

Chapter 11

Visual Technology, Youth Interventions, and Participation

Two Cases from the Netherlands

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In this chapter, we explore the impact of visual technology on youth participation. Our research addresses the benefits of the use of visual technology in education and the implications for contemporary adult educators. We empirically ground our research by looking at two specific projects, which use participatory video as an intervention method with youth in order to strengthen participation. In the first part of this chapter, we sketch the characteristics of multimedia with the fast development of new media technologies and the vast impact of media in contemporary culture. In the second part we discuss the impact of technological convergence on youth culture. We will argue that youth participation, defined as active citizens' involvement, is a prerequisite for learning and sustainable change. In the third part we discuss in more detail participatory practices that are embedded and implemented in everyday life in more detail. We take a close look at two cases from the Netherlands, exploring the conditions of participatory video for strengthening youth participation. We focus on the added value of visual media, building on the work by Pat Thompson (2008) who developed criteria that can be used for assessing the value of visuals in research. We also discuss the role that adult professionals—as filmmakers, facilitators and mediators—play in these projects, using the theoretical work of John Dewey (1938) and Paolo Freire (1970, 2005).

THE CONTEMPORARY AGE OF VISUAL MEDIA

It almost goes without saying that visual images are abundant in everyday life (Mirzoeff, 1999; Sturken and Cartwright, 2009). Technological development is the main reason for the visualization of everyday life (Mitchell, 2005).

Visual culture is to a large extent informed by what Walter Benjamin (1968 [1935]) has called *mechanical reproduction*, the technological possibility of infinite reproduction of images. The impact of visual technology started with the invention of the *camera obscura* and later the photo camera, before exploding into the multimedia of today (Crary, 1990). Over the past years we have grown accustomed to a visual overload (Smelik, 2011a). From huge screens in movie theaters to small screens that we can put in our pocket—visuals are everywhere: in the bus, metro or train, on buildings, in our kitchen or bedroom, in the office, on our phones. Even when we visit the hospital we are confronted with images probing our bodies in the form of X-rays, echography, MRI scans, to name just a few possibilities of medical imaging (Smelik and Lykke, 2008). All of these images flow to us day and night from all possible angles. Not only do we look at pictures and watch films, but we also make connections to the world, with words, images and sounds, anytime, anywhere, and to anyone.

In our discussion of the impact of new media technologies, we first define media by its actual hardware, like film, television, the Internet or newspapers, although this definition obviously simplifies the current media landscape (Smith, 2011). However, the hardware is equally made up by its software, by what McLuhan (1967) has famously called “the medium is the me(a)ssage.” McLuhan argued that the invention of a medium always brings about fundamental changes in the consciousness of a society. The history of media technology demonstrates that a new medium not only brings new opportunities, but also influences the functioning of the already existing ones (Bolter and Grusin, 1999). The invention of film changed the function of photography from reproduction to capturing the “right” moment, while “the comparison between film and television suggests that television’s distinguishing characteristic is its ability to broadcast live, potentially uniting a country or the entire world as we watch the same images together” (Smith, 2011, p. 121).

Smith further explains that with the arrival of a new medium, it is not immediately clear what that medium will eventually achieve in society and what its impact will be on its users. This also works the other way around. A technological invention only becomes a “real” invention when it is widely accepted by society. As Smith (2011) argues, “Although designers created the technology with a clear need in mind, the technology’s purpose is never clear till it is placed in a social context” (p. 125). The introduction of a new medium and its possible success or failure, will therefore always involve a negotiation between technological development and social integration.

Cinema and television series have been the two leading *visual storytelling formats* for the most part of last century. They have determined the technological developments and have been driven by the quest for visual fidelity, or what is often called realism. It is important to understand the paradoxes of realism. In a world that is saturated by images, pictures have become

complex, ambiguous and contradictory. Hardly anyone adheres to any idea of a naïve mimesis, that is, the idea that the image is a simple copy or mirror of reality. Mitchell argues that in visual culture the image has become increasingly complex, shot through with power, discourses, institutions and technologies (Mitchell, 1994, p. 16). Yet digitalization techniques have been a driving force in a push for realism, paradoxically in genres that have never been realistic in the first place; just think of fantasy, starting from *Jurassic Park* to *Harry Potter* or *The Lord of the Rings*, or computer games ranging from *Lara Croft* to *War of the Worlds*. Not only do fantastic genres and media demand screen realism, spectators and users equally yearn for authenticity.

