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MAKING ALL
VOICES COUNT

RESEARCH REPORT

A GRAND CHALLENGE
FOR DEVELOPMENT

Connecting communication: using video to open spaces and mediate exchange between Kenyan grass-roots activists



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Summary

Bunge La Mwananchi (BLM) is a Kenyan grass-roots social movement that creates space for unrepresented people from the poorest backgrounds to raise and debate issues, and to amplify their social struggles.

In 2015, BLM members carried out action research – supported by Institute of Development Studies (IDS) staff, as part of Making All Voice Count – to find out how the movement sustains its power against co-option and division (Otieno, Kabala, Scott-Villiers, Gachihi and Ndung’u 2016). A key finding was the importance of reaching across differences of ethnicity, gender, class and geography to increase BLM’s influence.

Following this, in 2016, long-standing BLM organisers and new members took part in a short accompanied participatory video project. This aimed to communicate the action research findings to the wider movement, and initiate further discussion on the implications. It also sought to raise awareness of the potential of using video recording and playback to open communication spaces between different BLM constituencies. As the Bunge movement is a verbal movement, video was considered an appropriate medium. However, there can be challenges in applying it effectively in practice, particularly in resource- and time-limited contexts.

This research reflects on the experience of adapting and scaling down elements of the participatory video approach during the Bunge video project, to be resource- and cost-effective and less time-intensive. Lessons are drawn on how video processes can be applied creatively and accessibly to mediate exchange in similar contexts in the future.

Key themes in this paper

- Using participatory video for learning, movement-building and communication
- Action research and deliberative learning
- Inclusive space and collaborative dynamics
- Choosing appropriate technology and adapting processes for purpose

Background and rationale

About Bunge La Mwananchi

Bunge La Mwananchi (BLM), the People's Parliament, is a Kenyan grass-roots social movement that operates in open public settings, such as parks, marketplaces and bus stops (Otieno, Kabala, Scott-Villiers, Gachihi and Ndung'u 2016). As one of the ground-level organisations in the Kenyan Bunge movement, it creates space for unrepresented people from the poorest backgrounds to raise issues of concern, exchange ideas and amplify their social struggles through campaigns, demonstrations and other vocal and visible actions. BLM has existed since the 1990s, but there have been periods of high as well as low activity.

The Bunge movement functions through listening and discussion, with formal procedures modelled on those of African village parliaments (Brocklesby, Hobley and Scott-Villiers 2010). Bunges are thus fundamentally verbal communication forums, and this provided the rationale for choosing video, rather than a written report, to communicate the action research findings. Video can enable people to *tell* as well as *show* (Humphries and Jones 2006), and was therefore considered as a good medium to utilise and build on BLM's communication strengths. In this context, it also provided the possibility to augment existing communication channels, both through dissemination on BLM's social media platforms (e.g. WhatsApp, Twitter and Facebook), and through 'live' video playback on mobile phones in Bunge spaces.

The aim of a Bunge session is to create a neutral space for dialogue that includes everyone, regardless of relative power divides based on ethnicity, gender, class, wealth or ideology (Otieno *et al.* 2016). This mirrors the ideals of communicative action (Habermas 1989). Although BLM has had notable successes in spanning the ethnic divides in Kenya that are so damagingly politicised during elections, in reality – like other spaces for deliberation (see Fraser 1990) – it faces challenges in achieving equitable exchange.

About this project

In 2015, an action research process led by BLM organisers, David 'Cidi' Otieno and Gacheke Gachihi, accompanied by Patta Scott-Villiers from the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), explored what helped and hindered Bunge's success in mobilising action towards social justice for people at the margins of Kenyan society (see Otieno *et al.* 2016). This paper focuses on the use of video during a six-day project in September 2016. The explicit aims were to: (1) document the action research findings; (2) involve older and newer BLM members in considering the current implications; and (3) share what was learned with the wider Bunge movement (<https://vimeo.com/199696702>). A more tacit intention was to raise awareness of the potential and constraints of participatory video processes in increasing communication capacities, building inclusive and collaborative dynamics, and catalysing interaction in new Bunge spaces.

BLM's earlier action research identified the need to bring younger people, particularly women, into the movement, and to initiate new grass-roots Bunges with those previously uninvolved or neglected due to geography, disability or other socio-economic factors. Video was considered suitable to the Bunge context, due to the potential it affords beyond the creation and dissemination of products.

Participatory video processes are well-documented ways to create enabling environments for dialogue (see Shaw 2017). Video projects can provide space for marginalised people to build expressive skills and confidence, develop group agendas, and rehearse articulating their perspectives before taking part in public forums (Shaw 2012a). Furthermore, participatory video practitioners utilise group recording and playback activities to mediate interaction more democratically, for example by organising turn-taking in presentation and production roles, or by using control of the camera to position marginalised participants more influentially than usual (see Shaw 2015; High 2005)¹.

¹ This way of using participatory video is comparable to Fraser's (1990) idea of a 'democratic counterpublic'.

These qualities suggest that BLM could use participatory video processes in the future, both to engage and motivate participation by new Bunge constituencies across the social and geographical divides that had been identified by the action research, and to build inclusive and collaborative exchange between different Bunge groups. While a long-term participatory video project to achieve this was beyond the scope of this short engagement, running the project using participatory video activities intended to raise awareness of these future possibilities.

