



Participatory Cultures Lab

Picturing Social Justice



Who are we?

We are a **CFI funded lab** under the direction of **Claudia Mitchell**, providing **space, technology, and support** to students, postdoctoral fellows, researchers, projects and international initiatives incorporating **participatory visual methodologies, art and media-making** as critical forms of **research** and **intervention**.

In the lab, we conduct **research** focusing on how participatory visual methodologies can help to deepen an understanding of such **social issues** as youth sexuality, HIV and AIDS, sexual and gender-based violence, disabilities, and poverty alleviation. While this work engages a variety of groups including **teachers** and **health care workers** as well as young people, a key focus is on the idea of **“girl-led/youth-led activism”** - empowering girls to find their voices and giving them the tools to speak about their own **health and well-being** and propose ideas for change.

Here researchers, artists and collaborators ask such questions as:

- How can participatory visual and arts-based methods help raise the voices of marginalized communities in **policy dialogue** and **policy-making**?
- What kinds of **technical adaptations** need to be made in rural and remote settings, **poorly resourced areas**, and working in **conflict zones**?
- What are effective ways of ensuring **inclusivity** in relation to **youth with disabilities**?
- How can playful and immersive **research** and **creation** experiences contribute to **learning** and **transformation**?
- How can **visual** and other **arts-based practices** can play a role in **social change**?

How does the lab address this issue?

Organized as a **well-equipped** and **inviting** lab space, the PCL supports innovative doctoral and postdoctoral projects and tests out and promotes the use of participatory arts-based and visual techniques, such as **digital storytelling, drawing, photovoice, participatory video** and **cellphilmimg, participatory archiving, participatory arts-based game design**, and the **study of objects**. These tools and methods are also linked to **reflexive approaches** to research including **memory-work**, and **self-study**. These methods are used in the process of **collecting, analyzing, and working with research**, framed within the broad question of **‘what difference does this make?’** We are particularly interested in studying these approaches in relation to **knowledge mobilization, focusing on the exhibitions, screenings, and engagement of audiences**.

What issues the lab address?



Deliverables & Impact

Pioneer innovative approaches to using mobile technologies

Training to doctoral students & postdoctoral fellows

Engaged in capacity building through collaborations with international NGOs

Established and hosted the last 9 years the McGill International Cellphilm Festival

Supported the voices of Indigenous girls, young women, and youth

Recognized both nationally and internationally

Through the many **research, training, capacity building** and **community outreach** activities, the PCL has successfully attracted **national and international funding** (CIHR, SSHRC, IDRC, Dubai Cares, Trudeau Foundation). With this funding, we have been able to pioneer **innovative approaches to using mobile technologies in rural and poorly resourced areas** such as cellphilm, No-Editing- Required (N-E-R) approaches to film-making, and designing composite videos as 'speaking back' tools. We have been able to provide **HQ training** to doctoral students and postdoctoral fellows on the various **visual methods**.

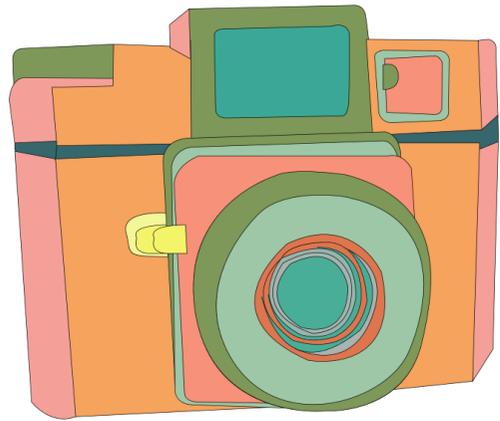
Through our various networks, we have offered **training institutes on participatory visual methods** and **engaged in capacity building** in participatory visual methods through collaborations with international NGOs (e.g. Plan, Oxfam, Global Affairs Canada, CODE). Through its collaboration with the **McGill Art Hive Initiative**, the **P. Lantz Artist-in Residence program** for the last 6 years, and through its close links to the **Institute for Human Development and Well-being**, We have contributed to the expansion of the use of arts-based tools and methods in the faculty. Since the last 9 years, the PCL established and hosted the **McGill International Cellphilm Festival** annually.

