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Postproductive methods: Researching modes of relationality and affect worlds through participatory video with youth

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Abstract

This chapter discusses three case studies of participatory video making in connection to projects developed with young people in Milwaukee and Tallahassee, U.S.A. They argue for an approach to participation with a focus on affect worlds and precarity. The authors propose a method of slow research as a mode of going along with young people's existing practices of consuming, creating, sharing, living with images. This method is informed by the art concepts of poor image and postproduction along with the work of cultural theorist Lauren Berlant around affect, the glitch and sensorial experimentation via genre innovation.

Keywords: poor image, postproduction, affect, participation, genre

Poor images and postproduction as participation

In an essay titled *In Defense of the Poor Image*, art critic Hito Steyerl (2012) describes as characteristic of contemporary times an economy of poor images circulating in the form of compressed video files that are uploaded, downloaded, modified, uploaded again, and that create alternative publics and sites of relation. These images are called poor for various reasons. They are produced by popular and amateur authors, with a do-it-yourself experimental aesthetic, around everyday experiences and with an interest for merging art with life. They are poor because they are imperfect, produced with technologies available

to regular folk. They lack the high-end quality of corporative production design. Their role is not to be original or high-res but to circulate, move, flow intensively in the circuit of many other images in the pool of capitalistic semioticization, where everything/everyone is made visible, documented, surveilled. In their circulation across the World Wide Web poor images may provoke alienation and submission but they also can incite transgression, contestation and fun. Steyerl (2012, p. 41) writes:

Altogether, poor images present a snapshot of the affective condition of the crowd, its neurosis, paranoia, and fear, as well as its craving for intensity, fun, and distraction. The condition of the images speaks not only of countless transfers and reformattings, but also of the countless people who cared enough about them to convert them over and over again, to add subtitles, reedit, or upload them.

Steyerl sees the political and imaginative role of poor images not coming from representation or contemplation but from a permanent dematerialization and deterritorialization, which enables their recombination and integration in new sequences and relations. The role of the poor image is not to deliver a fetishist visibility but to create visual bonds between dispersed audiences that do not necessarily share any form of solidarity but link via images in ‘a physical sense by mutual excitement, affective attunement, anxiety’ (Steyerl 2012, p. 43).

Laura and Rachel are interested in how the theory of the poor image and its emphasis on collective affect seems to resonate with emerging views of participation in research with youth inspired by the new materialisms (Grosz 2010; Barad 2007) and new empiricisms (Manning 2016; Manning and Massumi 2014; Massumi 2011), that demand to do research from the middle, a way of joining in activity that is already going on (Springgay and Truman 2018; Springgay 2016; Rotas 2016) with existing practices of consuming, creating, sharing, living with images. Considering this, Laura and Rachel

propose to redefine participation in video making as *postproduction* (Bourriaud 2005), a cultural practice not based on creating new and original objects but on reusing existing forms to produce new relational modes and zones of activity. Bourriaud (2005, p. 17) offers an example of postproduction practice through the figure of the DJ and her use of the sampler:

[A] machine that reprocesses musical products, also implies constant activity; to listen to records becomes work in itself, which diminishes the dividing line between reception and practice... This recycling of sounds, images, and forms implies incessant navigation within the meanderings of cultural history, navigation which itself becomes the subject of artistic practice. Isn't art, as Duchamp once said, 'a game among all men of all eras'? Postproduction is the contemporary form of this game.

Therefore, the aim of postproduction is not outputting results but developing *practice*, through active, intense, relational inhabitation of existing forms, so to create new circuits of movement through culture. Laura and Rachel are interested in working with this understanding of participation as an immanent relationality of emergent zones of activity to consider the affect worlds organising video-making with youth in contexts of precarity. Precarity refers to the material and affective *conditions of transition* that individuals collectively improvise and negotiate to live with broken parts and failing infrastructures (Berlant 2016). Since the financial crisis of 2008, when many Western countries implemented programs of austerity and cuts in youth provision (Bradford and Cullen 2012), precarity is something intrinsic to youth services with special impact in the arts education sector (Parsad et al. 2011). Within these conditions, Laura and Rachel develop video projects with small groups of urban youth from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. They have become accustomed to operating with meagre conditions, broken