By comparison, previous research (Shaw 2012a) has identified that there are tensions intrinsically connected to the possibilities of participatory video, such as between the opportunity for marginalised participants to express perspectives in public and the risk of exposure. Acknowledging that inequitable dynamics are often maintained and re-enforced in participatory spaces (see Howe 2009, 2010; Cornwall 2004), this paper responds to the call (see Milne, Mitchell and de Lange 2012; Shaw 2012b) to interrogate overly optimistic claims about participatory technology by learning from participatory practice as it plays out in reality. Important questions have previously been raised about the ethical dilemmas of participatory video, such as the power

dynamics between project actors (e.g. Kindon 2016; Shaw 2016; Mistry, Bignante and Berardi 2014; Wheeler 2012). Experienced practitioners have suggested that negotiating the key practice balances more ethically requires longer-term input during iteratively evolving project processes, due to the increased risks identified in short-term production projects (see Shaw 2017, 2015; Mistry, Berardi, Bignante and Tschirhart 2015; Shahrokh and Wheeler 2014). However, longer-term accompaniment is often not possible due to time limitations and a scarcity of resources.

In this paper, I take an alternative stance by exploring how elements of the participatory video approach were adapted and scaled back in the Bunge video project, to respond creatively to the time, cost and capacity limitations. Thus, I generate insight on using video to connect and mediate exchange in other comparable contexts by addressing the following questions:

- How were participatory video activities adapted to respond creatively to the resource limitations?
- What are the enduring gains for BLM participants and the Bunge movement?
- What are the lessons for future participatory video projects in similar contexts?

The Bunge participatory video project

From May to July 2015, activists from Bunge La Mwananchi Jeevanjee in central Nairobi, Bunge Mashinani in Mathare, Bunge La Wamama Mashinani in Huruma Kiamaiko, and Bunge La Mwananchi Kaptembwo in Nakuru were involved in action research to explore how the Bunge grass-roots social justice movement could be sustained against common counter-pressures, such as co-option and division (Otieno *et al.* 2016). This involved internal discussions, listening to BLM members in situ and interviewing other local people. It resurfaced the importance of building commonality across the social divisions of ethnicity, gender, class and geography to maintaining and building influence from the margins of Kenyan society.

In response to the action research findings, in 2016, BLM instigated several new initiatives, such as the Social Justice and Movement Building Fellowship programme. This addressed the observed need to mentor new activists and support the emergence of new local Bunges. The participatory video project was incorporated into this programme within modules on documentation and reporting, and social communication. It involved four older activists and four younger recruits to the BLM fellowship programme (referred to locally as fellows). It took place in the Kangemi and Mathare slum areas of Nairobi in September 2016. The overall aims were as follows:

1. **Video documentation and reporting** to produce a short video to tell the story of the 2015 action research findings, and what is currently being done to address BLM's identified communication challenges. The purpose was twofold: BLM would make a video product that they could use to initiate further discussion within the movement, and gain practical experience of time-efficient production processes, which they could repeat to make further videos.
2. **Video-mediated insight-sharing and discussion-prompting** to communicate the action research findings to the wider Bunge movement through distribution on BLM's social media platforms, and by piloting 'live' playback on mobile phones. The purpose was to share insights and catalyse discussion

within the national Bunge space in Nairobi. In turn, this would pilot a process that could be applied for future video-mediated exchange.

3. **Raising awareness of participatory video processes** to model introductory participatory video activities. The purpose was to provide insight into how video can be applied to motivate participation, build communication confidence, and generate democratic space and inclusive team dynamics.

I am an IDS research fellow and participatory video specialist. I convened the project, which involved training the group, structuring and guiding the production process, editing the video in response to the group's narrative, and accompanying the video dissemination activities. Table 1 lists the activities that took place during the project.

Table 1. Video project activities

Day	Activity	Purpose
1	Introductory participatory video process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To build inclusive, democratic and collaborative team dynamics • To practise basic equipment operation and production roles
2	Video production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To plan and record the main video narrative • To record some illustrative visual sequences
3	Editing and further production	Sub-groups to take turns to : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edit with Jackie Shaw (JS) • Record additional visual sequences • Discuss, through video activities, what the action research findings mean to the older activists and younger fellows
4	Editing and planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JS to finish the draft edit and upload video to Vimeo² • Group participants to plan the pilot video-screening event
5	Showing the video at the main national Bunge space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To download the video from Vimeo and copy to mobile phones • To show video at Jeevanjee Gardens in central Nairobi, to stimulate discussion in this central Bunge forum
6	Further training input and evaluation processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To cover video back-up processes and editing software • To transfer video production skills already learned to mobile phone recording devices • To consider and draw up guidelines on safety, risk and consent • To discuss and agree processes for care and access to the equipment • To evaluate the video project

² An online video-sharing platform: <https://vimeo.com>

This was an ambitious project given the timescale, and was not intended to provide comprehensive technical, production and participatory video training. Rather, in accompanying the BLM group in the first steps towards video usage, it hoped to provide an accessible and effective foundation. Given the scarcity of time and resources, particular participatory video exercises were adapted to provide less time-intensive processes that could be repeated during future video-mediated documentation, reporting and discussion-prompting activities.

This was not, however, simply a production and dissemination training project. Running the

project through introductory participatory video exercises was also intended to provide insight into the potential process benefits, such as building communication confidence or nurturing inclusive dynamics.

