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Listening, Narrating, and Attending to Things. Toward Proactive Relational–Mediational Epistemic Space for Education (after Carla Rinaldi)

Abstract

This article emerges from a lived engagement with education and addresses a tension arising from concern with “what comes out” of teaching and research, where experience is reduced to representation in order to be made presentable. In this reduction, the very life of education, as something in the making, is set aside, and experience becomes fragmented into separate domains of feeling (across sensory registers), narration, and materiality. In response, this text foregrounds forms of attention that remain responsive to lived situations, through which experience persists, is revisited, and is reconfigured over time. Documentation is approached as an infrastructure that keeps relations open and resists the premature closure of meaning. From the position of the teacher–researcher, I attend to slowness, ambiguity, repetition, and the seemingly ordinary in the classroom. The teacher’s presence in the roles of scaffolder and mentor is reconfigured as an active participator within a network of relations, opening possibilities for arts-based and problem-based pedagogies.

Keywords: pedagogy of listening, autoethnography, symmetrical archaeology, documentation, arts-based education.

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Słuchanie, narratywizowanie i uważność wobec rzeczy. Ku proaktywnej relacyjno-mediacyjnej przestrzeni epistemicznej edukacji (za Carlą Rinaldi)

Abstrakt

Artykuł wyrasta z osobistego zaangażowania w edukację i podejmuje kwestię napięcia wynikającego z koncentracji na „efektach” nauczania i badań, w których doświadczenie zostaje zredukowane do reprezentacji, aby mogło zostać przedstawione. W wyniku tej redukcji samo życie edukacji – rozumianej jako proces nieustannego stawiania się – zostaje odsunięte na dalszy plan, a doświadczenie ulega fragmentaryzacji na odrębne domeny odczuwania (obejmujące różne rejestry zmysłowe), narracji i materialności. W odpowiedzi na ten problem tekst eksponuje takie formy uwagi, które pozostają wrażliwe na sytuacje przeżywane, dzięki czemu doświadczenie może trwać, być ponownie podejmowane i z czasem ulegać rekonfiguracji. Dokumentacja jest ujmowana jako infrastruktura podtrzymująca otwartość relacji i przeciwstawiająca się przedwczesnemu domknięciu znaczeń. Z perspektywy nauczyciela-badacza autor zwraca uwagę na powolność, niejednoznaczność, powtarzalność oraz to, co w klasie wydaje się zwyczajne i codzienne. Obecność nauczyciela w rolach twórcy rusztowania (*scaffolding*) i mentora zostaje na nowo zdefiniowana jako aktywne uczestnictwo w sieci relacji, otwierające możliwości dla pedagogik opartych na sztuce oraz na problemowym uczeniu się.

Słowa kluczowe: pedagogika słuchania, autoetnografia, archeologia symetryczna, dokumentacja, edukacja oparta na sztuce.

از نظر گه گفتشان شد مختلف

آن یکی دالش لقب داد این الف¹

(Rumi 1926)

Introduction: Beyond Representation

In the tale of *The Elephant in the Dark*, a story is told that is often read as a parable of the relativity of perception: each person touches one part of the elephant and takes that partial contact for the whole (Rumi 1926, Book III). Yet what this parable brings forward for this article is not only the difference between perceptions, but the

¹ I present this line in Persian as it belongs to my own linguistic horizon. A tentative rendering would be: Because of differences in discourse, one named it ‘dāl,’ another called it ‘alif.’ The verse points to how meaning shifts with the position of the speaker. Any translation here can only approximate this movement, and in doing so, it inevitably loses part of the texture carried by the original. The discussion is based on the Persian original; the standard English edition is included in the bibliography for reference (Rumi 1926).

relation between question and perception. Each person sees what they are already seeking. What is touched in the dark is not separate from the question that guides the hand. Education follows a similar logic. What we see in education depends, before anything else, on the question through which we approach it. If our question concerns achievement, education appears in the language of outcomes. If our concern is intervention in order to address a pre-defined gap, education is formulated as a tool. If our question concerns the transmission of experience, education is understood through content. The question organises the field of perception, and from it emerge language, direction, and even what eventually becomes "evaluable."

This article arose from the difficulty of a teacher seeking a way to contemplate and revise their own work in the classroom. As a teacher who has lived for years with photography, narration, and the observation of situations in which experience is transmitted, I have tried to understand how one might learn something from the experiences of others about the process of education itself: a way of archaeology of the paths that have been taken. To do so, I turned to dozens of projects that in some way belonged to the same world as my own work: projects based on photography, narration, art, participation, and work with different groups, whether in classrooms or in social fields. Yet the more I read, the more I encountered texts in which it was possible to understand what had been produced, but difficult to understand what had happened along the path of participation. The photographs were present, the narratives were present, and at times even a voice speaking of participation could be heard. Yet the classroom itself, as a living event with its temporality, mechanisms, and tensions, remained absent from the text.

Gradually, it became clear to me that this absence was related to the horizon within which many of these projects are defined. A significant part of the experiences that use images, narration, or art with children, young people, or groups in fragile situations are formulated within the horizon of intervention: intervention for change, development, empowerment, or for filling a gap that has already been identified. Within such a horizon, attention is directed from the beginning toward impact and change. What comes to the centre is whether a rupture has been repaired, whether a voice has been heard, and whether a change has taken place. As a result, what is vital for a teacher who wishes to reread the educational mechanism of an experience is pushed to the margins: how participation remained alive over time, how attention shifted, how the teacher sustained the situation, and how materials, images, pauses, and resistances acted within the process.

But the issue has a deeper layer. What disappears in many experiences of change through art is not only the educational process, but also "art itself as a language." Anyone can be asked to take a photograph. Hundreds of images can be produced in a few seconds. But producing images is not the same as entering the language of photography. In the same way, one can ask someone to write, but writing is not the same as dwelling in the language of writing. Can one teach someone to write poetry without placing them in a sustained proximity of good poetry? Can one speak of photography as a way of encountering the world without allowing time to remain with

looking, to return to the image, and to discover slowly the relation between frame and experience? In many art-based projects, art enters the field as an action: a tool for expression, participation, or intervention. Yet what is rarely made into the object of work is art as a language, a language whose understanding, practice, and inhabitation require time.

From here, the difference of the classroom becomes important for me. The classroom is not simply an institutional setting for carrying out activities. At least within the horizon defended in this article, the classroom is a place for remaining in proximity of a language; for return, practice, error, silence, and the slowness without which neither looking, nor writing, nor a conversation that moves beyond immediate responses can take shape. My concern was not only why the “process” remains unseen in many project reports. The question was why the path itself, the staying with experience, and the work of the classroom lose their priority. Why can one understand that a project was “successful,” that participants were “empowered” and that narratives were produced, while still not understanding how the teacher or facilitator sustained the possibility of this conversation over time? How did a way of looking take shape? How did someone move away from the immediate consumption of images? How was the classroom prevented from falling apart into scattered activities? And how did something like a shared language emerge within experience?