parts, and missing pieces. Their projects reside in schools and youth centres, which partially cede their spaces and share resources such as teacher support, classrooms, outdated computers, snacks. They use free or trial software, combined with donated used phones and cameras borrowed from campus libraries and resource centres. Laura, Rachel and the youth they work with develop practices of poor making and postproduction in the sense that they make do with what is available. In inventing provisional arrangements, they improvise technological, material and affective relations (Bourriaud 2005), as the cases presented later on in the chapter discuss in detail.

This parallels with contemporary perspectives in social theory, which interrogate the exhaustion of capitalism and suggest that life not only originates in conditions of growth and progress but in situations of precarity that provoke unpredictable encounters and collaboration between unlikely gatherings of actors (Tsing 2015). Laura and Rachel have found in the work of Lauren Berlant (2016; 2015; 2011) important concepts to further think precarity both as a latent and pervasive condition and a site from which to engage in experiments of living through new aesthetic, sensorial, affective forms.

Affect, slow research and postproductive genres

Berlant proposes the concept of *cruel optimism* (2011) to argue that individuals organise their ways of belonging to the world through attachments to fantasies of good life that do not hold up. These fantasies revolve around desires for upward mobility, political representation, romantic love, and others. Good life fantasies are attached to different objects that organise such desires. These could be an education degree, a technological device, a new drug or many others. Berlant argues that attachments are optimistic. Optimism is what gets subjects to bind with worlds, and the attachment to an object of desire is a way to feel closer to a good life fantasy. However, Berlant sees optimism as having a double bind. On one hand, fantasies of good life are built around the continuity of

the networks of resource supply that organised the welfare state of the post-war societies. However, in current times this network (quality jobs, public education, public health, expansion of university access, etc.) is affected by disruption and systemic failures. Consequently, the distribution of resources is not ensured, thus putting in danger our sense of good life. On the other hand, the abandonment of such fantasies of good life feels unbearable. Without them subjects lose their attachment to lifeworlds, and their sense of belonging.

Participation in education could be thought in terms of the double bind of cruel optimism. Participation is something that is deemed as good, and that helps subjects to belong to the collective world of the school, youth centre or other institutions. At the same time, participation is predetermined to exist in normative parameters of school behavior and affect worlds. Other existing forms of relational activity will not be seen as participative. Thus, rather than binding subjects to the world this other activity can contribute to their exclusion from it. Springgay (2016, p. 72) writes:

Participation is commonly understood as either voluntary or as a way of being successful. As voluntary it is assumed that one chooses to participate. That participation is something we do, rather than something immanent to the event itself. Moreover, in a neo-liberal space, such as a school, participation is rewarded and deemed valuable. To choose not to participate, to say no, is to exclude oneself.

Berlant (2016) calls for not saturating the field of sociality with normative emotions and interrogates the prerogative that the affects of collective worlds ought to only be thought in terms of belonging. She suggests the concept of *proximity* to think in modes of being together in ambivalent and difficult-to-discern situations that do not necessarily correspond with the prerogative of having something in common. She writes:

This project looks to nonsovereign¹ relationality as the foundational quality of being in common, seeing, for example, individuality as a genre carved from within dynamics of relation rather than a state prior to it or distinct from it. As a result, this project works against the pervasive critical theory discourse of “belonging” insofar as “belonging” operates as a synonym for being in social worlds . . . The crowded but disjointed propinquity of the social calls for a proxemics, the study of sociality as proximity quite distinct from the positive attachment languages of belonging.