The third, more tacit aim was thus, in modelling participatory processes, to raise awareness and spark interest in how this approach could be applied by BLM to engage new people from generally uninvolved social groupings in the Bunge movement, to build collaborative dynamics within these emerging local Bunges, and to connect different Bunge groups to catalyse further exchange.

What the project achieved

In this section, I consider the main project achievements in relation to the three key aims listed in the previous section, with participants' inputs incorporated from the project evaluation discussions that took place on day six.

Using video for documentation and reporting

The first key aim was to support the BLM video group in telling the story of what their action research found, and what they are doing to act on the findings. Using a participatory video learning approach, I intended to ensure that all the participants would feel ownership of the resulting product, and gain sufficient production experience to enable future video reporting.

On the first day, the eight participants took part in a series of introductory participatory video exercises (see Shaw and Robertson 1997). This was the context for establishing an inclusive dynamic and the group's communication priorities. In parallel, the exercises provided a framework for group members to practise basic camera operation and sound recording, with everyone taking turns in the key production roles. In the afternoon, participants learned how to record shot sequences, and swapped tasks to create a short, in-camera edited documentary. They also took part in creative games to practise storytelling and visual storyboarding. I considered

this day a vital first step in building participants' communication confidence and videoing skills for the following production activities.

Next, the group had three days in which to produce a video. During the second morning, I supported the group in constructing a video narrative summarising their interpretations of the main action research findings. This was accomplished through planning and recording statements from each person, which were shot in order against a neutral background. This in-camera edited narrative provided the basic structure for the final video. The group then storyboarded an introductory sequence for the video. This was recorded outside in the slum to show the context and generate visual interest. Participants also took turns on a second camera to document the process, which provided additional recording practice as well as further visuals.

In the afternoon of the second day, the participants went out in two groups to record visual sequences to illustrate the video narrative. This enabled them to practise what they had learned unaccompanied. They returned energised, as five minutes away they had come across and documented a demonstration against slum clearance. While this happened spontaneously – and before the risks of filming in public had been discussed – it provided engaging footage for the video, as well as pertinent experiences to draw on when considering safety matters later.

On the third day, video editing began. Pairs took turns watching me edit, and learning some hands-on editing procedures, while the others recorded further visual sequences for the video and conducted video-mediated discussions about the action research findings.

Three days was a minimal period in which to make a video with inexperienced film-makers. Yet, the completed product exceeded expectations, particularly in terms of visual interest (<https://vimeo.com/199696702>), and the participants were justifiably proud of their achievement. Several factors contributed to this success:

- The BLM group are strong verbal communicators, and had a clear communication purpose. This meant they were able to produce a focused narrative quickly.
- They were motivated by the opportunity, and quickly picked up video basics to independently record contextualising footage.
- The process was aided by tight facilitation and the structured production framework, particularly the use of focused, edited statements as narrative structure. This ensured that a coherent video resulted, regardless of how much visual material was added.

Input on how to *in-camera edit* and construct visual sequences was particularly effective. In-camera editing involves producing short stories or messages by recording shots in order using a video recording device (e.g. camcorder, phone or tablet), without the need to edit afterwards. In addition to ensuring a video can be produced within the time available, this approach aided participants' speedy comprehension of efficient and effective production processes. The group soon appreciated that recording focused, shorter shots in sequence led to more engaging material, thus demonstrating that 'less is more'. In comparison, documenting all that happens often results in excess or irrelevant material, which may never be watched. Additionally, the in-camera editing technique equipped the group with a way to make a video that could be played back straight away (on a camera or phone) without the need for editing software or excess time input. This approach contributes to making production possible when resources are scarce. Instilling the habit of planning what is needed before recording is also more likely to lead to usable material, even if editing using software is required later. This knowledge will be important to the group's future use of video for documentation and film-making.

Finally, incorporating some input on visual storytelling early on was productive. Even for professional film-makers, it is hard to record enough visual material to create interesting videos when time is short. Emphasising a structured approach to recording *visual sequences*, which contained a long-shot, mid-shot and several close-ups, instigated good practice. Group members recognised this, particularly once they had seen the final edit taking shape. This structured production process provides an example of how elements of a longer participatory process can be adapted and scaled down in response to time constraints.

Using video to mediate communication and prompt discussion

A second aim of the project was to communicate the action research insights to the wider Bunge movement using the video produced. While I was completing the editing, participants met on day four to consider how to disseminate the video.

On the fourth night, I uploaded the video to Vimeo, so that it could be played back and downloaded via an Internet connection. Then, on day five, there were two dissemination activities. The group shared links to the video on BLM's social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp. This resulted in more than 100 'likes' and numerous positive and supportive comments within the first few hours; for example, many online respondents encouraged the group to make more videos. One of the participants, Gacheke Gachihi, thought this gave "wider coverage beyond the usual Bunge spaces". The experience demonstrated to the group that disseminating videos on social media could be "a powerful way of amplifying the social movement" (Gacheke Gachihi). This was possible because of the work already undertaken by BLM to build an online presence, done in response to the need to connect the different Bunge spaces. BLM were therefore primed and ready to make the most of the video dissemination possibilities, and their intention is to build on these experiences.

One of the action research findings highlighted the communication gap between outlying grass-roots BLM members and the BLM elite, due the power dynamics between them. Thus, there was a specific imperative for the group to use the video to initiate an exchange on the implications of the action

“Taking the video to Jeevanjee was a very inspiring moment because ... it was a chance for grass-roots defenders to take our messages back to the national space ... BLM has metamorphosed into one that can articulate its position.”