For a teacher who wants to return to their own classroom, reread it, and if necessary rebuild it, these are precisely the questions that matter. I was looking for a way to see what, within my own work, might open a small window onto a new landscape. From here, the classroom becomes for me not only an institution but an epistemological position. The importance of the classroom lies in the fact that it makes possible something that is often lost in haste: sustained conversation. The classroom is a place where one can return to an image, reread a narrative, not pass over silence, pause over an error, and allow something that has not yet been named to show itself gradually. When education is understood as a space for dwelling in a language, lingering with an experience, and forming new relations with the world, the process is no longer the margin of achievement. It becomes the very object of the work.

At this point, the question of the article takes shape: what must be preserved so that educational experience, when it is no longer lived and is narrated in the course of transmission, remains educational? If we want to see the educational process itself, and not only its achievements, final narratives, or social effects, what must become the object of attention? How can one approach educational experience without allowing it, at the very moment of narration, to decline into abstraction, summary, and conclusion? How can one learn from the educational experiences of others if what reaches us are only the final remains of the work and not the work itself? And if the issue is not the measurement of achievement, the transmission of content, or intervention to repair a gap, but the rereading and revision of process, what kind of question, what kind of language, and what kind of documentary form become necessary?

In condensed form, the path of the article can be formulated as follows: (1) question, (2) organisation of perception, (3) language and documentary form,

(4) the possibility or impossibility of seeing the process, (5) returning to the classroom as an epistemological position, (6) dwelling in the language of art rather than using art as action, (7) the situated orchestration of participatory resources, (8) resisting abstraction as the condition for preserving educational experience.

The response pursued in this article is the construction of an educational orientation for seeing, recording, and contemplating what is easily erased in common accounts: the situated orchestration of participatory resources in the classroom. The concern of the article is the transmission of experience in its concrete and layered form. For this reason, the point of departure of the text is resistance to abstraction. Before experience settles into stabilised representations², the language of results, or summarised narratives, it must be followed as a field of attention; a field in which space, time, materials, seeing, pauses, narrating, and relations have not yet been separated from one another. What follows is an attempt to build a situation that can preserve this condition as far as possible and allow the educational process to unfold through nearness, hesitation, and mutual learning. The following pages conceptualize this educational condition as what I provisionally call a 'Proactive Relational-Mediational Epistemic Space'. For brevity, I occasionally refer to this as the proactive architecture.

Resisting Abstraction: Experience as a Site of Attention

The separation of educational experience from its representations resonates with the intellectual work of Henri Lefebvre, whose critique of the dominance of abstraction in everyday life reverberates within the educational practices. Lefebvre explains that abstraction emerges from the ways everyday actions are handled and gradually distances itself from lived experience:

The relation of every humble, everyday gesture to the social complex, like the relation of each individual to the whole, cannot be compared to that of the part to the sum total or of the element to a 'synthesis', using the term in its usual vague sense. Mathematical integration would be a better way of explaining the transfer from one scale of greatness to another, implying as it does a qualitative leap without the sense that the 'differential' element (the gesture, the individual) and the totality are radically heterogeneous (Lefebvre 1991[1947]: 164).

Social life has its twists and turns and the language used to represent it, must have the flexibility to express them. Culture and life in the modern world tend to improvise our being by cursory haste without preparation and contemplation. These kinds of separation and reification bring to mind the idea that everyday life has be-

² In the social sciences, "representation" has been used as a means of describing reality and transforming experience into a form that can be expressed and communicated. However, since the late twentieth century, the "crisis of representation" has rendered the concept problematic. Representation is always bound up with selection, omission, and framing, and it takes shape in relation to the researcher's positionality. In this text, representation is understood as the stabilization of experience within linguistic forms. "Documentation", by contrast, is approached as an effort to sustain experience in the tension between what appears and what escapes articulation.

come both a dramatic and passive arena. The confusion, complexity and alienation of everyday life result in a sense of self-evidence and familiarity. This unattended predicament in turn produces a false sense, which is the most fundamental obstacle to cognition. It is here that the description of everyday life through literature and art mediates the understanding of the social world and represents the attitude that governs historical periods and the evolution of everyday life³.

Sensitivity to the fragility involved in transmitting experience in the process of becoming is something Lefebvre inherits from Walter Benjamin. Writing between two world war, Benjamin observed a paradoxical condition: people were surrounded by an unprecedented abundance of immediate experiences, yet found it increasingly difficult to produce meaning from them within the overwhelming speed of their encounter. Experience multiplied, but did not deepen. For Benjamin, the problem was the loss of the capacity to reproduce and transmit meaning. Actors within the unfolding field of life were unable to transform fleeting experiences into narratives that could be shared. The fragile human body and its emotions became saturated by the immediacy of accumulated experiences, while the capacity to transform them into meaning weakened (see: Highmore 2002: 66).

In his analysis of late modernity, Byung-Chul Han returns to Benjamin's diagnosis with a sense of urgency. According to Han, the crisis identified by Benjamin has intensified under conditions of informational accumulation. The endless "sense of beginning"⁴ in modernity, which Han invokes through Brecht, repeatedly clears the table of diverse presences and generates from within it a continuous present without separation, longing, or distance. Information fragments time into momentary connections and deprives experience of its sense of continuity and its concrete dimensions. Without a sense of time, narration collapses into abstraction. Han argues that we may be largely informed and filled with information while simultaneously remaining disoriented or uncertain (Han 2024: 9, 21).

³ The priority and distinctiveness of everyday life within problem-based learning is taken here as a given condition of this text and will not be elaborated further. See forthcoming work: *Problematizing Everyday Life and the Social Life of Things to Pave the Way for Problem-Based Learning and Pedagogy of Integration through Arts-Based Education* (manuscript in preparation). The emphasis on artistic language lies in its relative capacity to remain in contact with the tensions, ambiguities, and unfinished character of lived experience; dimensions that the discursive and specialized language of the social sciences often tends to abstract from. As Herbert Marcuse suggests, art preserves the memory of unfulfilled possibilities and, in doing so, establishes a critical relation to existing conditions, enabling a contemplation of everyday life beyond its apparent self-evidence (Marcuse 1978: 69).