(Berlant 2016, pp. 394-395)

Another important question that Berlant (2016; 2015; 2011) addresses is how these nonsovereign modes of being together feel. In this respect, Berlant (2011) differs from contributions in social theory that have concentrated on the concept of trauma to explain how individuals manage sensing a world that is overwhelming. She suggests that the event of living in ordinary crisis can have ‘other inexpressive but life-extending actions throughout the ordinary and its situations of living’ (p. 81). These do not necessarily need to be expressed as trauma but in the form of other genres like the happening, the joke, the conversation -perhaps the poor image- that speak of ‘other forms of sensual activity toward and beyond survival’ (p. 9). In this context, Berlant (2015; 2011) pays attention to what she calls the *impasse of the present*. The impasse corresponds with a time that is open and not saturated yet by normative feelings. It is the time of what comes up, the time where one can be changed by the encounter. Rather than being filled with a sense of eventuality where some action takes place, it is typical of the impasse to have a *flat affect*. In this the links between subjects, and subjects, things and places are neither defined by what it is said nor are clearly articulated feelings. Flat affect is carried by an atmospheric sense of quietness, banality, and slow time in which life is presented as a mundane activity of hanging up.

Laura and Rachel have found the concepts of the impasse and flat affect quite useful to consider other affects of participation in moments of low eventuality, where the research did not seem to move anywhere and where the activity of participants did not build in any clear direction, remaining in a state of indeterminacy. The impasse seems to remark the importance of slow forms of research that stick to ambivalent practices and atmospheres, and that go along with incidents, situations, anecdotes that unfold. Slow research moves with the ways young people see, make, share, relate with images. The impasse calls for a speculative use of methods, in which research is not so much a procedure for extracting data from the world, but the ways we become entangled in relations and the movement of thinking propelled by navigating the circuits of poor imaging and postproduction (Springgay and Truman 2018).

More recently, Berlant (2016) has proposed the concept of the *glitch*, which she defines as a broken or failing infrastructure, an interruption inside the bonds and systems that sustain ordinary life. More than a space where activity stops, Berlant sees the glitch as an infrastructure where creative forms of repair and provisional maintenance emerge that carry the potential for experimenting with transformational forms of togetherness not foreclosed by optimism. The glitch is a concept that merges well with the ideas of the poor image and postproduction, in the sense that a glitchstructure is an infrastructure in a constant state of transition constituted by loss and practices of reusing, recombining, and adjusting to what is available and what is left in situations of failure. Glitchstructures ‘can provide a pedagogy of unlearning while living with the malfunctioning world, vulnerable confidence, and the rolling ordinary’ (Berlant 2016, p. 396). Such pedagogy is based on processes of experimentation that retrain the sensorium and become proximate to collective modes of life that are fraying, queer, speculative, ongoing, incoherent without the desire to straighten them (see also Sellar and Zipin 2018).

Berlant (2011) proposes the concept of *genre* to explain how world-shifting events, their intensities and heterogeneous sense become organised in ways that can be collectively sensed. Genre is a placeholder of conventions that permits both acting on and interpreting feelings and consequently building a public sense of shared reciprocity. These conventions can produce processes of ideology and normativity but also adjustment and improvisation. Consequently, the carving of the event into some aesthetic form or genre is a key process to understand the management of ambivalence as a public feeling. Berlant (2015; 2011) has discussed the waning of the genres of historical realism and melodrama (sentimentality), and the emergence of alternative genres that address the subjective processes of adjustment to the erosion of the welfare state, the growth of alternative urban and sexual cultures, and the rise of the neoliberal economy. Connected with the concept of infrastructures of transition and the glitch, Berlant (2016) calls for new genres that address life in the space of broken forms and speculates on how precarious infrastructures can multiply conditions of possibility. Berlant also argues for the cultivation of genres of the common that are ‘carved out from within dynamics of relation rather than a state prior to it or distinct from it’ (2016, p. 394). Aligning with this idea, Rachel and Laura propose three postproductive genres: the meme, reformatting and montage. They utilise these three postproductive genres to think with three research situations in their respective video-research projects with youth. While the three post-productive genres allude to processes of digital image-making, hardware care and film, Rachel and Laura’s interest is not limited to their resulting objects (e.g. an image, a series of composed images or a repurposed technology). Following Berlant (2016) their focus is on the dynamics of relations and how using these genres as methods of analysis allows for more complicated understandings of participation and being in common in video-research with youth. We end this section with

a brief introduction of how these postproductive genres function to then proceed to the discussion of their associated case studies.

