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RESEARCH REPORT

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Pathways to accountability from the margins: reflections on participatory video practice

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Summary

Two of the central challenges in building accountability for marginalised people are how to reach and meaningfully involve the most excluded, and how to establish the kinds of relationships that mean they can achieve, influence and expect government responsiveness.

This report explores how participatory video – an existing methodology for engaging marginalised people – can be adapted and strengthened to inclusively engage citizens and foster responses from decision-makers. It presents four propositions for achieving this.

Proposition 1: Ensure inclusive engagement during group-forming and building.

Proposition 2: Develop shared purpose and group agency through video exploration and sense-making.

Proposition 3: Enable horizontal scaling through community-level videoing action.

Proposition 4: Support the performance of vertical influence through video-mediated communication.

Each of these propositions is discussed in relation to three concepts that are important elements of accountability initiatives: enabling spaces, bonding and bridging communication, and power-shifting. The discussion draws on two long-term participatory video processes at five sites in two countries, Indonesia and Kenya.

Many participatory governance and accountability processes – and the theoretical discourses and practical approaches underlying them – do not pay enough attention to the need to shape the relational conditions for accountability for marginalised social groups. This can perpetuate exclusionary dynamics. Extended participatory video processes can mediate relationships, but for them to do so, there is a need to develop more ethical and effective participatory video practice, and for more work on how to foster support from influential decision-makers.

Key themes in this paper

- Participatory video and participatory research
- Advocacy and accountability processes
- Marginalisation, empowerment and accountability

1. Introduction, background and rationale

This report explores how participatory video (PV) processes can be improved to both inclusively engage citizens and foster support from influential decision-makers. This addresses two key challenges in building accountability for marginalised people: how to reach and meaningfully involve the most excluded people; and how to establish the kinds of relations that mean they can achieve influence and expect government responsiveness.

The report is based on a study of five video processes at five sites in two countries (Indonesia and Kenya), where PV processes were developed in various ways from 2012 to 2015. Supported by Making All Voices Count, the study also draws on new video fieldwork with the same partners during 2016 and 2017. The purpose was to generate nuanced understanding of how to better navigate the difficulties in using video to drive social and political action towards accountable relations.

I am an experienced visual methods practitioner and fellow in a research institute, specialising in work with marginalised people in diverse community, development and health contexts. As founding director of Real Time and co-author of *Participatory Video* (Shaw and Robertson 1997) – the first definitive guide – I have pioneered participatory video since 1984. My previous research has developed detailed understanding of the possibilities and intrinsic tensions of practice. This study builds on that knowledge to explore how to apply video for accountability more ethically and effectively.

PV is an interactive group process, generally facilitated by a practitioner, which is mediated by video recording and playback. Broadly speaking, group members explore their situation by recording themselves and the world around them, and produce video stories or messages for external audiences to bridge horizontal or vertical communication. However, PV is not a singular method; the term incorporates diverse approaches.

In development contexts, it can be used as a mechanism for citizens to claim accountability. Typically, this is approached as group video-making

for research or advocacy purposes. In this short-term, production-orientated approach, a group of people are brought together to learn basic production skills, and facilitated to plan and film a video over a relatively short period (e.g. a week or ten days). Following production, the video is shown to a particular community or decision-maker audience to stimulate discussion. In this approach, the video is the main outcome, to the detriment of potential process benefits such as group-bonding, capacity-building or collective agency. Well-recognised ethical risks (such as inappropriate public exposure for vulnerable groups) are also amplified due to the brief engagement timescale. Most problematically for accountability applications, decision-makers can watch videos and think that they have consulted people, with nothing happening as a result. This often serves to end rather than initiate longer-term citizen–state exchange.

Successful pathways to accountability for the most marginalised communities require a shift in the local and structural dynamics that perpetuate exclusion. This report explores the use of videoing not as a production method but as a process that potentially, as it unfolds, establishes relationships that in themselves challenge and reverse exclusion and marginalisation. It is based on extended videoing processes, which are proposed as the means for improved practice. Extended videoing processes are slower and longer-term. The focus is on maximising the possibility for these accountable relations to form and grow.