⁴ Sense of beginning in modernity refers to a historical-perceptual logic: a social formation that stabilizes newness as a dominant value and is aligned with a continuous rupture from the past. Each present appears as a start without a critical relation to what preceded it, and leading to a cycle of endless beginnings. In the classroom, this logic takes the form of an emphasis on novelty of actions, while the dynamics of power and the structures of knowledge transmission remain largely unchanged. What is called "new" tends to operate within already stabilized frameworks. Knowledge continues to move from authority to student, and novelty often remains at the level of vocabulary. A "creative" project, for instance, is still evaluated through a pre-established rubric. The practical enactment of terms such as critical thinking, collaboration, and participation remains unresolved and opaque. Activities presented as exploratory are nevertheless bound by fixed and limited time. Students carry out projects, while the definition and direction of the process are assumed to lie elsewhere. Fatigue, hesitation, pauses, or confusion are interpreted as lack. Within a linear temporal regime, learning is reduced to a gradual accumulation.

Benjamin, Lefebvre, and Han point to a continuous and tangible condition. When lived experience is compressed, accelerated, or excessively translated, it is pushed back into forms of authoritarian abstraction⁵ in the process of recalling and receiving meaning through the embodied and identity-forming pathways of everyday life. Instead of meaning emerging from the situation, it is applied from above through judgments, clichés, or beliefs, suppressing the possibility that experience might resist theory. Marshall Berman, reflecting on the fate of modernity, reminds us that in spite of the proliferation of art and thought in the twentieth century, the connection between modern culture and lived life has weakened; it is as if we have “lost the art of putting ourselves in the picture.” Modern works and ideas continue to be produced, yet the experience that could set them in motion within everyday life gradually erodes. Berman explains this rupture through a comparison between nineteenth – and twentieth-century intellectual sensibilities. Nineteenth-century thinkers experienced modernity as a living field of tensions and contradictions and were simultaneously fascinated by and critical of it; this struggle itself became the source of their creative force. By contrast, many twentieth-century accounts incline toward rigid polarities. Modernity is either embraced with naive enthusiasm or rejected with cold distance, as though it were a closed and unchangeable whole (Berman 1988: 24). With the reduction of the open horizons to closed narratives, lived experience is likewise pushed into pre-formed abstractions. It is along this very trajectory that the conditions which could allow experience to remain in tension with concepts long enough to become meaning, begin to weaken.

This condition does not remain outside the field of education. Whenever experience is rapidly reduced to results, competencies, and achievements, it returns to the classroom filled with the abstractions of urgent and affirmative endings, along with the disturbances, anxieties, and disorientations produced by the loss of direction. The hope here is that classrooms remain among the few spaces in which attention, adjacent to time and meaning, can still be practiced and encouraged not as something assumed or taken for granted, but as a form of awareness that remains in contact with the situation. Education consists of staying with processes that reveal themselves slowly, unevenly, and in layered ways.

⁵ Authoritarian abstraction in the classroom appears when educational experience, before being followed in its complexity, instability, ambiguity, and unfinishedness, is reduced to pre-established frameworks of learning and assessment. For the teacher, attention shifts from “what is happening” to “what should be achieved,” turning accompaniment into management. For students, it becomes a practice of aligning with representation: “how to answer,” “how to align themselves with expectations,” and “how to present the not-yet-formed as complete.” Experience is divided into measurable units, and its lived continuity is lost. While learners, at the level of lived experience, draw energy from staying with the process, the educational structure directs them toward forms of “becoming” whose patterns have already been stabilized and reproduced within existing dynamics of power. This condition is not limited to childhood; it extends across the entire continuum of education. What remains is a presentable image of learning, not learning as process. This produces a form of educational alienation and shifts speaking from within relations to representations imposed from the outside. Embodied, material, and affective dimensions of experience are often the first to be excluded. Time is compressed into outcomes, leaving little room for delay, return, or repetition. Documentation, in this context, risks becoming a tool for confirming outcomes. What is at issue is not only how learning is represented, but whether it is allowed to remain alive as experience.

Entering the Field of Practice

1st Orientation: Listening–Documentation

Listening is a form of attention through which educational experience becomes perceptible as it takes shape. Within the educational orientation developed by Carla Rinaldi, listening is understood as an active verb. It involves interpretation, the attribution of meaning, and the recognition of value in what others present, even when no clear answer is available. As she writes, listening “does not produce answers but formulates questions,” and arises from doubt and uncertainty that stem from awareness of the partial and revisable nature of knowledge (Rinaldi 2021: 39).

Listening does not remain confined to the algorithm of spoken language. Learning emerges not only through differences among individuals, but also among languages—spoken, visual, tactile, musical, gestural—and through movement between them. In these passages, languages are “enriched, multiplied, refined and generated, but also collide, ‘contaminate’ and hybridise each other and are renewed.” (Rinaldi 2021: 41). Listening therefore operates across the full spectrum of sensory registers.

Documentation plays a central role in this relational configuration. Documentation is “interpreted and used for its value as a tool for recalling; that is, as a possibility for reflection” and interpretation (Rinaldi 2021: 36). Through documentation, learning processes become visible and transmissible while they are still unfolding. Visibility, readability, and shareability become conditions for communicative and educational effectiveness, enabling the reconsideration of mental, intersubjective, and relational processes (Rinaldi 2021: 42). Documentation connects times and places that are not adjacent and allows past moments of inquiry to remain active within the present.

This understanding of listening–documentation transforms the role of the teacher. Competence is defined less by possessing knowledge and more by perceptual sensitivity and interpretive awareness. As Rinaldi notes, teaching “is not a transferable ‘science,’ but rather an understanding, a sensitivity to knowledge.” Teachers participate in the very processes they make possible, observe, and document through their presence and perseverance, learning alongside the students. Scaffolding is practiced in relation to context, shared expectations, and attentiveness to what is taking place. Trial and error and improvisation move beyond the fear of failing scientific precision and instead become dynamic gestures of responsibility toward the situated unfolding of events (Rinaldi 2021: 45).

2nd Orientation: Autoethnography – Articulating Position in Practice

Autoethnography begins with a deceptively simple question: who carries experience? Here, experience is not treated as an object that can be observed from a distance, separated, stabilized, and translated. The object of experience is carried

by an embodied and situated subject who is already entangled in relations, routines, interruptions, and expectations. Language is expected, as precisely as possible, to reconfigure what has been lived so that it becomes transmissible.

Narration is the medium through which experience is expected to become transmissible without being stripped of its inherent complexity. I narrate neither to decorate theory nor to oppose it. I narrate because meaning, within educational life, takes shape through sequences, hesitations, repetitions, and sudden shifts that cannot all be grasped at once. It remains entangled with the limits of words and the breadth of minds. Life and narration are inseparable here. Experience anticipates telling, and telling reshapes experience. "Narrative is both about living and part of it" (Bochner, Ellis 2000: 746). What is at stake are the points at which experience is articulated: how narration directs attention, sustains responsibility, and either opens possibilities for parallel actions or forecloses their presence.