1. Formally the concept of the meme refers to a mode of cultural production built around the practice of distributing repackaged forms of digital material, where modified content is passed ‘person to person by means of copying or imitation’ (Shifman 2011, p.188). As a postproductive genre the meme alludes to collective processes of image-making that grow out from inhabiting, borrowing and appropriating images and artistic practices that are already in circulation.
2. Reformatting is a practice commonly performed when digital devices are affected by data corruption. As a postproductive genre reformatting enacts processes in which image-making is used as a practice of adjustment and improvisation in response to unexpected life shifts and ordinary crises.
3. In Deleuze’s (1989; see also Rodowick 1997) film theory montage refers to the arrangement of images in relation and the potential of transformation that such relationality introduces in the film narrative as whole. As a postproductive genre, the montage refers to the possibility of representing the research as a differential process of emergent and ongoing relations between bodies, technologies, images and places in space and time.

The mimetic chain: Linking up through YouTube production

In the summer of 2016 Rachel initiated a weekly video workshop at a teen centre in Tallahassee, Florida. Publicly funded, the drop-in centre provides afterschool and summer programs for local teens. From the outset, Rachel followed the teens’ lead as they explored their interest in developing a presence on YouTube. For three teens—Ice, Sage and Thunder—this process drew on a series of YouTube styles the youth were fluent in and

relied on a set of free editing apps that could be used on the teens' borrowed smartphones and the centre's PCs. These teens developed videos with one-shot takes and single song audio tracks, engaging a mode of production that reflects the intensity and fast pace of poor image circuits (Steyerl 2012). The group was able to film, edit and upload videos in the span of just one or two project sessions (2-4 hours).

The videos the teens produced were predictable. Replicability is a key characteristic of how amateur content circulates in YouTube across a loosely organized public (Burgess 2014; Steyerl 2012; Shifman 2011;). The output focused on generating memetic videos where the authors responded to existing content by mimicking its visual style. As a postproductive genre, *the meme* is a form of cultural participation.

Methodologically, this leads to the observation that these videos are 'the mediating mechanisms via which cultural practices are originated, adopted and (sometimes) retained within social networks' (Burgess 2014, p. 87). The teens' interaction with YouTube was built through processes of assembling tools, bodies and scenarios. Their practice was one where 'notions of originality (being at the origin of) and even of creation (making something from nothing) are slowly blurred in this new cultural landscape' (Bourriaud 2005, p. 7).

The video production, upload and visualization created spaces of shared activity. As Berlant (2016) would argue, this shared activity did not imply a sense of belonging, but occurred through what Steyerl (2012) calls visual bonds which are more ephemeral, erratic and physical in the sense that they connected bodies through excitement, intensification but also boredom and surfing. The teens opened a shared YouTube channel.² This platform prompted the teens to place advertisements on their videos, which they saw as an opportunity. The teens wondered if they could monetize their channel and began tracking their view count. One day a disagreement arose regarding the proprietorship of *Black*

*Superman*³; the person who acted as Superman wanted to upload the video on his personal channel, to capture its traffic, but the collective prevailed.

The teens' memetic production could be interpreted to situate youth as depoliticized agents in a system of communicative capitalism (Dean 2005). Indeed, Steyerl (2012, p. 32) suggests the poor image "mocks the promises of digital technology". However such promises do not come into contact with the teens' lifeworlds. Rather, researching alongside these teens revealed modes of relationality, or 'scenes of genuine ambivalence [that] better disclose some matters of managing being in proximity' (Berlant 2016, p. 395). The teens' non-sentimental and constrained engagement with poor video equipment, the material environment of the centre and ongoing YouTube viewing oriented research toward young people's proximity with and within the ambivalent circuits of poor images and afterschool spaces marked by precarity.