We need media theory to understand the contemporary desire for authenticity (Smelik, 2011a, 2011b). Both in postmodern theory and in media studies the idea of a “society of the spectacle” has become widely accepted. Though the phrase was coined by the French Marxist Guy Debord in the 1960s to initially condemn the mass media, the term has a much wider meaning in today’s society. It has become one of the organizing principles of our economy, society, and everyday life, according to Douglas Kellner (2005). While the spectacle was first related to the realm of fiction, fashion, theme parks and the like, in the last decade the spectacle has become part of the media covering reality. This means that the real on television, whether be it news or reality shows, is often spiced up for easier consumption. Examples are the sensationalist coverage of disasters or the fictionalization of reality shows. Geoff King (2005) introduced the notion of the “spectacle of the real” to refer to the conjunction of spectacle and reality. Reality or performance, true or untrue, original or copy, street fashion or fashion show: the different strands of fact and fiction become entangled in a Gordian knot.

When “the real is no longer what it used to be, nostalgia assumes its full meaning,” as the French philosopher of postmodern society, Jean Baudrillard (1983, p. 12), asserts. Nostalgia for the real, or the authentic, is the result of modern mass media turning everything, including reality, into a spectacle. Viewers simply yearn for what is lost: the real. The quest for authenticity can be understood as a resistance to regimes of representation that turn each image into a spectacle or performance. But there is a paradox at work here. As Gilmore and Pine (2007) have argued, people crave real experiences; they want the authentic thing. In their book *Authenticity* they illustrate the contradictions of the experience economy: in an increasingly unreal world, consumers desire something real, original, genuine, sincere—in a word, the authentic—but they have to pay a lot of money to have it organized or produced for them. The public may seek what Gilmore and Pine call the “really real,” but—as Walter Benjamin already predicted in 1935—in a media culture of the spectacle, the real and the authentic are lost objects never to be retrieved from the “lost and found” department.

Returning to the question addressed in this chapter—the impact of visual technology on youth participation as active citizens in society—we need to take into account the desire of people today for that lost quality of authenticity and a sense of the real. We argue that one of the important ways of achieving this is by active participation. New media such as video, the Internet, and social media have provided consumers with mobile and accessible media. Media scholars have elucidated on the process of “remediation” (Bolter and Grusin, 1999), the way in which new and old media remediate one another. Others have pointed to the high convergence between forms of the media, for example, Henry Jenkins (2006a). For Smith (2011, p. 127) convergence occurs when a medium becomes a mix of components adapted from other media. Remediation and convergence are not in itself new phenomena, but both have been increased and accelerated by digitalization.

Video first brought moving images into the hands of consumers. When the digital video camera appeared around 1995, and digital editing became accessible at the turn of the century, consumers could become producers and distributors of their own media products. Today, consumers can make their own movie on their mobile handheld devices, combine different apps, edit the material and share it immediately without any loss of quality. With these interfaces, users have access to the world in their hands.

Interface is the significant notion here, implying a technological shift from recording fidelity to interactive communication. This development involves a shift from spectator to user. Whereas films are still characterized by visual spectacle, narrative structures, and psychological credibility, games offer interactive participation (Raessens, 2005). Social media remediate older media such as photography, radio, cinema, and games (Bolter and Grusin, 1999), allowing consumers to create any media experience and share it immediately through the same interface that created it. In today’s media landscape participation is almost self-evident (Jenkins, 2006b). The hierarchical relation between the producer of information and its consumers has changed forever. Today, we refer to consumers more as users who can produce, distribute and consume high-quality media messages in large quantities. Access and interaction are two conditions that are applicable for almost all citizens in Western countries. However, for Carpentier (2011) these two conditions are not necessarily equated with participation. Access and interaction do not in themselves guarantee participation or influence. Some scholars have been disappointed in the Internet as a factor of changing society as Curran et al. (2010) explain:

While it is true that social media provide a pleasurable means of self-expression and social connection, enable people to answer back to citadels of media power and in certain situation (. . .) may support the creation of a radical counter public

(. . .). Social media are more often about individual than collective emancipation, about presenting self (. . .) rather than changing society, about entertainment and leisure rather than political communication (. . .) and about social agendas shaped by elites and corporate power rather than radical alternative. (p. 180)

The technology of the Internet cannot then be separated from social structures and contexts. The Internet is constituted by the way it is organized, designed, and controlled; indeed, it is vested in powerful corporations, supported by software and hardware restrictions, and regulated by governments (Dijck, 2013).

In this section we have argued that the advent of new media such as the Internet and later of social media, have instigated a cultural shift that has deep implications for everyday life (Boomen et al., 2009). The interface enables the construction of new realities as well as new forms of collaboration and participation. In the context of this chapter it is important to note that young people—at least in the affluent West—actively participate in a landscape of visual and social media. The youth of today is media-savvy (Smelik and Versteeg, 2013), which may entail a changing role for adult educators. In order to assess such changing roles we focus in the following section on the level of participation, where the involvement of citizens is not restricted to institutionalized politics, but where participatory practice is embedded in everyday life (Carpentier, 2011).