– David ‘Cidi’ Otieno

research findings in the symbolic national Bunge space – Jeevanjee Gardens, a public park in central Nairobi.³

The main purpose was to bring the research insights from grass-roots BLM members to this important and influential Bunge space to prompt discussion among the Bunge elite. However, there were several challenges to overcome in preparing for this event. For example, there is no power or Wi-Fi connectivity in the gardens. Furthermore, setting up a video projector and screen would have had further cost implications, as well as intrusively changing the nature of a traditional Bunge session.

I suggested playing the video back on a number of mobile phones. This would provide a resource-appropriate response, as mobile phones are ubiquitous in Kenya. It also seemed fitting for the Bunge communication context, as those present could cluster in small groups around the different phones, and the phone could be passed around to involve more people in the dialogue. There was also the possibility of further dissemination, as those present might be motivated to share the video link with others after they watched it.

On the morning of day five, the video was transferred to a handful of mobile phones. Transfer happened in various ways, as each phone had different capabilities. In some cases, the video was downloaded directly from the Vimeo website. When this was not possible, the video was either copied from the memory card of a phone that had downloaded it successfully, or transferred from phone to phone using Bluetooth.

The nominated Bunge session speaker, Chekai Musa, had already published a notice about the event in the gardens. After introducing the agenda and research, in the afternoon, the video was shown via the phones to small groups and individuals, as planned. The group that produced the video took turns to record proceedings and responses from those who watched the video, practising their video documentation skills further.

While there were some strong reactions in the highly politicised space of Jeevanjee Gardens (see below), the responses from those who took part in the session were generally very positive. There was lots of affirmation about what the video group had achieved in making the video, and enthusiasm for video’s potential for documenting BLM events. This experience was clearly confidence-building for the video group participants:

“The response was awesome. I felt really good ... I gained courage because we worked as a team.”
– Rachael Irungu

Participants also thought playback on mobile phones worked well:

“Putting it on a mobile phone, and showing it in a small space at Jeevanjee, was very powerful.”
– Gacheke Gachihi

The BLM group had not previously taken the action research results to the national Bunge space in Jeevanjee Gardens. They had been reticent, due to the unequal power dynamics between Bunge members at the periphery and those at the centre. Despite some of the group feeling nervous on the day, having the video enabled them to

³ Jeevanjee Gardens is in some ways Bunge’s most provocative appropriation of public space because it is centrally located near Nairobi’s bustling retail district. In another way authorities tolerate people making speeches behind the straggly privet hedges while the rest of city life surges on past, because it contains the grass-roots will to discuss political matters (Patta Scott-Villiers, pers. comm).

communicate effectively, and they felt this was a significant achievement:

“Taking the video to Jeevanjee was a very inspiring moment because ... it was a chance for grass-roots defenders to take our messages back to the national space ... BLM has metamorphosed into one that can articulate its position.”

– David ‘Cidi’ Otieno

This event thus piloted a ‘live’ playback process on mobile phones. This could be applied easily in Bunge’s unofficial outdoor spaces, which typically do not have electricity or Wi-Fi. Moreover, running the event through video enabled the group to organise and direct communication in the space more assertively than they would have been able to otherwise, as discussed further in the following sections.

Raising awareness of the benefits of participatory video processes

The third, less explicit aim of the project was to provide some insight into the potential benefits of participatory video. I therefore ran the project using basic participatory video recording and playback activities, so that participants gained experience of how this approach can support group processes.

As already discussed, consistently reported benefits of using participatory video arise from its application in establishing and maintaining democratic communication spaces and collaborative dynamics. Recording and playback activities are evidenced ways to progressively build an inclusive environment for interactions, expressive confidence, group agency, mutual purpose and the means to influence (see Shaw 2017, 2012a). Indeed, the productive group dynamic generated was the factor most appreciated by participants in this project:

“I most enjoyed the teamwork and the positive energy generated.” – Rachael Mwikali

Video recording also provides a rationale for discussion, and playback can help those involved to stand back and reflect further on what they have said. The plan was to embed the 2015 action research findings in the present, and thus bring the findings up to date, through video-mediated interactions between the older activists and the younger / newer fellows from the Social Justice and Movement Building programme. Participants accomplished this through videoing responses on the third day, while the editing was taking place. This provided an opportunity to practise using participatory video to catalyse and mediate interaction. The edited discussion will also be used to prompt further reflection within BLM and beyond.

Although it was a less central aim, I intended to give a sense of what the participatory video approach might offer in building new, local Bunges. It was, of course, only possible to illustrate a scaled-back participatory video process given the timescale. Nevertheless, as a result of their taster experience, group members clearly appreciated the value of using this approach, which “ensured no-one dominated” (Rachel Mwikali), and participants “worked as a team” (Chekai Musa). Being part of the participatory video project engendered some appreciation of the potential. For example, because individual participants gained confidence through the video exercises, they recognised the chance to provide the same opportunity for others:

“Very many people fear the camera – it opened a path – as BLM we will use [participatory video] training as part of building the movement from below.” – Gacheke Gachihi

“The camera will strengthen them, help bring the confidence to talk in front of the camera.”
– Antony Kirika

As a result of their experiences, the group could see how participatory video might be applied to engage new people, such as young people and women, in the movement. They have since gone on to run some video sessions with other new fellows during the mentorship programme.