Reformatting: Destiny not-making the video self-portrait of her favourite place in the city

During the months of January to June of 2008 Laura worked with a group of 15 third graders in a public school in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in the development of video self-portraits of place. The project sought to collaborate with a classroom teacher, children and their families to capture and edit footage of places in the city that children frequented, liked and developed activity. Among the 15 children in the class only 11 were able to get parental permission to borrow a camera for the weekend and be supported by an adult with the time to take them to the place they wanted, and spend time with them in that place. A number of children became aware of such limitations fairly early in the development of the project and decided to excuse themselves from its activities. It soon became obvious that the spaces that children were allowed to navigate, and when and how they were allowed to

navigate them, were highly dependent on their guardians' time and availability to help (Zeicher 2003).

Destiny was one of the girls in the group whose family did not support the borrowing of the camera so she could videotape the place of her choice, the neighbourhood library. Destiny had told Laura that she would go to the library daily for a couple of hours to do her homework with her grandfather, who meanwhile would read the newspapers and use the computer. The classroom teacher explained to Laura that Destiny was not living with her mother and father, and that her legal guardians were her grandparents. After having a phone conversation with the aim of explaining further the project to the grandparents, the teacher described their mood as feeling disappointed because Destiny had lost other school materials that they had to replace. She explained that the situation at home was 'tight'. The grandparents feared that Destiny would lose or damage the camera and that they would have to pay for it. The teacher shared with the grandparents how much interest Destiny had showed for this project. Destiny had written detailed descriptions of the library and had made several drawings with different views of the place in order to plan her camera framings and movements. She had also prepared a script and participated in tutorials on how to compose different styles of frames with a Flip™ video camera.

Despite being aware of the antagonism of her grandparents towards the project, Destiny committed to it by intensifying her productivity in ways not seen in other participant children. Thinking Destiny's activity from a perspective of cruel optimism (Berlant 2011), one can see that the making of the video was an object of desire that Destiny could not easily give up. As Berlant (2011, p.3) affirms, in contexts of overwhelming impediments 'adjustment seems as a big accomplishment'. The teacher and Laura decided to ask Destiny if she would like to do her self-portrait of place in the school

library rather than her local library. In this way, Destiny could adjust rather than drop the object of desire. Destiny agreed. This is how the postproductive genre of *reformatting* came into place.

Reformatting refers to agentive modes that involve adjustment and improvisation towards a situation of disturbance (Berlant 2011). The participative process between adult, child, place and things was reformatted so Destiny's video self-portrait could be made in a different place and time. In the school library Destiny could not record herself doing her homework, commenting on her favourite book collections, or playing video games. She could not capture the librarian, the locals and her grandfather reading the newspaper, as included in her planning script. Additionally, Laura was left to be the adult with whom Destiny could rely on to enact her project. As Azoulay (2016) explains, in image-making collaboration does not aim or imply a given form. It takes its shape in response to specific circumstances. In the case of Destiny, her project required solidarity and someone who listened and recognized Destiny's presence and desire to produce a movie.

The resulting video self-portrait that Destiny co-filmed and co-edited with Laura is a disjointed visual-collage of dispersed mundane gestures that at first sight do not seem atypical in a school context. Destiny shows her classroom, reads a book about Rosa Parks, talks about the assignment connected to the book, searches the shelves of the library for more books on Rosa Parks, interviews the librarian, uses the library computer, shows other favourite books, reads a personally authored composition (see, Fig. 1).

[Insert here Fig. 1]

From a postproductive perspective, Destiny's performance, its video recording and editing can be conceived as an assemblage of embodiments, things, spaces that portray ambivalence or a dynamic of affirmation and constraint that is characteristic of flat affect. As mentioned earlier, Berlant (2015; 2011) describes flat affect as manifested through

ordinary activities that more than showing growth or progress present pure maintenance. On one hand, we see the affirmation of Destiny being a competent reader, someone capable of eloquently arguing why Rosa Parks changed the world, someone who defines herself as a poem writer, someone who reads a nicely crafted composition with a personal and evocative atmosphere that fills the viewer with curiosity. On the other hand, Destiny's statement that if she was Rosa Parks she would not give up her seat when she reads the book, along with the sense of freedom and joy summoned in her composition, highly contrast with the flat and controlled environment where these actions took place. Such optimistic feelings also seem anomalous when considering the limitations that Destiny experienced to develop her project.