YOUTH CULTURE

A long tradition of youth research exists within different disciplines such as sociology, psychology, pedagogy, criminology, and cultural studies. The study of youth is ambiguous. Multiple perspectives exist and interdisciplinary studies are rare. For example, in the study of youth cultures is a “false binary” (Furlong, 2013) between those who study culture as a representation and those who focus on socialization. But nowadays in spite of different approaches they find each other in a focus on antisocial behaviour, the vulnerable and the risks of growing up. As Furlong (2013) argues:

While early work within the “cultural tradition” (. . .) had a core concern with understanding the dynamics of processes of social reproduction through cultural resistance by young people, all too often contemporary work on cultural dimensions of young people’s lives has focused on “spectacular,” deviant or risky expressions while sidestepping core sociological concerns relating to the ways in which inequalities are reproduced across generation. (p. 146)

The different disciplines of youth studies recognize that the age of youth can be characterized as a period where young people are trying to escape the pressure of adults to build an independent life. Furlong (2013) describes this period as semi-independent; a state of being in-between that is constructed differently across time and society. *Identity* is a core concept in sociological studies of youth. Different social science disciplines share some core assumptions about the contemporary concept of identity. In relation to the previously mentioned digital and visual culture, one of them is: "... that the protraction of the youth phase and the increased complexity of socio-economic contexts have implications for the development of identity" (Furlong, 2013, p. 125). In Western countries, identity is a strongly individualized lifetime project. Du Bois-Reymond (2009) and Arnett (2004) describe this period as a time to experiment with lifestyles, relations, and jobs, a time of optimism, and a time to chase dreams. On the other hand, the extended youth phase makes young people more dependent on adults and for a longer period of time (Cote, 2009). The strongly individualized nature of this phase requires youngsters to make substantial choices. The relevant question is therefore: are young people competent enough to make these choices? Both the negative and positive aspects of the extended youth phase require attention. Furlong underlines this: "Young people may not feel prepared to make choices or may find choices blocked or constrained at times when they want to take action" (Furlong, 2013, p. 10). Despite her positive view, Du Bois-Reymond (2009) also makes it clear that the idea of a "choice biography" does not mean a total freedom to choose whatever you want.

The study of youth can also be seen as an opportunity to analyze the contemporary complex society through cultural resistance or—contrariwise—how young people conform to new or different conditions (*cultural adaptation*). It is young people who are the first to adopt new technologies.

Because of the extended youth phase, young people have time, space, and energy to experiment with the possibilities of the technological convergence. It is therefore interesting to find out how young people integrate the possibilities of the digital and visual culture in their daily lives. Most of the research available seems to be motivated by advertisers for reaching their target group or by institutes who are concerned and suspicious about young people's behavior. Longitudinal research in the Netherlands is conducted by the Institute for Addiction Research and focuses, for example, on Compulsive Internet Use (CIU) as a new disorder. To trace Internet addiction, this organization conducts a monitor about the Internet use of youth. In 2012, young people still used laptops, desktops, and the game console the most. In 2012, 56% had a smartphone and almost 33% a tablet (Rooij and Schoenmakers, 2013). YouTube was the site used most on the Internet and mobile phone. Every two years Stichting Promotie Televisiereclame (SPOT) conducts market-driven

research in the Netherlands into the time people invest in consuming different media. In 2010, young people between 13–19 years were identified by SPOT as heavy users of online videos.

We look at this generation who grew up with technology convergence as composed of experts in using technological possibilities. In this chapter we prefer to use the perspective of these young people as (political) citizens who have demands and priorities that differ from those expressed by older citizens. It is therefore important to stimulate involved and responsible citizenship grounded in trust and expertise rather than suspicion. Different forms of video technology have become integrated into all kinds of daily life activities. Young people are, as we have seen, heavy users of online videos, yet we are not sure to what extent young people are aware of aspects of media technology in the broader context of society and the influence of visual culture on representation and issues of realism and authenticity. The question then arises: how can adults support them in becoming active citizens by using visual and social media. We have specified this question by exploring the conditions of participatory video for strengthening youth participation in everyday life.

EDUCATION, PARTICIPATION AND VIDEO

Education, Participation and Visual Literacy

We postulate that participation defined as *active involvement* is a prerequisite for learning and sustainable change. This means that participation and education are inseparable. This is underpinned by two important well-known authors: John Dewey (1859–1952) and Paolo Freire (1921–1997). As we have seen, the classic hierarchical relation between the producer of the information and the user of that information has changed through the convergence of technology. As a consequence, the relation between adult educators and young people has changed too. Greater scope for the co-creation of video productions and participation of young people in them has been allocated in the learning processes and classic critical pedagogical advances in this.