The relational aspects considered in the study were grounded through the concepts of enabling space, bonding and bridging communication, and power-shifting processes. The premise was that video as a relational mediator can create contexts that enable dialogue, mediate relational dynamics more inclusively, and bridge communication to develop new alliances. Video is applied in different ways as the processes evolve towards these relational aims. For instance, at the start, quick video games intend to build communication confidence and inclusive group dynamics. Later, short production exercises can enable group agendas to emerge, and instigate interaction with other people. However, it

is accepted that tensions are inherent in facilitated videoing processes because they attempt to shift power dynamics in contested contexts. Rather than being over-optimistic about the use of technology, I acknowledge and reflect on the considerable challenges involved in using PV to engage the most marginalised people and transform their relations with leaders. In recognising these key sticking points of accountability processes, the study addresses the overall question: How can participatory video processes be developed more usefully to both inclusively engage citizens and foster responses from decision-makers?

I tackled this question by reflecting with local researcher-practitioners on two extended videoing processes in Nairobi (which explored disability issues, slum insecurity and sanitation) and on three shorter video processes in Indonesia (for research engagement and policy-influencing), which happened alongside the Reality Check Approach (RCA, www.reality-check-approach.com/what-is-rca.html). We also held new engagement events with decision-makers to gain deeper insights into how they interpret and react to group videos. The video processes studied involved a range of activities including participatory video exercises, in-camera documentaries and dramas, video diaries, peer and community interviews, video messages and stories, digital story-telling, participatory and collaborative film-making, video-mediated community walks, video screening events, and video-mediated decision-maker exchange. These activities are exemplified throughout the report.

This report does not issue instructions for practice, as videoing processes should always be adapted to the specific situation. Nor does it assume that an ideal process is possible; there are always challenges when negotiating between the possibilities and limitations in reality. Instead, the report is based on in-depth illustration of what happened in these processes and why. The insights lie in both the small gains and shifts that mattered to participants, and the practical risks, contradictions and trade-offs they experienced.

The report tests four propositions for improving PV practice in response to recognised challenges, each of which is associated with a distinct stage of the PV process.

A section on each proposition follows the introductory, conceptual and methodological sections of the report. Each section begins by clarifying the assumption on which the proposition is based and the key practical

Research question and propositions

How can participatory video processes be developed to inclusively engage citizens and foster responses from decision-makers?

Proposition 1: Ensure inclusive engagement during group-forming and building.

Proposition 2: Develop shared purpose and group agency through video exploration and sense-making.

Proposition 3: Enable horizontal scaling through community-level videoing action.

Proposition 4: Support the performance of vertical influence through video-mediated communication.

tensions involved. I then give examples from the five video processes to build theory from practice, including links to video materials to illustrate what was produced. Drawing out the nuances makes it plain that there is no one right way to do things; instead, practitioners need to adapt as the process develops. Therefore, at the end of each section there are questions to prompt reflection.

This report is for practitioner-researchers and programme leaders who want to think more critically about using participatory video, whether they are interested in participatory research, visual methods, empowerment processes, advocacy, participatory technology or policy-influencing and accountability mechanisms. It aims to help them set realistic expectations when using video for accountability purposes and to anticipate and negotiate the likely challenges and unavoidable risks, as well as to avoid the worst pitfalls. It also aims to encourage practitioners to engage in critical reflection about how to proceed as activities unfold.

1.1 Building accountable relations in contexts of marginalisation

Across diverse global contexts, people living in poverty identify state corruption and government unresponsiveness as major concerns (e.g. Lash and Batavia 2013; Rothstein and Uslaner 2006; Narayan, Chambers, Shah and Petesch 2000). Top-down intervention often leads to unintended negative consequences (Briggs 2012) and downward cycles of poverty for the most marginalised. To meet the *Sustainable Development*

Goal (SDG) challenge to “leave no one behind” (Kabeer 2016), there is a compelling need for leaders to learn from and develop accountable relations with citizens.