The position of the "I" enters this work through practice rather than declaration. I write as an educator who inhabits classrooms as fields of presence where relations multiply. Teaching, as I experience it, is reciprocal and unfinished. It reveals itself as much through responses, misunderstandings, uncertainties, and shifts in my own attention as through intentions and planned trajectories. For this reason, I resist turning students into objects of research. Whenever I attempt to evaluate the presence of others as data, I encounter a form of ethical and perceptual distraction. Students attend to themselves and to one another; my task is to articulate the path I travel in relation to them. Autoethnography offers a way to do this without claiming authority over the experiences of others, while still keeping the movement of the "I" within the educational situation tangible and accountable (Adams, Holman Jones, Ellis 2015: 25).

Listening as Autoethnographic Practice in the Classroom: A Site of Convergence

From where I stand, listening and autoethnography within educational practice do not emerge from separate genealogies. Both respond to conditions in which the process of learning has become increasingly abstract. In tracing a map of kinship markers, four recurring orientations can be identified where conceptual proximities that have long existed are revealed. By revisiting these homogeneous tendencies, I hope to scaffold new possibilities for educational action through four related methodological orientations, followed by a fifth reflection on the productive tension that emerges between them.

Relational Construction of Meaning

In Rinaldi's account, learning is a process in the making. It is "the emergence of that which was not there before," a search within social life (Rinaldi 2021: 104). The child

is understood as “a context for himself or herself and for the others,” and learning becomes the construction of interactions along the subject-objects of learning; objects that include not only knowledge but also social, emotional, aesthetic, and ethical dimensions (Rinaldi 2021: 43).

The turning point in this perspective (and the central concern of my article) is what Rinaldi calls a “relational place” (Rinaldi 2021: 43). Knowledge is produced through mutual curiosity between subject and object, allowing those who participate in the educational process to give new identities to what they encounter. Meaning is produced within interaction and remains inseparable from the relations that sustain it.

This continuum resonates with the epistemology of autoethnography within the classroom. Autoethnography takes shape through attentiveness to the other, the social, and the collective good, as Carolyn Ellis emphasizes (see: Kafar 2014: 131); in doing so, it becomes tied to the ethical domain of education, where knowing evolves through contact with the surrounding world and remains accountable to others.

Reflexivity and Interpretive Responsibility

Listening suspends premature certainty. It arises from doubt: an awareness of limits. The actor who listens enters into relation, adjusts position, attends carefully, and participates in the production of meaning.

Documentation is where this reflexivity takes form. Evaluation emerges from documentation as values become explicit, visible, and shareable. The process Rinaldi calls “progettazione” unfolds as a flexible orientation nourished by what emerges in practice. The teacher’s competence is defined “more in terms of understanding than of pure knowledge,” sustained through continual examination of situations and evidence and through shared reflection (Rinaldi 2021: 44–45). In this configuration, the teacher participates within the process and assumes responsibility for interpretation and scaffolding. As a subject of autoethnography, the teacher becomes simultaneously the subject and object of their own action. Remaining within the educational process, articulating their position and acknowledging their interventions, the teacher takes responsibility for how meaning emerges through participation, uncertainty, and situated action.

Motivational Language, Poetics, and Embodiment

Drawing on Loris Malaguzzi, Rinaldi portrays the teacher simultaneously as director, set designer, curtain, electrician, and spectator; figures that foreground performance, attention, and embodiment (Rinaldi 2021: 45). Fragility, vulnerability, and uncertainty are accepted as integral aspects of educational life. Documentation, understood as

an act of responsibility and expression of the teacher's situated presence, is at least once described as "an act of love" (Rinaldi 2013).

Creativity is something that may surface through weakness, rupture, and reconfiguration. Language does not remain suspended above experience but stays in contact with it. The form of expression itself participates in meaning-making. Interestingly, as prominent autoethnographers observe, "it is difficult, if not impossible to separate doing autoethnography from writing autoethnography." (Adams, Holman Jones, Ellis 2015: 67).

Autoethnography takes seriously the aesthetic dimension of knowledge production (Adams, Holman Jones, Ellis 2015: 23) and makes room for both the ordinary and the exceptional. Teaching unfolds between repetition and interruption, between routine and sudden insight, between what frequently appears and what cannot be anticipated. Many educational moments are neither dramatic nor easily narratable, yet they carry decisive weight. Others arrive as "epiphanies"—moments of rupture, confusion, or clarity that reshape understanding and call existing assumptions into question (Adams, Holman Jones, Ellis 2015: 26–27). Autoethnography allows such moments to be expressed without forcing them to conform to stabilized explanatory frameworks.

First-Person Position as a Quality of Inquiry

Through documentation, interpretation becomes material. Notes, photographs, recordings, and other traces form fragments of memory that appear objective while remaining infused with the subjectivity of the documenter. These fragments are offered to others for revisiting and participating in the collective production of knowledge. Documentation functions as a narrative form that seeks communicative clarity without erasing emergent elements or attempting to invent meaning. Nor is it detached from the life history of the documenter. The bias present within it is recognized as an element of quality (Rinaldi 2021: 43–44).

Subjectivity here is intentional. It is distinguished from unexamined partiality and integrated as a generative force within the process. For participants in educational processes, documentation becomes an interface through which they encounter themselves and their actions as narrative, reflect on meanings emerging from their work, and situate themselves in relation to others. Participation⁶ in this educational orientation goes beyond invitations to speak, filling out forms, or following

⁶ In this text, I understand participation as grounded in the situated position of the acting subject; specifically, the educator–researcher engaged in the mediation of knowledge. While shaped and constrained by field conditions, participation is not given in advance; participation cannot be delegated or performed on behalf of the subject; participation entails exposure and risk and its boundaries are defined through the subject's accountability, sustained by persistence and perseverance in being-with others and by recognizing oneself in the mirror of relational proximity. Participation activates the position of the educator as well; constituted through reciprocal transformation; sustained through forms of attention; and unfolds over time and requires duration.

predefined steps; it emerges from relations that are actively sustained when uncertainty is endured. Participation means being affected by others and allowing oneself to be transformed through interaction.

In this sense, listening is a commitment to remain open to the differences that take shape within a shared situation. Negotiation becomes a way of dwelling with what may be transformed in the moment. Participation therefore appears as a relational process sustained through trust, vulnerability, and mutual adaptation (Rinaldi 2021: 103). As autoethnography suggests, “proximity, not objectivity, becomes an epistemological point of departure and return.” (Adams, Holman Jones, Ellis 2015: 23). Autoethnography accepts proximity as an epistemic condition and understands vulnerability and participatory dimensions within situated conditions as a form of methodological rigor and an opportunity for analytical coherence and discipline.

A Productive Tension to Activate the Teacher and Foster Reciprocal Pedagogy

The four affinities traced above do not dissolve the differences between listening and autoethnography. On the contrary, they make it possible to approach those differences more precisely. What emerges at this point is a productive tension generated by the encounter of two distinct methodological sensibilities. The pedagogy of listening foregrounds mimetic empathy and relational receptivity, while autoethnography brings subjective / reflexive empathy together with positioning participation into the field. Reciprocal pedagogy becomes possible in and through the tension between these orientations.