Reflections on the project's limitations and practice conundrums

Overall, the project was successful in achieving its key aims, due to BLM's clear communication purpose and the project structure. However, there were practical challenges and further questions raised for practice in comparable contexts, which I now reflect on.

Choosing appropriate technology for purpose

Video was suitable in supporting BLM's communication aims, because it is a verbal / visual medium that builds on and extends the group members' communication strengths. However, a question that arose during planning was whether it was more appropriate for the group to learn how to record video on a camcorder or mobile phone in this context. A compelling argument from Making All Voices Count colleagues was that, as mobile phones are familiar and accessible, using them would build on local technology and might be more easily sustained. Answering this question required me to reflect on what is afforded by different video-recording technologies in relation to the purpose of the project, as Table 2 summarises.

I decided to run the project using a typical participatory video workshop kit, including a camcorder, tripod, monitor, hand microphone (mic), directional mic and headphones. There were three reasons: (1) the camcorder set-up would better support speedy production learning for all, which could easily be transferred to mobile phone usage afterwards; (2) the camcorder would enable production of a higher-quality video; and (3) the workshop kit could provide the intended insight into the group benefits of participatory video processes, which would not be afforded by running the project using mobile phones.

However, the introductory participatory video model was adapted to include the transfer of the production processes learned on the camcorder to

mobile phone and tablet usage. Moreover, playing back videos on mobile phones was a creative response to contextual needs. The group therefore experienced the interrelationship between these different recording and playback devices, and experienced effective ways of using both. This contributed to the practice lessons, which I now expand on.

The participatory video workshop set-up is designed to maximise its contribution to group dynamics (see Shaw and Robertson 1997). The camcorder is placed on a tripod and attached to an external hand mic and large video monitor. This helps ensure that everyone speaks and listens, and experiences all the roles in a production team.

Furthermore, working with the external monitor means that everyone can be involved in production decisions, and that technical and creative progress is accelerated. For example, amateur videos are often characterised by tortuously moving camerawork, not framing shots close enough for visual interest, and poor sound. This set-up means everyone can see and learn from what others are doing with the equipment.

These affordances are not innate to the video camcorder, but it can be much more easily set up to achieve this than a mobile phone. By comparison, mobiles have smaller screens, so do not aid group learning or group decision-making. They often do not have an external mic socket, which means a hand mic cannot be used to create a space for all to speak. Additionally, mobile phones are more individually focused. This means they do not build the team dynamic so easily through role-swapping, as there is only one operator. It is therefore harder to prevent project 'takeover' by dominant group members.

I also felt that the structured group exercises using the video camcorder were more likely to lead to participants being able to apply what they had learned after the project. As predicted, it was then easy to transfer the video production skills acquired to mobile phone technology during a

Table 2. Comparison of video-recording technologies

Considerations	Video recording on:	
	Camcorders	Mobile phones / tablets
Contextual appropriateness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less familiar and available • Provides valued new opportunity, but access less easily sustained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familiar and accessible • Builds on local technology use and thus more easily sustained
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better control of sound levels and quality • More stable images when used on a tripod, and zoom, focus and light-level controls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harder to record quality sound, as often no external microphone, which requires recorder to be close to sound source to limit intrusive background • Can be used on a tripod
Ease of use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to use, but perceived as difficult • Success when shown how it affords the opportunity to shift the sense of self-capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceived as easy to use, but harder to get what you want technically, so may be frustrating
Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly motivating to participants, which energises and drives group action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not seen as a new opportunity
Group dynamics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When used in a participatory way, with everyone taking turns in all roles, it can create an inclusive team dynamic; this generates collective ownership and mutuality • Easier for facilitators to intervene to prevent takeover 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lends itself to individual usage • Harder to use to create a democratic dynamic, as no division of roles • If device numbers are limited, there is a greater tendency for them to be taken over by dominant group members
Participatory learning context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When used with a monitor, the whole group can be involved in learning from each other as everyone can see clearly; this affords more rapid learning for all, and is relatively easy to transfer learning to individual phones afterwards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More practice if each participant has a phone, but less crossover learning, and limited individual feedback
Intrusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More likely to change contextual dynamics as the device is larger, more threatening and needs more peripheral equipment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less noticeable / obtrusive • Less equipment needed
Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More likelihood of a negative response or backlash • Equipment needs more care; attractive to steal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less likely to illicit defensive response • Small, so may be lost or damaged
Internal power dynamics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be used to structure inclusive interaction during a project, but projects can be taken over by the most powerful without intervention at key times 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals have phone access, but it is harder to generate a collaborative group dynamic
Participant external positioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can reposition participants more influentially due to assumptions and videoing conventions, but there may be ongoing access and control issues due to local dynamics after a project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not have a repositioning effect, but less likelihood of a negative reaction

short exercise on the final day. This involved showing participants how to edit in-camera on their individual mobile phones and tablets. It was much easier to transfer the camcorder production techniques to mobile phone technology than it would have been in reverse. This view was supported through what happened next. Most participants began recording shot sequences immediately (some older phones did not have the capacity), with some producing complete videos on their phones and tablets that evening.