Postproductive methods conceive of participation as a process of going along with young people lives, as these lives are lived. As Horton and Kraftl (2006) have pointed out, this going along may involve a reformatting of research plans and habituated methods so to invent alongside the dull, repetitive rhythms of young people's routines. As it happened with Destiny's video, its making process opened up a way of seeing the 'unnoticed, often unsaid, often unsayable, often unacknowledged and often underestimated' (Horton and Kraftl 2006, p. 259) in children's everyday lives.

Montage: Navigating disturbances in the contested present of JT's ongoing video project

The final case study returns to the weekly video workshop Rachel hosted in the summer of 2016 at a local teen centre. It considers how postproductive genre of *montage* acts as both film technique and a relational mode of participation. Early in the project teen participant JT filmed a walk home from the centre using his mobile phone. In this fourteen-minute continuous shot, JT and his friend documented litter, crooked street signs and parking lots,

while maintaining a colourful conversation about how everything they came across was ‘disgusting’ and ‘trashed’. The following week JT captured his route to the centre in the morning. There is no voiceover in the day scenes where JT quietly filmed a landscape bathed in sunlight, documenting trees and fluttering leaves, zooming in on flowing water and growing tadpoles, and panning across a wooded area and a field.

JT sought to continue his engagement with this material through postproduction and envisioned bringing the day and night scenes together in a back-and-forth montage. Deleuze (1989, p. 179) observes that montage, which does not blend images into a coherent whole, operates as a mechanism of ‘differentiation’. Colman (2011, p. 21) further suggests that montage consists of ‘affective intervals created between movement and within time, dialectic movements productive of mutations of form’. For JT’s video project, and arguably for his participation in the project, the work of montage consisted in such a mutation of form. In postproduction JT encountered an obstacle; using a free video editing software program, the long video clips exceeded the program’s capacity, making the process of editing unbearably slow. Undeterred, this stilted process seemed acceptable to JT who drifted into workshop sessions sporadically, happy to comment on his vision for the project in lieu of dedicating blocks of time to editing.

The postproductive genre of montage acted as a ‘glitch’ which introduced ‘hiccups in the relations among structural forces that alter a class’s *sense* of things’ (Berlant 2011, p. 198). At impasse, over the course of the project JT consistently tinkered with his compilation but never exported it. For Berlant (2011, p. 199), an impasse is a ‘formal term for encountering the duration of the present’. In other words, the montage-as-glitch replaced a directional, finite task of editing with an open and ongoing engagement that altered JT’s relationship to the video and the workshop. In this glitched system, montage loses its narrative quality of meaning making. Following Deleuze (1989, p. 155), montage

is seen as capable, paradoxically, of ‘introduc[ing] an enduring interval in the moment itself’. This interval, as a ‘stretch of time that is being sensed and shaped—an impasse’ (Berlant 2011, p. 199), emphasizes the atemporal quality of JT’s ongoing montage. Within JT’s project the unresolved relationship between day and night scenes turn into a topology comprised of ‘the simultaneity of impossible presents’ (Deleuze 1989, p. 131), which situates JT’s neighbourhood in an ambivalent now.

The glitched process guiding JT’s postproductive engagement with his landscape allowed montage to manifest as a ‘contested present,’ one that ‘emerges through activities of disturbance’ (Berlant 2015, p. 194). Within this disturbance the postproductive genre of montage gains value as a research orientation. Tsing signals how, in ‘disturbance-based ecologies’ (2015, p. 5), new forms of world making emerge specifically in assemblage: ‘assemblages don’t gather lifeways; they make them’ (2015, p. 23). In a context that does not (or cannot) aspire to a linear vision of progress, ‘assemblages are open-ended gatherings. They allow us to ask about communal effects without assuming them. They show us potential histories in the making’ (2015, p. 22-23). In this workshop, the poor quality of the montage shifted the project’s focus from product, or the ‘real thing’, to its ‘conditions of existence’ (Steyerl 2009, p. 8). Forced into an open-ended register, ultimately JT’s manipulation of time-space rehearsed possibilities for togetherness, speculating on unrealized modes of engagement, in collaboration and with the city.

