

Henry Jenkins, full professor
Provost, University of Southern California, USA

Nico Carpentier, associate professor
Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium;
Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic

Theorizing participatory intensities: A conversation about participation and politics³

Abstract: This conversation started in Prague, the Czech Republic, during a panel moderated by Irena Reifová at the symposium ‘On Empowered and Impassioned Audiences in the Age of Media Convergence’. The event was organized by the Faculty of Social Sciences at Charles University. The text contains a series of discussions. First, there is a conversation about the nature of the participatory democratic utopia and participatory culture and how groups take (or do not take) advantage of the affordances of new and emerging media. It also emphasizes the political nature and potential of popular culture and touches upon its connection to institutionalized politics. Three other key areas are mentioned: the role of different cultures of leadership, the significance of organizations in structuring participatory processes, and the need to enhance civic learning, providing more support for participatory cultures. This is combined with an interlocking discussion about the definition of participation and how it is tied up with power. It covers the differences between participation and interaction, engagement, interpretation, production, curation, and circulation. Finally, there is an underlying strand of discussion about the role of academia, focusing on the relationship between critical theory and cultural studies, the need to deconstruct our own frameworks and the question of which language to use to communicate academic research to the public.

Key words: *Citizenship, convergence culture, critical theory, cultural studies, democracy, education, fandom, literacy, participation, participatory culture, participatory democratic utopia*

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