All of the participants commented positively on the participatory learning approach, which was supported by the video camcorder set-up:

“I enjoyed the participatory nature of the training, with all participants taking all roles ... I was very much impressed because it ensures that everyone is involved ... all learn from each other, not only from the facilitator.”
– David ‘Cidi’ Otieno

The inclusive and productive group dynamic that Cidi and the other participants experienced exemplifies the anticipated benefit of using one video camcorder as the central focus, rather than individual mobile phones. The camcorder kit was left with the group following the project to support further video work. Following the project, individual group members have continued to produce video sequences on the camcorder, and on their mobile phones and tablets. However, ongoing access to the camcorder enables more than BLM’s video-making. It has also enabled the video group to run participatory video sessions with others, using the most suitable workshop set-up outlined.

Nevertheless, the presence of video equipment changes the dynamic in any situation, which means that it does not merely capture the world as it is, but always intervenes to change it in some way. Facing up to this unavoidable reality opens up the possibility of using this effect positively, but there are parallel risks, which I now discuss (see also Shaw 2012a).

Negotiating the contradictory power dynamics afforded by videoing processes

Videoing was used to mediate exchange in different ways during the video project. For example, video recording exercises provided the rationale for exchanging ideas in the project.

Passing the hand mic from person to person during the recording exercises opened space for everyone to contribute perspectives, and playback was used to generate further discussion. This approach was used to mediate interactions between older BLM organisers and new fellows, so that no-one dominated. A similar, scaled-back activity was then used to facilitate inclusive dialogue at Jeevanjee Gardens.

This approach builds on the observation that the videoing dynamic can be used to position video group members more influentially than usual in a public space (Shaw 2017). This is due to production and playback conventions. In explanation, during videoing the production team control the space and direct the action. Comparably, the implicit expectation of a screening event is that audiences will watch and listen to the producer’s message or story. In Jeevanjee Gardens, this was utilised effectively. The Bunge session was set up like a video workshop, with participants taking turns on the camera. This helped the group to direct proceedings assertively. The hand mic was handed from person to person round the circle of attendees, so that all views were heard during the discussions, and captured for future reflection. Moreover, having the completed video to play on mobile phones enabled the action research findings from the periphery to be communicated in a focused and engaging form, which might have been harder to do in person.

This process thus enabled these BLM members to have confidence in claiming influence in this important national space, which was appreciated:

“Taking a camera to Jeevanjee – and having the courage to use it – was very inspiring. The camera helped us resolve the fear that we have when we go there, and people are suspicious.”
– Gacheke Gachihi

Jeevanjee Gardens is a highly contested national forum, due to the overt challenge it makes to formal political processes, and its presence in the centre of Nairobi. Despite the older activists’ familiarity with the context and its key players, this explains the courage required to claim the space, and the sense of accomplishment afterwards.

Videoing also contributed to the way the video group participants were viewed in public. For example, Rachael Irungu, who operated a camera

In addition to the dynamics generated by using video in public space, there are also new power dynamics generated when video equipment is left in situ after a project.

for much of the screening session at Jeevanjee, was taken to be a journalist and contacted afterwards to find out which media channel she worked for. While she will need opportunities to build on this experience, it expanded her sense of her own capacities and imagined future possibilities.

However, it is important to recognise that the 'videoing effect' can, at the same time, easily generate negative reactions, especially in contested public spaces. Despite the general encouragement received at Jeevanjee Gardens, some people left the sitting because of the video camera, which is not surprising. Others questioned IDS's involvement, although this would not have arisen if BLM had presented the video without my presence. In addition, the group were aware that there were government infiltrators in attendance. Although the event was largely cordial, it is easy to see how videoing could amplify tensions and lead to a negative backlash if feelings are running high.

This experience, along with that of videoing at the demonstration on day two, clearly showed the potential risks of using a camcorder, which always need consideration. Reflecting on this in the Bunge context, participants highlighted that videoing police actions might sometimes protect those on camera, and sometimes endanger them. As a consequence, on day six of the project, they conducted a risk / threat analysis and drew up safety and security guidelines. These included: always undertaking security mapping of the target area beforehand; assigning and sticking to specific roles (e.g. camera operator, community liaison, safety oversight); and always videoing in a group of at least three, with no-one allowed to wander off and become isolated. The group plan to review these guidelines regularly after future videoing activities.

In addition to the dynamics generated by using video in a public space, new power dynamics are also generated when video equipment is left in

situ after a project. My experience suggests that access arrangements afterwards can reinforce existing inequities and exclusions (e.g. between men and women). Alternatively, they can shift dynamics more equitably (e.g. marginalised people are seen as controlling resources perceived to be valuable), but this can in turn catalyse a backlash. Furthermore, those who take charge of equipment can use their control to increase their own power at the expense of the collaborative dynamic generated in a project.

There was some consideration of this by the group. In response, they drew up a contract specifying responsibility, usage and access; and the women in the group agreed to practise alone in order to counter the tendency for men to dominate technology. Learning how to produce videos on mobile phones was also thought to increase the likelihood of production being sustained, because everyone can continue to practise, even if access to the camcorder is restricted. Nevertheless, this does not address future issues of power that may be generated between the BLM video group and others in the movement.

The intrinsic connection between the possibilities arising from video usage and the tensions has been identified previously (see Shaw 2012a). The participatory video approach I developed for this project, in collaboration with participants, drew on my practitioner knowledge of what can help and hinder. However, there is a need for ongoing reflection on the dynamics generated by video engagement, a trusting environment in which arising issues can be expressed, and adaptive practice as relationships mediated by video processes play out in context. Although this was a time-limited engagement, the video group's experiences sensitised them to this need and, in turn, I intend this discussion to alert others using video in similar projects to the kind of tensions involved.

