

S2

POLITICAL PITS

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This stream on politics and affect explores the pits as zones of affective pitfall and of orchestrating otherworldly noise. Pits evoke stuckness and despair, but also hiding places and refuge. They can entrap or relieve. How might pits shape understandings of affect and politics?

Sociopolitical pits fill the air with hopelessness, dread, and resignation. They call for prompt, forceful action and raise dire questions about how to sustain political projects and movements. Affect studies have generally explored the politics of slower, subtler activities, from sharpening the senses to experimenting with processes of becoming (Bennett 2020). How might these and other affective practices engage urgent political issues? What are their pitfalls? How does affect inform oppositional, activist, and militant politics? What affective tones dominate politics, and are they energizing or enervating? What feelings might invigorate the political?

Although political, economic, and ecological fragilities might break social promises of the good life, perhaps the historical present remains oriented by the promissory. White supremacy, fascism, transphobias, militarism, and settler violence have sought to jumpstart the good life. What is the affective relationship of the promissory to political imagination? Could political value be found in the unpromising and, if so, what might it be?

Impasses emerge, as when antagonisms hit a head, or they can be instituted to halt business as usual and open other paths. What are the politics of impasses and their conventional qualities like stuckness, blockage, and incommensurability? What lines of flight are smoldering in impasses, and how might they be detected and channeled? How might “transitional infrastructure” (Berlant 2022) to uncertain futures be built?

Alongside threats to bodily autonomy, democracy, and earthy life, certain humans and nonhumans are framed as threats to comfort, social norms, and national

futures. What are the biocultural registers of threat, and how are they modulated to reproduce sociopolitical orders (Wynter 1984)? What becomes possible through disidentification as a threat and being threatening otherwise? Can the threat be playfully reclaimed?

As the sociopolitical and planetary here and now is increasingly unsettled, we might ask: what affects have been dampened in order to consolidate that here and now? How might their traces be sensed, activated, or amplified? How do settlements—of sensoria, images, matter, spaces, borders, discursive practices—depend on dispossession of potentialities of unsettlement?

With much falling apart and uncertainty darkening the future, what is there to affirm? What might an affirmative politics look and feel like from within the pits? Papers in this stream may explore the provocations above, below, and many topics besides:

- Political qualities of pits/the pits: worstness, lowness, wretchedness, darkness, loneliness, solitude
- Racial and colonial politics of sunken places (Peele 2017).
- Political atmospheres of pits: dark, dank, stinky
- Minimalist performances of affect: unfeeling (Yao 2021), inscrutability (Huang 2022), inexpression (Post 2023)
- Joy: sparking it (Kondo 2010), killing it (Ahmed 2023)
- Political sensoria: *la facultad* (Anzaldúa 1987), watching and waiting (Stewart 2007), arts of noticing (Tsing 2015)
- Impasses as political technologies: blockades, strikes, liberated zones, refusals (Coulthard 2014; Simpson 2014; Moten 2018; Honig 2021)
- Theorizing systems of power through/as process (Connolly 2011; Massumi 2015; Manning 2016; Snaza 2024)