Dewey is one of the most important educational reformers of the twentieth century. Experience, interaction and participation are the kernel of his ideas. In the contemporary age of visual media his ideas about the significance of participatory democracy get new meaning. Young people learn, and learn better, when they are actively involved. Learning is not seen as a direct and passive transmission of knowledge. Education is a continuous process of reconstructing experiences. "Participation is the concept by which Dewey clarifies how humans proceed from individual to social meanings.

Participation is the connecting element between the psychological and the social factors in education" (Berding, 1999, p. 4).

Democracy is more than politics. Democracy is a way of living together. It is about exchanging experiences, interaction and communication. Education can contribute to democratization by being democratic in itself. This idea gives a point of reference for contemporary participatory democracy. For Dewey (1938), knowledge is temporary because a society is always changing and developing warranted assertibility. Participatory processes have a pedagogical and a political intention.

One of the main critiques of Dewey relates to the role of educators in the process of growing up. Sometimes Dewey is misinterpreted about the meaning educators can have. Berding (2011), for example, explains how to transform the ideas of Dewey in today's education where the (adult) educator plays an important part. The adult educator is a mediator, a facilitator with his or her own knowledge who initiates and supports learning processes.

Freire, a philosopher and influential theorist of critical pedagogy, teaches us that all education is politics. For Freire an important condition is to speak the language of the community. Conscientization is his core concept, which is about the development of critical consciousness through action and reflection within a community (Freire, 1970). Literacy within the community is a basic condition. Participants are experts in their own everyday life and this is conditional for the development of a critical consciousness. Experience is therefore central in the process, as it is with Dewey. The educator needs to connect with the language of the participants. The methods used to identify and codify themes, problems and actions need to fit into their everyday lives. Literacy is political and conditional for democracy. We will elaborate on these critical pedagogical concepts of democratization and education in the second part of this chapter.

Literacy in the contemporary age of visual media has a new meaning. It is not only important that citizens can read and write, but it is also important to raise consciousness about the use of new media. New literacy, cultural literacy, media literacy, or visual literacy are new concepts for explaining the complexity of understanding today's society (Buckingham, 2000). Walter Benjamin ends his essay *A Short History of Photography* (1931) with the note: "It has been said that 'not he who is ignorant of writing but ignorant of photography will be the illiterate of the future.'" But isn't a photographer who can't read his own picture worth less than an illiterate?"

We focus on a specific aspect of new media literacy, namely *visual literacy*. Visual interventions that aim to strengthen participatory processes need to strengthen visual literacy as well. Visual interventions made by adults to stimulate participatory processes and the development of young people have increased in the last two decades. Pink (2009) describes through a series

of case studies how applied visual anthropology offers methods of research and representation to projects of intervention. In a similar study, Thompson (2008) describes in a similar study how "doing visual research with children and young people" offers diverse communication opportunities, namely:

"Images communicate in different ways than words. They quickly elicit aesthetic and emotional responses as well as intellectual"

"Some researchers argue that image-based research will particularly allow those children and young people who have difficulty with words an alternative means of expression"

"Other researchers suggest that through the creation of images young people are more ready to express their beliefs and emotions"

"... they (children) seem to take pleasure in the process, suggest that they are 'getting something' out of their participation . . ." (p. 11)

We will use these opportunities formulated by Thompson in the second part of the chapter to address the added value of a visual medium—in our case video—in participatory youth interventions. But first we will have a look at the history of participatory video as this is the field of the two cases that will be discussed later.

The History of Participatory Video

Conducting visual research with youth often takes the form of participatory video projects. The various motives that are given for using the participatory video can basically be divided into two categories with the following objectives: (1) to collect academic knowledge and (2) to empower people and communities. The first is called "participatory video research" (PVR), the second "participatory video" (PV).

The first-known scientists who introduced the notion of participatory cinema are Judith and David MacDougall (MacDougall, 1975). David MacDougall is an anthropologist, who produced ethnographic films as a negotiable property that lies within a conceptual triangle formed by the (film) subject, the filmmaker and the audience (Banks, 2001). David MacDougall entered actively into the world of the subject, with his camera tied up on his shoulder even when he was not filming, so people got used to this man and his camera. MacDougall renounced the idea of the observational objective camera and used the camera and his film to provoke dialogue. The researchers showed their film material to their subjects and gave them the possibility to correct and reflect upon it. Through such an exchange, a film can not only provide information the filmmaker or researcher perceives the world, but moreover about how the subjects perceive theirs. In this way film is not to be seen as physical evidence of an event or occurrence, but is a way of communication.