Tension between opening possibilities and raising unrealistic expectations

In this project, I adapted lengthier, more complex participatory video processes according to budget and time resources, in order to meet BLM's immediate communication needs. This contributed to the group's success in producing a video, and disseminating and discussing it within the allotted time. However, there are several caveats. BLM activists had the capacities and motivation to make the most of these opportunities, and have continued to develop their skills following the project. A less communication-confident group, without similar community engagement or public communication experience, would need more time and input to achieve the same results.

Furthermore, there was a mismatch between my plans, based on what I thought was possible, and the participants' expectations.

As an illustration, the group were very motivated by the idea of learning to edit videos on a computer. However, I planned to outline the computer-editing process only, and introduce basic editing operations instead as a way of tidying up and distributing in-camera edited videos. Realistically, I knew there was not time to do more. This approach was taken because editing on a computer is often a key sticking point of participant involvement in participatory video, because it needs additional resources (e.g. editing software and computer capacity). It is also very time-consuming.

I therefore focused on the *in-camera editing approach*, as described on page 9. This provided a time-efficient production process that participants could use in the future to make short videos on camcorders and mobile phones. It also illustrated a method that can maintain group control, even if in-camera edited material is tidied up later by someone else using computer software. Group control is supported because choices on narrative content are made by the group before recording. On this basis, I intended that each group member would perform an edit operation or two to inform their decision-making, but I would do most of the hands-on editing to complete the final video.

However, the editing task expanded for two reasons. In response to the interest of the group, I involved participants in more hands-on computer editing than planned. The group had also recorded

far more visual material than anticipated, which considerably increased the time needed. In particular, the material from the demonstration on the second day was long and largely unusable, as it was recorded spontaneously before we had covered visual sequencing skills. The extra material resulted in a much more visually interesting video than I thought possible, so it warranted the additional efforts, but there were consequences. It made the simple production process I had designed more complicated than intended, and thus less easy to reproduce. While the group understood that this project was just a first step towards learning about video production, they would have liked more days for edit training:

"This is the beginning ... it's a process."
– Rachael Mwikali

In retrospect, as there was insufficient time to cover computer editing software, I would have made the purpose of in-camera editing clearer, and focused the input on making sure everyone knew how to back up materials, link in-camera edited shots together in a computer programme, and upload them to Vimeo.

The final video was well received by the wider Bunge movement, with many messages of congratulation received on the social media sites, which greatly encouraged those who took part:

"What happened was timely – a video about Bunge activities, made by Bunge for Bunge ... They said it should spread to other Bunges."
– Kennedy Chindy

However, the main thrust of the many comments expressed was a desire for similar training projects in other Bunge spaces such as Mombasa. While the video equipment provided enables the BLM group to continue to develop their own video skills, there is a danger of raising unrealistic expectations about their capacities.

Finally, although the BLM group did experience using video to mediate across the communication gap between the Bunge national space at Jeevanjee Gardens and the grass-roots periphery, I experienced some frustration as a practitioner. This was because I could see further potential for the video group to facilitate participatory video processes themselves, in order to engage uninvolved constituencies in the movement. This project was never intended to do more than raise some awareness of the approach, and

There are several adaptations to video production models, and longer-term participatory video processes, that can make them more accessible, less-time intensive and more effective.

participatory video practitioner training was not part of the brief. Yet I would like to go back and build on what was achieved.

However, my practitioner's desire for more time is not productive, because resources are always limited, particularly when supporting social mobilisation from the margins.⁴ The video group participants are experienced social activists and capable communicators themselves, who were

able to put the knowledge they gained into practice immediately. Following recommendations, the video group downloaded Filmora editing software and soon started producing short videos themselves. They are thus 'up and running', and it is important to focus on what was achieved by this seeding intervention, and how these cost-effective and less time-intensive adaptations of longer-term participatory video processes could bring about similar ends in other contexts.

Concluding insights and practice implications

BLM's action research identified the need to connect different Bunge spaces to sustain and build influence (Otieno *et al.* 2016). In particular, it found a communications gap between local and national spaces, and across divides such as gender, ethnicity, class, relative wealth, (dis)ability and geography. This video project provided the opportunity to explore the potential and challenges of using video to connect people and initiate exchanges between different Bunge constituencies.

Overall, expectations were exceeded. An engaging video was produced about BLM's research findings, their action in response, and current implications. This was disseminated online to amplify the message and increase awareness of the Bunge movement. The video was also used to catalyse discussion between grass-roots members and BLM's centre, through showing it at the national Bunge space at Jeevanjee Gardens. Running the project through participatory video exercises also built awareness about how it could be used to motivate participation, build confidence and generate inclusive dynamics.

I now address the following questions to consider the lessons for future practice (these are summarised in Table 3):

- How were participatory video activities adapted to respond creatively to the resource limitations?
- What are the enduring gains for the video group participants and the Bunge movement?
- What are the implications for future participatory video projects in similar contexts?

Participatory video adaptations and consequent gains

There are several adaptations to video production models, and longer-term participatory video processes, that can make them more accessible, less-time intensive and more effective. The condensed video production process, which incorporated structured narrative recording and visual sequencing, enabled the production of a

⁴ Thanks to Naomi Hossain for provoking me to reflect on this.