If listening is placed in proximity to the phenomenological notion of *epoché*, both involve a temporary suspension: a suspension of presuppositions and also of the rush toward meaning-making. This movement shifts attention away from causal explanation and toward the way experience appears, making it possible to perceive what is emerging before it is conceptually stabilized (Konecki 2019: 16). By limiting pre-conceptualization, this suspension is coupled with openness to meaning, acceptance of multiple perspectives, and readiness to encounter the unexpected, thereby enabling serendipity in fieldwork (Konecki 2019: 21–23). Seen in this way, listening can be understood as a pedagogical inflection of *epoché*⁷, one that makes possible a temporary suspension of certainty so that experience may be perceived in unfolding state.

⁷ In the phenomenological tradition, *epoché* refers to the suspension of presuppositions and the bracketing of judgments, allowing one to move beyond ready-made frameworks and attend to how things appear. It is typically understood as an individual act. Here, “inflection” signals a creative turn of this concept within a different context. When this idea is brought into the field of education, it becomes a collective and situated practice that unfolds within the relations of the classroom. Through this shift, the aim of attaining knowledge is reoriented toward enabling the conditions of learning. The *a priori* force of concepts along with the rush toward meaning is held in suspension, so that experience can remain in contact with concepts long enough for meaning to take shape gradually. The teacher, in this sense, is responsible for the duration of this pause; the effective sustainment of this suspension becomes a key dimension of pedagogical competence in the classroom.

This proximity brings into view a subtle distinction between listening and autoethnography. In the pedagogy of listening, the researcher's judgments and presuppositions are bracketed. The subject remains present, yet withdraws from imposing meaning so that experience may appear in its instability and openness. Autoethnography, by contrast, brings this very position to the surface and makes it the object of inquiry. The issue is no longer only to see experience, but to see how meaning takes shape from within the situated position of the subject. When that subject is the teacher, their role in directing attention, interpretation, and intervention becomes explicit. In this sense, listening, across sensory registers, makes the emergence of experience possible through suspension, whereas autoethnography introduces accountability and responsibility into the field through the articulation of position.

This difference does not remain only at the level of meaning-making. In the pedagogy of listening, the center of gravity lies in a sense of relational attunement: openness to the other, emotional responsiveness, affective bonds, recognition of the other's perspective, and exposure to the influence of the other. Rinaldi understands listening as an act saturated with emotion, one generated by emotion, one that stimulates emotion, and one that places the subject under the influence of the emotions of others. She links listening to "welcoming and being open to differences" and "recognizing the value of the other's point of view and interpretation" (Rinaldi 2021: 38–39). Documentation, too, is described as a dialectical, poetic process grounded in affective bonds, a process that shapes knowledge at the level of relation (Rinaldi 2021: 43). From this perspective, listening places the subject, before anything else, within a field of relation, affect, and responsiveness to the other.

In autoethnography, this relation is articulated through a different route. Experience enters language through the "I"; the subject's position is made visible, and the subject itself becomes the object of inquiry. Vulnerability, reflexivity, care, empathy and accountability are produced through autoethnographical reflection. The difference lies in the route. In the pedagogy of listening, relation is opened more through receptivity, affectability, and remaining within an affective bond. In autoethnography, that same relation is brought into language through narration, through making the subject's position visible, and through rendering interpretation answerable. For this reason, one might say that the pedagogy of listening intensifies relational receptivity, whereas autoethnography intensifies subjective articulation.

This distinction becomes even clearer in Rinaldi's reading of mimesis. Rinaldi does not understand mimesis as imitation in the simple sense, but as a process of "making oneself similar" to the other; a movement in which one does not merely copy the other but is transformed in relation to them. Imitation, in this sense, is an entry into a relation that changes both child and adult. It is precisely here that Rinaldi speaks of the "force of love," of the desire to "step into the shoes of the other," and of empathy (Rinaldi 2021: 173). Empathy here is not merely the achievement of reflective understanding, but the outcome of a mimetic and relational engagement with the other; one that begins with gestures, tones, movements, and bodily presence. Autoethnography, by contrast, tends to render this very proximity to the other intelligi-

ble and open to inquiry through narration, through the articulation of position, and through the subject's conscious work upon lived experience.

These are two different routes for producing relational knowledge in the classroom. One proceeds through being affected by the other, affective bonds, bodily attunement, and openness to difference. The other proceeds through narrating one's own position, exposing vulnerability, and rendering the act of interpretation answerable. Listening prevents inquiry from collapsing into the self of the narrator; autoethnography, in turn, prevents relation from remaining at the level of an unnamed affective openness that evades interpretive responsibility. This tension shows that understanding educational experience requires both a capacity to be affected by the other and a capacity to articulate one's own position in relation to them while taking responsibility for holding and sustaining participation from within. Here, the teacher-researcher enters as an active element within a mutual field of learning, a field in which the intensification of the teacher's role simultaneously enables the agency of all participants. From my position, and in close alignment with Carla Rinaldi's understanding, teaching is fundamentally a "reciprocal" act. Empowerment therefore takes shape as a shared co-constituted process⁸.

At this point, the conjunction of listening and autoethnography acquires a further pedagogical significance in light of Gert Biesta's insistence that "the subject-ness of the student is the real 'basic' of education" (Biesta 2022: 8). If education unfolds across the interwoven domains of qualification, socialisation, and subjectification, and if subjectification concerns the emergence of the student as a subject capable of "autonomy, independence, responsibility, criticality and the capacity for judgement" (Biesta 2015: 77, 85), then autoethnography matters here not only because it renders the teacher's own participation and judgement visible, but because it brings the teacher into the pedagogical relation as a subject as well. In this way, the conjunction with listening becomes more than a methodological enrichment. Listening sustains openness and responsiveness to the other, while autoethnography makes the teacher's own subject-position available within that relation in a reflective and answerable form. What emerges between them is a reciprocal pedagogical field in which the teacher's subject-position and the student's subject-ness are held in relation to one another, and in which the work of education remains oriented not only toward learning and social incorporation but toward the coming-into-presence of subjects.

⁸ In conventional approaches, empowerment is evaluated by listing 'indicators' and assessing them through in-depth qualitative documentation, often positioning students as objects of research. From the perspective advanced here, with an emphasis on the reciprocal nature of education, this logic is reconfigured. The teacher, as a scaffolder of the educational process, can themselves become the site of evaluation. Evaluation shifts from individual subjects toward the configuration of actions, relations, and conditions that generate possibilities of empowerment. It thus moves beyond stabilized outcomes and becomes a reading of "orchestration of resources": the conditions that enable becoming empowered. The teacher-researcher operates simultaneously as the object of evaluation, the scaffolder of this empowering orchestration, and the regulator of its conditions. Attention to the duration and sustainability of these possibilities keeps evaluation open to revisiting and reconfiguration. I borrow the notion of 'orchestration of resources' from Sandra Safourcade's discussion of agency and empowerment (Safourcade 2024).