The first-known PVR project, where the researcher hands over the camera to the subject is *Through Navajo Eyes: An Exploration in Film Communication and Anthropology* (Worth and Adair, 1972). This is one of the first research projects that “gave the other a voice.” The project set out to research the hypothesis that language creates the everyday reality of a culture. The researchers hoped to create new perspectives on this hypothesis. They asked themselves:

What would happen if someone with a culture that makes and uses motion pictures taught people who had never made or used motion pictures to do so for the first time? Would they use the cameras and editing equipment at all? If they did, what would they make movies about and how would they go about it? (Worth and Adair, 1972, p. 3)

The detailed descriptions give an insight of the complexity of this process. Their overall conclusion was:

We feel that this method may offer the fields of anthropology, communication, cognitive psychology, and the humanities a new research technique, another method for getting at the way people structure their own humanness. Our investigations seem to confirm that this method does help to reveal culture as determined and organized by the people within that culture. (Worth and Adair, 1972, p. 253)

The first-known participatory video (PV) project for empowerment is “The Fogo Process” in 1967 (see, for instance, White, 2003). Globalization creates distance between decision makers and the everyday experience of local people. Lack of information can create isolated communities, especially when these communities are already geographical isolated, like the Fogo islands in the North of Canada. The researchers enabled isolated communities to tell their stories and reflect on their problems through film. The locally produced footage is used to communicate with decision makers and other stakeholders, to create dialogue and interaction and promote social change.

“‘The Fogo Process’ . . . , provides real evidence of how people who have been marginalized by the economic and political structure of the world system can renew and empower their local communities and transform conditions of uneven development” (White, 2003, p. 123). Another project worth mentioning here is the “SkyRiver” project, in which Tim Kennedy participated for almost 30 years with the Alaskan Natives in the Greater Anchorage Area (Kennedy, 2008).

The study of participatory video is multidisciplinary. An example is Kindon’s (2003), social geographic research about “Maori’s and ‘the relationships between place, identity and social cohesion in communities.’”

She uses three different ways of filmmaking: first, the Maori community is trained to produce films by themselves, second, the researchers filmed semi-structured interviews, and, third, the researchers made their own film, based on oral history. The process of filmmaking has the aim to collect academic knowledge as well as to build capacity. In capacity-building activities, active involvement is a prerequisite for learning and sustainable change. For almost thirty years, the organization Educational Video Centre in New York has produced documentary films in school classes with youth at risk. In this period of time, they experienced that producing documentaries with young people has different efforts, such as actively exploring their everyday lives, gathering information and making sense of it, developing multiple literacy skills, creating real work for real audiences to make a difference in their community by going out into it (Goodman, 2003).

PV and PVR have in the tradition of Participatory Action Research (PAR) and is mainly elaborated in the academic fields of development studies and pedagogy. The PV and PVR are diverse and multileveled. They give the unheard a voice, support community building, empower individuals, and can be used to collect data for producing academic knowledge (White, 2003; Thompson, 2008; Pink, 2009). However, the study of participatory video is still fragmented. It is important to frame the multilevel approach of participatory video and take advantage of the opportunities it provides in this contemporary age of visual media. Developing multiple literacy skills and especially visual literacy is an advantage, which is becoming more and more important today, as we have seen in the first part of this chapter. In the second part of this chapter we focus on two organizations who developed PV in the time that video became portable and available for the broader public. With the turn of the century digital editing became accessible too and consumers became producers and distributors of their own video products. It is in this period that the two organizations we studied started to develop their work with PV.

PARTICIPATORY VIDEO IN PRACTICE: TWO CASE STUDIES

Participatory video often refers to handing over the camera, but participation can also be accomplished in the process of design and (decision) making (see, for instance, Lie and Mandler, 2009). The case studies we describe in this section address both forms of participation. The studies focus on two organizations, All About Us Film Factory (AAUFF) and Bosch film. Both organizations conduct exemplary participatory visual projects in the Netherlands. We reflect on these projects to better understand how we can use visual practices in the contemporary age of visual media. We look at which methods are used by the organizations and explore and discuss the

added value of the visual medium, as well as the role that adult professionals play in the interventions.

All About Us Film Factory (AAUFF) is a nonprofit organization that in the last ten years has developed a method that stimulates young people to film their personal stories. The approach was developed by doing. AAUFF wants the young people to become active (media) citizens who "influence the media as much as the media influences them" (www.allaboutusfilmfactory.com). The method aims to provide technical skills, which are conditional for the three main objectives: individual empowerment, media literacy and giving young people a voice. In this case study we focus on their first project *Zeedrift* (2003) in the Netherlands. This project can be regarded as forming the basis for the method. For comparative reasons we also look at the project *Hey Mum, Tell Me . . . !* (2006).