Table 3. Summary of participatory video adaptations, BLM's gains and implications for future practice

Participatory video application	Video process adaptations	Gains for BLM project participants and the wider movement	Questions and lessons for future practice
Capacity and resource development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The camcorder workshop set-up was used to assist speedy learning, combined with transfer to mobile phone for accessible production 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New video equipment resources BLM gains resources and skills to strengthen communication Access, safety and care guidelines drawn up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a need to consider what technology is appropriate to the purpose, e.g. video recording and playback on mobile phones, camcorders or a combination
Documenting and reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time-effective production process, including structured narrative recording and visual sequencing Resource-effective use of in-camera editing technique, which does not require computer editing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three completed videos for BLM to use Participant knowledge of a scaled-down production process Input on adapting production processes to different recording devices, which has enabled participants to produce videos on camcorders, tablets and phones Despite limited input on editing software, participants are now able to use Filmora editing software 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The group is motivated and able to apply what they learned, but other, less communication-confident groups may need more input There is a need to be alert to a mismatch between expectations and the possibility of raising unrealistic expectations
Mediating communication and prompting discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speedy distribution on social media Playback via mobile phones is suitable to resource constraints in typical Bunge spaces (e.g. lack of electricity, projectors or connectivity) Scaled-down participatory video processes repositioned participants and mediated exchanges inclusively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants able to share videos on social media or in live playback via mobile phones Wider coverage of BLM activities via social media, raising awareness of BLM itself Participants empowered to bring action research to the national space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a need to consider carefully the possibilities and risks of video power dynamics, and to be responsive as interactions develop
Generating democratic space and inclusive / collaborative dynamics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project run through condensed participatory processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants gained communication skills and confidence Positive group / team dynamic generated as a basis for future collaboration Insight into the benefits of participatory video approaches Group members gained enough insight to use participatory video basic activities with others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How can practitioner training be best supported?

focused and visually engaging product quickly and easily. BLM has two versions of the video – one with input on current implications of the action research, and one of the Jeevanjee Gardens deliberation – which they can continue to show. The video group have been provided with a video camcorder kit and a back-up storage facility. These resources will enable future video production by BLM. They have also established guidelines for access, storage and safety to address anticipated challenges. The in-camera editing process is efficient and appropriate for immediate playback of video materials from recording devices, without the need for access to a computer. Expanding my input to include transfer of the production processes learned to other recording devices means participants can record on the camcorder, and on tablets and mobile phones. While computer editing training was not planned, some limited input on editing processes was enough to set participants on the path to using use Filmora after the project ended.

As BLM had recently put work into developing their social media platforms, the condensed process facilitated speedy dissemination of the video on social media. This has publicised BLM's activities. More unusually, the piloting of playback on mobile phones was a new approach, which responded to resource constraints in the Bunge settings. This provided a new way to connect people and communicate within and across Bunge spaces. Through this process, the older BLM activists and young fellows successfully brought the action research findings into the national space, which they had not done previously.

Introductory participatory video exercises were used to run the project. Individual participants gained communications skills and confidence, and appreciated the positive team dynamic generated. Scaled-down elements of the participatory video approach were also used to reposition participants more influentially, and mediate discussions inclusively at Jeevanjee Gardens. As well as contributing to the participatory learning environment, this provided insights into the benefits and the potential of using participatory video processes to nurture enabling spaces as foundations for new local Bunges.

Reflections on implications for future participatory video projects in similar contexts

In this project, I was provoked to think more clearly about the affordances of different video recording and playback devices. I am now much clearer about my reasons for using camcorders rather than mobile phones for group video processes. I have also seen how to work between devices more effectively.

I have been asked whether it would have been easier to work solely on mobile phones, rather than go back and forth between devices during this project. My answer is no. For one, it would not have been possible to produce the quality of video that emerged. Neither would the group have been provided with insights into the group dynamic benefits. Moreover, the camcorder workshop set-up aided speedy technical and production learning to such an extent, and it was so easy to then cover mobile phone videoing as an add-on, that counter-intuitively I would be tempted to train using a camcorder first in this way, even if participants only had access to mobile phones afterwards. The importance in making decisions should be purpose-led rather than technology-led.

In conclusion, the structured production process provided an accessible and time-efficient way to produce a video quickly. I have used a similar approach before, and I will do so again as it is simple and effective. My previous writing has focused on the benefits of longer-term participatory processes as an ethical response to the tensions of short-term production projects (see Shaw 2017). By contrast, these experiences have shown it is possible to apply elements of the participatory video approach productively during short-term engagements with activist groups such as BLM. This is because they are already communicating confidently in the public domain, and can make progress with more limited input.

However, I remain alert to the balance between making things accessible and the danger of generating unrealistic expectations about what is possible. My stance is that there is not one right approach to using videoing and playback processes to connect people and stimulate dialogue within and across different social spaces. Of course, accompanying inputs should be adapted to context, and BLM's video work will develop in response to specific needs as they practice, which is the best way to learn. This paper includes practical details so that these lessons can be applied by others.

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About Making All Voices Count

Making All Voices Count is a programme working towards a world in which open, effective and participatory governance is the norm and not the exception. It focuses global attention on creative and cutting-edge solutions to transform the relationship between citizens and their governments. The programme is inspired by and supports the goals of the Open Government Partnership.

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