Accountable dynamics between citizens and leaders have two key aspects: people’s capability and opportunity to claim influence; and the political leverage to expect responses and hold decision-makers to their commitments (Burns, Ikita, Lopez Franco and Shahrokh 2015). Accountable governance processes are assumed to be key to citizens’ influence, and tend to work from either ‘bottom-up’ (to build community capacities, identify local solutions and mobilise collective action), or ‘top-down’ (to open more institutionalised forums for dialogue) (e.g. World Bank 2003; Joshi 2008; McNeil and Malena 2010; Gaventa and McGee 2013). However, critical questions remain about how the most marginalised groups can really participate meaningfully in state or civic forums, while contesting exclusionary dynamics in politically inequitable contexts is far from simple (see Johnston 2014; Halloran 2016; Bivens, Black, Hartnack, Waltz and Wheeler 2017). In the SDG era, there is a need to build collective agency and horizontal leverage as well as ongoing multi-level (e.g. local, county, national) interaction between stakeholders as the foundation for scaling up alliances to challenge the powerful forces behind accountability failures (Fox 2016). Accountability processes are unlikely to shift the unequal power dynamics at the root of marginalisation unless they are transformative rather than merely instrumental or functional (Joshi and Houtzager 2012; Shaw 2015; Edwards and McGee 2016).

This study builds on the concept of participatory accountability (see Howard, Lopez Franco and Wheeler 2017) – an extension of social accountability (see Fox 2015; Joshi 2013) – which has become depoliticised in application (Joshi and Houtzager 2012; World Bank 2016). Participatory accountability is a process rooted in context but often catalysed by external intermediaries; it is crucial to SDG implementation because it speaks to the shift in power that is necessary for marginalised people to sway governance. Fox (2015; 2016) has called for strategic approaches to building enabling contexts for leveraging influence, through *diagonally* connecting actors from state and non-state positions in multi-level alliances. It is also crucial to address the social norms, intersecting inequalities and local, structural and systemic constraints that maintain exclusion (see Fraser 1990; Sørensen 1996; Dovidio, Gaertner and Saguy 2009; Halloran 2016; Black *et al.* 2017).

I approach building pathways to accountability from a relational perspective. Foucault (1980) helpfully clarified how power manifests through social relationships at a micro level. Indeed, grounded research in South African townships shows how exclusionary dynamics are played out and perpetuated through everyday social exchanges (Bivens *et al.* 2016). However, this understanding needs to inform change in practice; if power is inherent in all human relationships and interactions (Foucault 1980), purposeful efforts to achieve more equitable exchanges between people can help shift power dynamics (Hook 2010). This in turn can alter power relationships and make them less inequitable for the long term. Building accountable communication in contexts of marginalisation therefore necessitates action to shift relational dynamics at the micro-level interfaces within communities, across agencies and between citizens and state actors (Shaw 2015).

However, there is insufficient understanding about how to develop enabling interactional contexts (Campbell and Cornish 2010) in unaccountable situations, something that is vital to transform communication dynamics and establish productive alliances at the crucial interfaces between different interest groups and social groups. This study therefore focuses on the possibilities and limitations of applying videoing processes as the means to build the relational conditions for accountability in such contexts.

Rather than assuming that expressive agency can always be accomplished through interaction (see Hosking, Dachler and Gergen 1995), the notion of necessary relational conditions draws on relational theory (Gergen 1995) and acknowledges the hidden and invisible power dynamics (VeneKlasen and Miller 2002) such as the interactional ‘rules of the game’ and the social norms that enable and constrain participation. The relational conditions necessary to build accountable relations in contexts of marginalisation include factors such as feeling safe, a trusting and encouraging environment, self-esteem and expressive capacity, connection between people, group identities and mutual dynamics. The relational focus considers relationships both as an outcome (accountable relations) and as the social context, interactional processes and practitioner input needed to transform unaccountable dynamics (the relational conditions). I now turn to the use of video as mediator of these processes.