Bosch film is a profit-making company that produces film projects with social engagement. It produces films and TV programs about current topics, preferably about controversial topics or topics that divide. The directors of Bosch film focus on the human point of view in all their projects. Therefore, it is necessary to collect the stories of the subjects involved. They use professionals for directing, editing, and producing, so they can guarantee the quality that is demanded by broadcasting institutions. They also cocreated implementation with the organizations involved for educational purposes. Their first participatory project was *The Street is Ours*, a directors' reaction to the somewhat negative one-sided way of looking at youth problems by adult professionals. The film was used to stimulate dialogue between decision makers and urban youth. In this chapter we also focus on their project *Find Out!*, an entertainment and educational intervention for young people. It is a television program about sex, drugs, and alcohol. The program is based on the principles of the Users-As-Designers concept. For every episode a group of young people was selected and became responsible for the production of that episode. They also performed in that specific episode.

The Added Value of Using Video

As we have seen in *Doing Visual Research with Children and Young People* (2008), Thompson listed four opportunities for using images with children. If we apply these opportunities to our cases, we can make the following analysis.

"Images communicate in different ways than words. They quickly elicit aesthetic and emotional responses as well as intellectual responses" (Thompson, 2008, p. 11).

In our cases we have seen that some of the films were used to stimulate dialogue among different stakeholders or used in educational settings.

The Street is Ours is a low-budget film, which was shot in two weeks. The preproduction, including the initial free dinners, the script writing, and the acting classes took about a full year. The reactions were strongly divided. Some professional youth workers claimed that this film would not stimulate the empowerment of ethnic minorities, because it deepened clichés. In almost every city in the Netherlands, Bosch film organized a meeting between decision makers and street youth.

AAUFF has also integrated this aspect of bonding and binding in the making process. In their method it is important to create a feeling of belonging and make the participants feel connected. Using video images is a way to make this happen and enable people to get to know each other in a very short time period. Every meeting stimulates self-expression and the young people learn to give honest, critical feedback about the products of others.

"Some researchers argue that image-based research will particularly allow those children and young people who have difficulty with words an alternative means of expression" (Thompson, 2008, p. 11).

We cannot identify this aspect clearly in our cases, because we have no information about the young people who participated in the projects. Moreover we do not know if they had difficulty with words before they started participating in the projects.

"Other researchers suggest that through the creation of images young people are more ready to express their beliefs and emotions" (Thompson, 2008, p. 11).

In our cases the technological opportunities were limited. Nevertheless, by analyzing the films we can see that this medium gives young people the chance to raise their voice, to tell their own stories, and show their emotions. This is especially evident in the individual films which are part of *Zeedrift*, where one of the participants shares his deepest thoughts about loneliness and belonging. In *Hey Mum, Tell Me . . . !* the young girls give us insight into their beliefs and emotions. In the moments where they brainstorm about the concept of motherhood, we can see and feel the importance of motherhood.

"... they (children) seem to take pleasure in the process, suggest that they are 'getting something' out of their participation . . ." (Thompson, 2008, p. 11).

The aspect of *pleasure* is dominant. To create a film together with professionals is fun and provides directly noticeable results. In the *Find Out!* project the young people indicated that they learned more about how television is made than about the subject itself, but they were all satisfied with their film and proud of being part of the process.

Applying Thompson's opportunities to our two cases showed us that video adds value to youth interventions. First of all, using video enables young people to get to know each other in a very short period of time and at the same

time increases the feeling of belonging and being connected. Second, video empowers young people to raise their voices, tell their own story and show their emotions. Finally, using video is fun and this has a positive influence on the quality of the participation of the youth.

Process, Product and Levels of Participation

The two organizations of our cases, AAUFF and Bosch film, conduct participatory projects with *different aims*. These aims are related to the process of making a film and the film as the final product.

AAUFF wants young people to become active (media) citizens. Individual empowerment is based on personal expression of their own life and daily experience. Personal development creates self-confidence. In this process, media literacy is an important aspect. The aim of AAUFF's projects is to raise consciousness about mainstream media. The young people experience in practice the differences between authentic stories and manipulated stories in the mass media. Most of the projects aim to create real stories about young people that differ from the one-sided vision of young people in mainstream media. By this way of working they focus on the individual and group level. The style of the films does not conform to mainstream film formats, but makes use of unsteady and sometimes out of focus shots, rustling sound and jumpy editing. As an immediate effect of this rather rough style, the stories come across as true-hearted, honest and raw. It fits with the authenticity that the makers were looking for; as a young viewer said: "this is really for real." This quote illustrates altered perceptions of reality that relate to the use of visual technology and lies at the heart of the discussion on the changed sense of the real which we provided in the first part of this chapter.

