The Many Shapes and Colors of 'Respondent-Generated Image Production' (RGIP): A Methodological Account and a Discussion of Imaginative Health-Related Visual Studies

Luc Pauwels[*1]

[1]University of Antwerp (UAntwerpen) – Department of Communication Studies Faculty of Social Sciences St. Jacobstraat 2 M.479 2000 Antwerpen, Belgium

Abstract

Respondent-Generated Image Production (RGIP) is an increasingly popular and effective visual data production method which comes under different forms and in different combinations with other approaches that today are often grouped under the nomer 'visual participatory research' or 'collaborative methods'. However it is important to refrain from the customary celebratory treatment of visual participatory approaches, and adopt instead a critical constructive stance necessary to realize the extensive ethical and epistemological potential of participatory visual research. Presenting such a balanced and critical account of the strengths and weaknesses of RGIP constitutes the first introductory part of my talk.

In the second and main part of my presentation I want to share and discuss inspiring visual work produced by my students on the basis of respondent-generated images, and feed those as yet undisclosed results and experiences back into the conceptualization of the rather confused domain of visual participatory research. These recent student projects all relate to experiences of people who have to cope with various sorts of mental or physical impairment: from persons suffering from anxiety disorder, schizophrenia, anosmia, Crohn's disease, diabetes, spina bifida, acquired brain damage (ABD), to persons with Down syndrome. These RGIP approaches range from fairly dispassionate studies to very intimate autobiographical accounts, whereby the roles of researcher and research subject amalgamate. The visuals produced in these varied set-ups likewise range from very mimetic recordings of objects and situations to very metaphoric, and artistic expressions. The end products therefor range from image rich articles up to visual essays.

[*]Speaker