Glossary

Poor image It is a concept developed by art critic Hito Steyerl (2012). Poor images are images circulating over the World Wide Web that are produced, shared, manipulated, downloaded and uploaded again

and again utilising everyday technologies such as mobile phones and desktop computers. The role of the poor image is not to be a high-quality image to be contemplated, but one to circulate, move, become intense and eventually de-materialise. Our projects worked with the assumption that young people are already active and implicated in the circuits of the poor image. The poor image situates the concept of participation in the territory of deterritorialized activity and affect.

Postproduction It is a term proposed by art critic Nicolas Bourriaud (2005) to describe contemporary cultural practices consisting in reusing existing forms, not to produce new objects but to explore practice, create new relational modes and produce (even if it is only ephemerally) new sites of collective existence. We propose that the poor image is a case of postproductive practice that, as Steyerl (2012) notes, creates visual bonds between people living in different places. These visual bonds do not correspond to traditional ideas of participation based on commonality or solidarity. Instead the social form of the poor image is the production of collective affect through its flows and movements through the World Wide Web.

Affect Affect is a pervasive concept in contemporary theory, especially in the context of the new materialisms, the new empiricisms, and non-representational theories. For Berlant (2013), affect is a way of talking about the impact of the world in subjects. It focuses on how subjects form and sustain attachments with the world and how

these attachments feel. Most particularly, Berlant is interested in affects connected to ordinary practices of ongoingness and adjustment characteristic of a time when the post-war infrastructures that ensured the continuity of life are failing. Berlant suggests that practices of learning to live with broken parts and transitional infrastructures constitute transformative experiments of living and sensing. This is relevant to participative research with youth, because many places and spaces where youth meet with educators are precarious, underfunded and require inventive practices of infrastructuration.

Participation Thinking with Springgay (2016) and Berlant (2011), we have suggested that educational research should neither anticipate the format nor the affect of participation. Participation is not a thing, but a *doing* that is immanent to events constituted by situations of being together, proximate or in relation to others. Influenced by these theorists, we have suggested an approach to participation as a *joining with* the activity that is already ongoing related to consuming, creating and sharing images. The aim of this research is to pay attention and intensify modes of connection, relation and affectivity within ecologies of poor imaging and postproduction.

Genre For Berlant (2011) genres are placeholders of conventions that permit the collective feeling of complex events. Berlant (2015) suggests that contemporary genres presented in the novel, cinema, visual art and popular music offer forms to sense the times, moods and atmospheres of ordinary crises. In this chapter, we have

thought with post-productive genres like the meme, reformatting, and the montage, which emerged from video practices of/with different groups of young people. This has allowed us to approach the affects, moods, sensations that make research events while grappling with their difficulty, ambivalence, and ongoingness.

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Footnotes

1. The nonsovereign is a concept that Berlant (2016) proposes to think a form of life in common that does not begin with the idea of sovereignty. She proposes a politics of nonsovereignty that cultivate understandings of subjectivity as made of incoherences, tensions and contradictions. The concept of the nonsovereign addresses forms of being in proximity with others which neither presume that belonging is something that unites, nor presuppose that subjects are in proximity because they have something in common. The nonsovereign subjectivity involves modes of a relationality detached from the object and fantasies of good life. It is a subjectivity open to experiment with modes of living that go beyond the common genres in which life in common is explained and understood (e.g. romance, friendship, family, etc.). It interrogates how intimacy, proximity and communal infrastructure feels and what it does to other collective modes of being like being a mentor, a co-worker, a collaborator in a project.