Bosch film produces films and TV programs about current issues, preferably about controversial topics or topics that divide. In all their projects, the directors of Bosch film focus on the human point of view and collect the real everyday life stories and experiences before shooting. From a genuine interest they confront the viewers, reflect on contemporary society and make the unheard heard. They use film professionals to guarantee that the end product can be shown to the mainstream public. Bosch film is more product-orientated than AAUFF. Bosch film's main objective is to produce films and videos, but only when the subjects are really involved. Participation is a must to tell the story lived.

The outcomes of the participatory video processes can be situated at *different levels*. On the microlevel they empower young people and make them literate. They give participants self-confidence and self-respect. On the meso level they stimulate dialogue; horizontally (with peers) as well as vertically (with different multileveled stakeholders). They create community awareness

and stimulate processes of bonding and bridging. On the macrolevel the outcome is mainly about representation in broadcast media and giving young people a voice and a face.

Professionals in Education

As we argued above, in contemporary society young people are more familiar with the possibilities of new media than many adults. We also stated that we can look at young people as experts on their own life. The question then arises what these statements mean for the work of professionals in PV processes. The cases in this chapter date back to 2006, but are still illustrative for processes of youth participation. Although the kind of visual technology that young people use has changed throughout the years, the principles of participation and education still have relevance as a point of anchoring for today. Notwithstanding, things have changed rapidly and maybe only a few years ago access to high quality visual technology was only possible for professionals. Interventions by adult professionals were unavoidable for young people who wanted to join PV processes.

Professionals as Facilitators

The adults in the projects are all professionals in filmmaking. In our cases the adult professionals were involved in directing, editing, and producing to guarantee broadcast quality. The increasing possibilities of portable filming and editing were the inspiration for conducting participatory video projects at AAUFF. AAUFF facilitates the use of professional and semi-professional portable equipment. Nowadays high-quality portable equipment is available for almost everyone and this has changed the role of the facilitator.

Filmmaking is a process in which many choices must be made on a technical, ethical, and aesthetical level. The ethical part of the process is an important one, because professional filmmakers are aware of the consequences and the impact that visual technology can have. The professionals who we interviewed all pointed out that it is their responsibility to protect the young people from any possible negative consequences of showing their everyday life experiences and emotions. In one of the *Zeedrift* films, titled *Being Bad is Beautiful* this is most visible when criminal aspects occur in relation to Muslim fundamentalism. Professional integrity is a matter of finding a balance between the realism of the story, the privacy of the participants, and the impact on the viewer. Bosch film's projects are always designed by professionals working in the interests of the young people. In the editing stage, all aspects of the final film have to be in balance, including images, sound, music, titles, etc. They all make (and break) the story. Images are layered and

tell a story in different ways. Bosch film's view is that the accountability lies with the professionals.

Professionals as Participatory Educators

In this chapter we briefly discussed the ideas of two important founding fathers of participatory processes, Freire and Dewey. Dewey sees young people, and Freire the oppressed, as experts in their own lives. Conscientization and literacy are at the core of Freire's ideas. Literacy is a prerequisite for equal development and dialogue. In his method he developed a way of consciousness-raising by using the language and daily experience of his participants. We can presume that in this age of contemporary visual media, visual literacy is a prerequisite. In his method he starts with collecting and selecting words and expressions of the participants. Subsequently, he begins the process of codification, whereby the dialogue leads to consciousness-raising. We also saw this at AAUFF and in a less intensive form at Bosch film. Both organizations gather themes from the daily experience of young people and address them as experts of their own life. AAUFF expresses this as follows: "Social discipline and acquiring an open, yet critical understanding of the media leads to a series of highly individual films that truly represent the world of young people, their environment, and youth culture at large" (www.allaboutusfilmfactory.com).

Dewey argues that education is a continuing reconstruction of experience. The adult educator is the mediator and facilitator of the learning processes. In every meeting, AAUFF stimulates self-expression, where the continuing reconstruction of experience is focused on an individual level. The young people create their own content and form. The preproduction stage of *The Street is Ours* and *Find Out!* can also be seen as a continuing reconstruction of experience. In this case it is situated on the level of youth and street youth as a community. During the shooting period the director remains connected to the everyday life of the young people instead of working with fully scripted dialogues. By doing so, he/she creates room for improvisation. In the follow-up manifestations, the dialogue between the community and the stakeholders can also be seen as the reconstruction of experience.

