

Practices of deviating: questioning the ways we research

“and we are walking in the woods and he says “you’re deviating, the path is up here. where are you going? you are deviating. (...) “okay, okay, deviate, deviate, deviate.” that’s what I needed. (...) “it works for me?” works for me.”
Carolee Schneemann

What do we research? Why do we research? How do we research? For whom? What kind of relationship is the one between the professor and the student? What is the significance of this relationship, namely in constructing and/or destructing students’ trust in entering into the unknown? What is the relevance of seeking the unknown? How can we deepen the relationship that values “I am in you and you are in me” at the basis of the interconnection between these two beings engaged in research? In the professor inspiring their students to find sometimes unknown and under-evaluated bliss? What is the role of this bliss in generating meaningful knowledge? In the end what is meaningful knowledge? What is the role of imagining the impossible to arrive to some kind of unexpected possibility?

This paper does not aim to answer all these questions, but they are in the subterranean layer of our thoughts, incessantly seeking and questioning our ways to research. I keep this self-doubt that crosses the what-how-why we research into a realm of (un)conscious seeking. I do not know. My guiding motto is William Blake’s “expect poison from the standing water.” Therefore, much of the time the path is cloudy, precarious, and uncertain, for both the students and me. Although working this way is challenging, it is a driving force for research to be more than a way of commenting on the world but to actually change the world. A sample of this type of query is our practice of researching with our master students in the School of Architecture at the University of Minho where we have been learning the relevance of “inadequacy, intimacy, and intensity” as tools that support the transformation of the ways of research.