3rd Orientation: Symmetrical Archaeology of the Recent Past

Listening is never confined to spoken language. It is distributed among movements, materials, spaces, images, rhythms, tastes, and silences⁹. They are ways of sustaining meaning where experience cannot be fully narrated. When Rinaldi speaks of the “hundred languages of children” (Rinaldi 2021), the traces of this openness become visible.

Autoethnography also encounters such threshold conditions. Carolyn Ellis emphasizes that the researcher is not necessarily concerned with the self from the outset; rather, “in the process of research, the researcher discovers his or her connection to the material and to the world studied” (see: Mizzi, Laidlaw 2024: 24). Autoethnographers are aware that this approach leans heavily toward the human capacity to narrate. Even when bodies, spaces, objects, and affects are present in the text, agency can quietly return to the narrating subject.

This marks a limit. In listening, multiple sensors are at work. Yet in writing, there is always the risk that narration consolidates dimensions into coherence, reduces space and conditions to retrievable fragments, and compresses the lived complexity of educational situations into accumulations of what can be said. For this reason, remaining faithful to educational experience requires more than precise narration. The issue becomes particularly significant in contexts where experience is intensely documented, narrated, and represented. Under such conditions, experience risks being reduced to information.

Symmetrical archaeology of the recent past offers a way to remain with these conditions without immediately translating them into narrative; a subtle shift of attention toward what remains materially. Historical archaeology has often developed our understanding of the past through narratives rooted in texts, documents, and conceptual genealogies, where objects tend to appear mainly as confirmations of stories already told. By contrast, symmetrical archaeology moves closer to the practices of prehistoric archaeology, approaching objects not as supports for narrative coherence but as entities that exert their own pressure on interpretation¹⁰. They do

⁹ Studios dedicated to food and taste, ongoing engagement with recycling and rethinking materials, and attention to environments and objects are not secondary features of this educational practice. Projects such as REMIDA (the Creative Recycling Centre) and PAUSE (Atelier dei Saporì) managed by Reggio Children. Carla Rinaldi, as president of Reggio Children and a leading figure in the Reggio Emilia approach, has been central in articulating and disseminating these practices as expressions of the pedagogy of listening.

¹⁰ Think, for a moment, of the *Venus of Willendorf* and its symbolic presence in thought. Its weight and material presence exceeds what narrative description can carry. To make this more immediate, consider your own wallet: perhaps it holds a photograph of a partner or a child. For you, this object inseparable from your relation is charged with affection, memory, and situated meaning; for another, it may appear as nothing more than an ordinary image (a small print, 3×4 or 6×4, its material condition, worn or pristine, shaped by how it is kept), easily overlooked if encountered on the street (unless, as a passerby, you are a photographer or it echoes something intimate in your memory, perhaps a past attachment or loss). What is at play here is the situated force through which objects participate in meaning. We live materially and think narratively. Experience occurs within spaces and in the presence of things, yet it is summarized and transmitted in the form of words. At this point, a certain level of abstraction

not replace narrative; rather, they complicate it by opening another register through which experience insists on its presence (Harrison, Breithoff 2017: 206).

Rather than adding more stories, archaeology of the recent past lingers with what has been left behind, reused, worn, or taken for granted. Through renewed encounters with material persistence, it renders the familiar unfamiliar. What matters here is the ordinary endurance of things and their capacity to hold memory without converting it into words. From this perspective, symmetrical archaeology working with Benjamin's notion of the "now," revealing how multiple pasts remain active in the present. These pasts recur, overlap, and nudge one another (Harrison, Breithoff 2017: 206, 209; González-Ruibal 2008: 8).

By temporarily suspending, the impulse to decide what matters most, symmetrical archaeology of the recent past intensifies attention. Instead of beginning with 'questions of meaning': what an object represents; it turns toward 'questions of being': what this thing is, how it endures, how it relates, and how it makes a difference (Witmore 2019: 2–3; Olsen, Witmore 2015: 4–5). By refusing to allow all experience to dissolve into narrative, interpretation remains open to surprise. Here, art and archaeology become parallel practices, multiplying and layering our relations with objects and our ways of seeing them (González-Ruibal 2008: 21).

Narration and material presence thus support the relational position articulated throughout this text while preserving their distinction. They anchor educational experience so that it is less readily exhausted by representation and remains open within the mediational "spatio-temporal" field through which it unfolds.

Bridging Toward a Relational–Mediational Epistemic Space

Listening, autoethnography, and symmetrical archaeology have each developed as responses to a shared tension. The growing distance between lived experience and the forms through which knowledge is authorized, stabilized, and accumulated. Yet they have been situated within different epistemic territories. What has been lost is continuity of attention. Epistemic distinctions introduced to make knowledge manageable but at the cost of fidelity to experience, which does not present in such separable forms. The need for a bridge emerges here.

As specialization became institutionalized as a marker of rigor, these divisions were further reinforced. Listening that remained relational risked being dismissed as excessively qualitative. The presence of the first person was taken as evidence of bias. A longstanding suspicion toward narrative has also contributed to this condition. Because narration is embodied, affective, and open to persuasion and repositioning, modern knowledge repeatedly sought to neutralize it by concealing the speaker, flat-

is permitted, though it must remain recognizable. Consider your place in the classroom. You may be seated within a shared desk, leaning into the presence of another, or positioned on a separate chair, at a measured distance. The feeling of your body, its sense of contact or separation, tension or ease, is shaped by this arrangement. Affection, discomfort, identity, and even memory may take form through such field experiences.

tening language, and converting narrative into information. When the “moment of truth” within narration is lost through endless reproduction, information circulates while orientation weakens; so, meaning becomes diluted. What disappears is narrative’s capacity to hold time and sustain direction. Materiality, in turn, was sidelined for the sake of cognitive simplification. Objects, spaces, and environments carry layered temporalities, resist language, and are difficult to stabilize conceptually. Their exclusion has been justified as a way of simplifying and managing cognitive models.

What is at stake lies in the enforced isolation of attentional registers that, in practice, continually intersect and sustain one another. The bridge keeps different modes of attention alive within tension. Grounded Theory provides the theoretical authority needed to open an in-between space. It functions as methodological sensitivity that redirects attention to the concrete dimension of experience, compelling me to turn to other epistemic orientations wherever experience cannot be fully read within a single one. What emerges is a relational, intermediary space in which perception is enabled and extended through movement across frameworks. Listening remains open to voice without absorbing everything into narration. Autoethnography remains accountable to experience without claiming to possess it. Archaeology attends to material presences without requiring them to be converted into stories.