In our view *dialogue is participation* when this dialogue is authentic and when all the participants, young people and adults, are able to reflect on and discuss their own assumptions. We saw that in the study of youth most of the professional meanings are based on suspicion instead of on trust and expertise. Suspicion undermines open dialogue and makes the reconstruction of experience impossible. In our cases, this is most visible in the production process of *Find Out!*. Three nonprofit health organizations were involved in its production. Bosch film's assignment was that the episodes needed to be

interesting for young viewers by using peers as designers. It also had to be a health education program about sex, drugs, and alcohol. These conflicting aspirations of dealing with top-down information on the one hand and designing from the bottom-up on the other hand resulted in tension. Such was the case, for example, when the young people wanted to devote an episode to synthetic drugs like XTC. This episode was not in accordance with the policy of the organization and they decided not to make this episode. Another episode, "A Match with a Hangover," was pretested for any possible negative effects before it was allowed to be broadcast. When different stakeholders are involved, the adult professionals need to take heed of the danger that participation does not become a matter of tokenism.

Professionals as Mediators

Professionals stimulate, support and guide young people to construct authentic real life stories. The guiding principle of both organizations is a genuine interest in the experience of the young people. AAUFF uses this for creating the final film in a participatory setting. AAUFF works with a maximum of twelve young people in one group which is an important condition for this intensive participatory process. Bosch film concentrates on reaching mainstream media and participation is deployed in a functional way in this process. In *The Street is Ours* they started their research by inviting young people "from the streets of Amsterdam" for free dinners. Finally, they spoke with more than hundred youngsters. In the Users-As-Designers project *Find Out!*, 109 young people participated as designers. Bosch film reaches a great number of young people with its functional use of participation (see also Bouman and Draaisma, 2006).

In both organizations the professional is a mediator who supports the learning processes. These professionals are focused on the living experience of young people. They approach young people with trust and as experts. The adults use their professional skills and experience in the process of co-creation, to learn together and sometimes to protect the young people for negative consequences of the visual impact.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we focused on the impact of visual media technologies on the participation of youth as active citizens in society. In the first part of this chapter we discussed how the contemporary age of visual media leads to convergence between the different media. New media such as video, the Internet, and social media have provided consumers with mobile and accessible media.

As a result of the new media technologies, today's consumers can produce, distribute and consume high-quality media messages, which has increased possibilities for participation and collaboration. While this creates huge opportunities for youth participation as active citizens in society, access and interactive communication are not enough to guarantee active participation. In the case of active participation through the use of new media, we argued that it is important to take into account the desire of youth to reconstruct a lost sense of the real and authenticity.

In the second part of the chapter, we argued that visual communication is an elementary component in youth culture today. Young people are the most intense users of interactive media. As they are thus experts in the new media, different forms of media technology have become integrated into all kinds of daily life activities. Yet, we have also argued that young people may not be as critically aware of certain aspects of media technology as we may hope. After all, media education is still a rather new phenomenon in most schools. It is therefore important to redefine the role of professionals in youth interventions that make use of videos or other media. Here, we were inspired by Dewey's ideas about education as an exchange of experiences and Freire's ideas on the necessity of literacy and consciousness-raising.

In the third part of the chapter, we argued that video (and similarly the social media of today) can be characterized by its mobility and accessibility. The added values of visual communication are increasing the feeling of belonging and being connected, empowerment by giving young people a voice and means to show emotions and expressions, and finally the fun factor. From the two cases that we discussed, AAUFF and Bosch film, we can conclude that the benefits of the use of video in education are threefold. On an individual level, participatory video can empower young people, make them more literate in visual communication, and give them more self-confidence and self-respect. On the level of communities, they can stimulate dialogue, both horizontally with peers and vertically with different multi-levelled stakeholders. Participation through the media thus creates community awareness and stimulates processes of bonding and bridging. Finally, on a macro level the product of participatory video gives young people a voice and a face when it is broadcast.

Returning to the main question of this chapter we conclude that using visual technology in education and especially in youth interventions not only has a positive influence on participation, but it also enables professionals to connect to the current age of visual media. In this new age we need to work with redefined notions of reality and authenticity and this has consequences for the work of the professionals. Consideration of this *role of professionals* in youth interventions has become crucial. Professionals add value as committed facilitators and mediators to stakeholders and decision makers. They

can support, guide, stimulate, and protect young people in the process of co-creation. As professional facilitators they can build trust with youth and work in the interest of the young people. As mediators, they can serve as the bridging component between individuals, communities, and organizations. When adult professionals learn how to connect with this new generation of experts in visual culture and base their interventions on trust and professionalism, the young people will learn in a participatory way.

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