This work of the PCL has **supported the voices of Indigenous girls, young women, and youth** in conflict zones and in policy dialogue in the global South (Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, South Africa, and Vietnam). A good example of this is the development and local adoption of a new protocol on Forced and Early Marriage in rural South Africa as a result of the **digital stories** produced by girls and young women in the community.

Our work has been **recognized both nationally and internationally**, with the founder being made a member of the **Royal Society of Canada (2015)**, the recipient of the **SSHRC Gold Medal for Impact (2016)**, recipient of the **Leon-Gerin Laureate in the Social Sciences (2019)**, the recipient of an **Honorary Doctorate from the University of Mid-Sweden (2016)**, and recently honoured as a **Canadian Woman of Impact (2021)**.

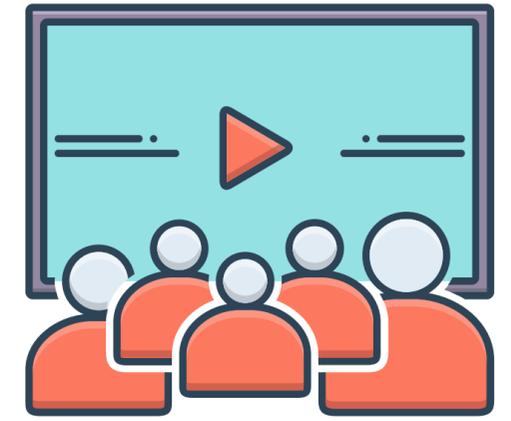
"I want Canadians to understand that research like mine, and that of my team, puts ordinary people at the centre in defining what needs to be changed. This kind of work, however, also requires community leaders and policy-makers to do a great deal of listening and acting."

- Claudia Mitchell



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TRAINING IN PARTICIPATORY VISUAL METHODS

- PhD Students
- Postdoctoral Fellows
- Researchers in Medicine, Anthropology & Environmental Studies
- Courses on Visual Methods

STUDYING & PROMOTING ART FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

- P. Lantz Artist in Residence
- Making Connections Workshop Series
- Art Connecting Initiative
- Support the IHDW

CAPACITY SUPPORT: RESEARCH-TO-ACTION

- Pioneering new tools
- Adapting methods to poorly resourced areas
- Decolonizing through design
- PVM training: International NGOs
- Toolkits, webinars and videos

PRIMARY RESEARCH PROJECTS

Networks for Change and Well-being: Girl-led 'From the Ground Up' Policy Making to Address Sexual Violence in Canada and South Africa

SSHRC & IDRC

More Than Words: Studying the Impact of Arts Based Survivor Engagement on Families and Communities

Women & Gender Equality

Canadian Young People in the Context of COVID -19

Ministère de la Santé et des Services Sociaux (MSSS)

Participatory Research in Education and Agency in Mali (PREAM)

Dubai Cares

RELATED RESEARCH PROJECTS

- Transforming Girls' Education Project, Sierra Leone
- Constructing Feminist Identities Through Participatory Visual Methodologies
- Nurturing Warriors: Understanding Mental Wellness and Health Risk Behaviours among Young Indigenous Men
- Portrait X: Preventing Gender-Based Violence: the Health Perspective Teen/Youth Dating Violence Prevention
- Storying Transnational Knowledges: Connection through Narrative
- Learning with and from the global South: Opportunities for engaging girls and young women with disabilities across Southern spaces

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

- Girlhood Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal
- Our Rural Selves: Memory, Place and the Visual in Canadian Rural Childhoods
- Disrupting Shameful Legacies: Girls and Young Women Speak Back through The Arts to Address Sexual Violence
- Visual Encounters in The Study of Rural Childhoods.
- Participatory Visual Methodologies in Global Public Health
- Participatory Visual Methodologies: Social Change, Community and Policy
- Handbook on Participatory Video
- Was it Something I Wore? Dress, Materiality, Identity
- Picturing Research: Drawings as Visual Methodology
- Doing Visual Research

INTERNATIONAL CELLPHILM FESTIVAL

- Workshops
- Social Media Campaigns
- Global Participation
- Symposia