Within this space, documentation functions as an infrastructure. It is the place where listening, narration, and materiality encounter one another without collapsing into each other. Through documentation, voices are registered, experiences are reflected, and material traces enter the field of meaning. Documentation mediates the discovery of ongoing relations. It slows interpretation, enables revisiting, and keeps experience open to reconfiguration. This infrastructural role of documentation signals an epistemic shift from a human-centered orientation toward a relation-centered one. Meaning emerges through networks of interaction among humans and non-humans¹¹. Documentation builds the bridge by redistributing attention, responsibility, and time across domains. Through documentation, methodological work becomes collective and durational and keeps interpretation provisional and accountable.

Methodology¹² thus functions as a sensitizing apparatus. A non-academic analogy may clarify this logic: methodology operates less like a camera and more like lighting. It does not record the scene; it shapes the conditions under which something can be seen. What remains illuminated, what stays in shadow, and what resists visibility are all effects of how attention has been arranged. Listening, autoethnography, and

¹¹ The designation “non-human” remains problematic, as it continues to rely on a human-centered point of reference. Language itself seems unable, at least for now, to fully move beyond these historical trajectories that have resulted in the sedimentation of confidence in the human that continues to shape how relations are named and understood.

¹² Methodology is invoked here in a paradoxical sense. What this text develops is better understood as a synthesizing operational orientation, not as a fixed method, but as an orientation emerging from practice. The retention of the term signals both its historical force and the difficulty of moving beyond it without gradual reconfiguration and sustained, experience-based reorientation and accumulated practice.

archaeological attention provide a different logic of illumination, allowing relations that are often overlooked to become perceptible. As Audre Lorde writes of poetry, it “forms the quality of the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change, first made into language, then into an idea, then into more tangible action.” (Adams, Holman Jones, Ellis 2015: 20).

A Vignette of Participatory Process in Formation¹³

[...] Long-haired girl and the girl with two casts’ group (2 girls, 4 boys): the long-haired girl was slightly sturdier than her classmates and at times became a support for the girl with two casts. This girl had both forearms in plaster casts, supported by a wide sling looped around her neck. She slipped her hands out of the sling when she wrote. Classmates had drawn and written on the plaster. She was strangely serene. The Painter boy [...]

[...] a corner of the building with a bar table, the facilities of a small coffee shop, round swivel stools that could be raised and lowered, and several leather poufs in circular and square shapes, slightly apart from the table. The table was less than a meter wide and made it possible to sit on both sides. Conversation happened at close distance here. The poufs also made it possible to lie down and withdraw from the crowd from time to time [...]

Note: The mentors were pretending to search with the children while already knowing what the book (*Codex Seraphinianus*) really was. They too seemed caught by the mystery of the book. Their accompaniment took the form of a mimetic empathy: they entered the children’s attempt to approach the unreadable text for all days of upcoming week without closing its uncertainty too quickly.

The children had been asked to document the place and space and, from within that exploration, to produce a collective form of meaning for what they encountered there. The members of each group were to decide for themselves what product they wanted to produce.

¹³ This vignette draws on observations made during my participation in the Scuola Diffusa programme at Caffarri, the research and fieldwork centre of the Fondazione Reggio Children in Reggio Emilia, in November 2024. The experience brought together primary-school children in an educational project outside their ordinary classroom routine, encouraging sustained curiosity and participation. It was co-designed and accompanied by an interdisciplinary team including senior atelieristi, pedagogistas, municipal educators, school teachers, trainees, and doctoral researchers. My role was that of photographer and videographer: I took photographs on the first day and, at the request of the atelierista, recorded video during the remaining days. Working through the camera gradually deepened my understanding of listening, as sustained visual attention became part of entering educational relations. In accordance with institutional procedures, the photographs and video recordings were uploaded to the Municipality of Reggio Emilia’s secure network, where subsequent access required additional institutional authorization. The narrative was therefore written from memory. The complete field narrative extends across the two-week experience and follows several groups of children; the vignette presented here reproduces only parts of the opening episode of one group’s trajectory, selected because it makes visible the gradual emergence of a process through which listening, narrating, and attending to things through documentation make educational experience itself available for ongoing inquiry by teachers and other participants.

[...] The girl with long hair found a copy of *Codex Seraphinianus* and brought it to the group. From behind the camera, even I was surprised by the force with which it reorganized the group's attention [...] What captivated the children was not only the imagery of the book but the unreadability of its writing. They wanted to understand the words, or at least to recognize why they could not read them. The girl with long hair thought the language of the book was what she called *Arabo Antico* [...] The Painter boy, for his part, drew instead of writing. He had said that because writing in Italian was difficult for him, he drew his ideas and then tried to make his notes meaningful to others [...] The book remained with the group. The ladybugs on the cover, the drawing of a bed, the naked woman and man lying on it who, across several drawings, seemed to turn into crocodiles, the rainbow and the creatures that made it, all became subjects of discussion...¹⁴.

What It Means to Speak from Within Relations

The classroom offers a vivid indication of Proactive Relational–Mediational Epistemic Space. For children, the boundaries between listening, making, narrating, and engaging with things are not yet stabilized. These modes coexist without hierarchy. Taking childhood as a reference point reveals that the separations we defend epistemically are learned, institutionalized, and therefore reversible. Through a mediational space sustained by documentation, the process of bridging restores adjacency and fidelity to how educational life is actually lived.

This proactive architecture becomes possible only through the presence of a subject within the field in the midst of action. The fundamental distinction lies between the form of saying and the situation of saying. The issue is not primarily the manner of expression, but the position that remains accountable to relations through proximate participation to give expression its form. Forms can be learned, refined, and repeated without altering responsibility. Situations cannot. To speak from within a relational field is to accept exposure, limitation, and consequence. Familiar words acquire new force through the position from which they are spoken.

This reorientation positions the educator–researcher as a participant in relations. The classroom becomes a field in which space, objects, bodies, language, signs and time participate in the formation of the educational situation. The teacher directs attention to how these elements are arranged: to the spatial layout, to rhythm and pauses, to the qualities of objects (color, texture, temperature, weight, rhythm, density, direction,

¹⁴ Luigi Serafini (2013) *Codex Seraphinianus* – an encyclopedic artist's book written in an invented, undecipherable script and organized as a pseudo-taxonomy of an impossible world, facilitates scaffolding by the trainers. Ellipses (...) indicate the omission of substantial portions of the original fieldnote. Following a 'documentary screenplay' logic, the first bracket functions as a cast list, the second as a spatial setting, and the Note as a brief authorial clarification. The density of differences gathered here belongs to a single small group within an actual classroom and is retained because it forms part of the concrete condition of contemporary classroom life. Only those fragments necessary to situate the encounter and the formation of participation within it are retained here. The point of this situation of saying is not to turn classroom life into a site for discovery, but to render educational process itself perceptible and transferable, so that experience can be pedagogically reworked.

sound, smell, taste, persistence, light, shadow, contrast, speed, continuity, rupture, balance, tension, pressure), and to how acts of naming and inscription orient the course of experience. From here, questions emerge: what is present in this situation (visible or invisible)? What relations are formed among these elements? What triggers, interrupts, or transforms the situation? What is brought to the center and what is pushed to the margins? And how does language reinforce, modulate, or obscure these relations? (Mizzi, Laidlaw 2024) In this way, the teacher's intervention shifts from directly guiding meaning toward configuring conditions and reassembling material and linguistic relations, so that different possibilities for the emergence of experience can take shape. As Carolyn Ellis demonstrates through her return to the classroom as a form of methodological novel, the content and contexts of experience become textured and embodied in proximity to the conversational intimacy of workshop spaces (Ellis 2004)¹⁵.

To insist on the concrete point of departure of this text, namely its inquiry into the workings of the educational process itself, it is necessary to specify the "unit of analysis" within the space constructed here. The unit of analysis is the educational situation of participation. It is a situated arrangement in which students, teacher, materials, spatial configurations, gestures, inscriptions, rhythms, pauses, and later returns to the experience are gathered within an unfolding field and make the emergence and continuity of participation possible. This shift in the focus of inquiry keeps educational experience tied to the process through which it takes form. What becomes available for analysis is the process of scaffolding itself: the way participation is orchestrated, sustained, revived, and transformed through relations among human and non-human elements.

Seen from this perspective, the three orientations brought together in this proactive architecture are three ways of "organizing attention" during the formation of the educational event. At the same time, they function as three "interpretive procedures" for analyzing educational situations of participation. The pedagogy of listening attends to the emergence of relation through documentation, dialogue, affective receptivity, and the unfinished quality of experience. Autoethnography renders visible the teacher-researcher's implication, vulnerability, and interpretive labor and brings positional accountability into the field. Attention to material culture directs inquiry toward everyday life, objects, traces, spatial compositions, recurring gestures, and the persistence of ordinary things. These are elements that overlap in the formation of participation and give the educational situation its material and temporal density. Together, these three orientations architect the teacher's sensitivities in the scaffolding of classroom life and form an interpretive architecture through which the educational situation becomes readable into spatio-temporal manner.

¹⁵ The task of making the classroom visible is a precision in attending to detail and a careful rendering of their texture. In this sense, the classroom begins to resemble a script or a screenplay, where the configuration of space, the description of actors, and the qualities of light, movement, and position are articulated as conditions of the scene; where material and linguistic elements co-constitute the situation; where narration may extend across images, fragments of text, and other presences. Even to the extent that outcome functions as a field rather than a statement and resembles an interactive exhibition-like arrangement.

A further shift is necessary here. The three orientations become a proactive architecture when they can be repeated within action, reviewed, and made to generate fresh materials for understanding the situation. In this sense, the pedagogy of listening, autoethnography, and attention to everyday life and material culture each produce a relatively durable procedure for remaining alongside action as it unfolds. Listening requires documentation and revisiting. Autoethnography develops its methodological force through the reflective interval and positional accountability. Everyday life studies, in conjunction with material culture, sustaining their place in the inquiry by reading objects, images, spaces, traces, and absences. When these procedures meet within an educational situation, the educational situation of participation takes form together with the practices through which it is monitored, revisited, and sustained. When such situations are documented, revisited, compared, and recomposed over time, something like a situated grammar of participation becomes visible. This grammar grows out of the teacher's developing insight into the orchestration of participation across situations through repeated revisiting documentation, reflective intervals, sustaining material readings, and the spatio-temporal labor of scaffolding. The proactive architecture is therefore both a presupposition at the outset of the work and an emergent effect of movement among (1) orientation, (2) procedure, (3) educational situation, and (4) critical rereading in the midst of the process's own formation.

What becomes tangible here is the evaluative architecture, internal to this space. It is built through an operational rhythm. Educational documentation is produced from within the situation. Revisiting makes possible the return of students and, wherever feasible, their families. The reflective interval compels the teacher-researcher to reread their own position in relation to the situation. Attention to material culture returns material readings alongside everyday life to the field of analysis. Cross-case comparison and interdisciplinary dialogue bring these materials toward theoretical synthesis. Within this rhythm, documentation functions as an infrastructure for reviving, revisiting, and rearranging the educational situation. Orientations become procedures. Procedures make possible the continuity of educational situations of participation. These situations, in turn, make visible a situated grammar of participation.

The Proactive Relational–Mediational Epistemic Space is an operational architecture of inquiry that becomes active through the presence of a subject who is conscious of their task and trajectory within the field. That subject is the teacher-researcher. The teacher-researcher bears responsibility for sustaining the scaffolding through which participation is orchestrated, revisited, and kept alive over time. From this formulation, which begins by problematizing the educational process itself, another research path also becomes imaginable. It involves constructing the concrete details of an evaluation attuned to this very proactive architecture. Evaluation, in this sense, becomes the reading of the quality of the orchestration of participation and of the scaffolding process through which that orchestration is situated and sustained.

In doing so, the classroom may be approached as a temporary museum. A living and provisional museum. Musealization of the ordinary and mundane, searched and found in our daily lives and from within our vernacular expressions of life: a space of encounter. Objects of childhood, circulating materials, and traces of collective action are handled, rearranged, and recomposed to enable renewed encounters. Where objects cannot remain physically present, practices such as photography can make traces perceptible without claiming to replace the thing itself, functioning as “archaeological imagination” against absence (Shanks, Svabo 2013: 90).

This path intensifies the responsibility of presence, action and critical revision, making educational work heavier, longer and more meticulous. Attention itself becomes a form of sustained responsibility and care. What follows is not a conclusion, but a reflexive return toward what has been attempted, to account for the paths taken, the paths not reached, the paths foreclosed by narrowed ways of seeing, the missteps, the errors (those less accounted for so far), and the directions that remain open. This Proactive Relational-Mediational Epistemic Space keeps educational questions inhabitable, shared, and ongoing¹⁶.

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¹⁶ Writing is a practice of searching for the self within a condition of ongoing reflexivity; a movement from me toward a self that takes shape in relation and through engagement with language (Kafar 2019: 144). My relationship with the English language intensifies the difficulty of this condition. The ideas in this text were not born in this language; meanwhile the language of the texts that have nourished my ideas is not my mother tongue. In the process of writing, ChatGPT has assisted, in my present situation, as a possible learning community; facilitating access and proximity by creating a space for continuous questioning and response. The responsibility for the position of this text, its judgments, and the configuration of meaning remain entirely my own.

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