1.2 Video processes as relational mediator

In the past decade, there has been a rapid expansion in the use of video to drive participatory research and community development processes. Practitioner-researchers have been enthusiastic about the possibility of generating ground-level insights on social issues through cycles of recording and reflective dialogue, and the potential to shift inequitable dynamics within groups, across communities and between marginalised groups and external agencies (e.g. White 2003; Bessette 2004; Shaw 2015). However, as an accountability mechanism in development contexts, participatory video is predominately interpreted as a voice for the excluded and applied as group video-making for advocacy or monitoring and evaluation (M&E) purposes (e.g. Braden 1999; Lunch 2007; Lemaire and Muñiz 2011). For example, a recent PV for social accountability guide (Koolwijk 2014) contains much useful detail on facilitating group video-making, but only passing reference to the potential for building relationships. Moreover, the risk of constraining meaningful participation, when the exchange ends after a playback event, is well documented (e.g. Shaw 2015; 2017) and is an example of finalisation (Bakhtin, cited in Frank 2005), which is a barrier to ethical dialogue. Comparably, many online technology platforms have been built on the premise of using citizen feedback to improve services, with little evidence of delivering on this (Edwards and McGee 2016). Clearly, citizen voice alone – via video or other channels – is insufficient to leverage accountability (Joshi 2014).

In this report, I frame the use of video in a different way to extend its potential scope as a participatory accountability mechanism. Before I unpack this conceptualisation further, there are three important clarifications.

Firstly, I do not think the possibilities afforded for building accountable relations are due to the video equipment itself. Handing out technology unsupported tends to maintain the status quo of local power dynamics (e.g. Nolas 2007; Shaw 2016); the video processes explored in this report were therefore facilitated. Neither do I view video technology as a magic bullet, in contrast to overly optimistic practitioner discourse (see White 2003; Lunch and Lunch 2006; Low, Brushwood Rose,

Salvio and Palacias 2012). The equipment is a tool that can be used positively or negatively, and different practitioners approach the participatory use of video with dissimilar motivations (see Plush 2016). That means understanding what works and what doesn't as video processes evolve in situ, and recognising the contribution of crucial soft skills¹ and tacit facilitation aspects, which is also relational practice.

Secondly, there is sufficient evidence that visual processes can contribute, in some instances, to enabling contexts, inclusive dynamics and collective agency as the conditions necessary for marginalised groups to claim influence (see Black, Derakhshani, Liedeman and Wheeler 2016; Shaw 2016). However, it is important to critically interrogate assumptions of governance responsiveness and real-world improvement in consequence (see Milne, Mitchell and de Lange 2012; Shaw 2012a). Hence, this study also speaks to the crucial knowledge gap in understanding influential decision-makers' interpretations and reactions to video narratives produced by marginalised groups.

Thirdly, important ethical questions have been raised about the use of video, questions that echo those asked of other visual methods, such as the politics of public exposure and reception (e.g. Milne 2012; Wheeler 2012), and the power dynamics between project actors (e.g. Mistry, Bignante and Berardi 2014; Shaw 2016). My experience, backed up by others (see Gumucio Dagron 2001; Goldman, Booker and McDermott 2008; Shahrokh and Wheeler 2014; Mistry, Berardi, Bignante and Tschirhart 2015b), suggests that video recording and playback activities for accountability purposes are most ethically applied as iterative processes due to the increased risks found in short-term, production-orientated projects (see Shaw 2015). However, what such iterative processes look like in a particular context is often insufficiently specified in methods literature, which makes it harder for others to emulate them. There has been a call for clarification of the implicit, intangible or unaccounted for aspects of participatory video practice (Kindon 2016), such as the specific forms, techniques and facilitation approaches used, the funding and organisational backdrops, the relationships that develop, and the effects. In response, this report focuses on the micro-level (face-to-face) interactions that occurred.

¹ 'Soft skills' incorporate the interpersonal skills needed to facilitate group work, such as communication abilities, attitudes, empathy, integrity, patience, enthusiasm, warmth, time management, flexibility, responsibility, and collaborative and leadership traits.



Video-mediated decision-maker engagement in Mwiki.

2. Conceptualising extended video processes – from ideals to reality

I have used three concepts to frame this study: enabling space (the social context of interaction); bonding and bridging communication; and power-shifting processes.

The notion of space is essentially social in that it encompasses all the physical and virtual environments and forums where people come together to interact (Lefebvre 2009), whether private and closed, or public spheres (Habermas 1989). It also encompasses the relational norms

and explicit and implicit rules of interaction in a particular space. It is these, and the underlying power dynamics, that make it hard for disadvantaged people to participate fully in invited spaces² (Gaventa 2006), such as governance forums. Claimed spaces³ (Ibid.), similar to Fraser's notion of counter-publics (Fraser 1990), are alternative semi-public spaces in which resistance to damaging social norms and practices can develop, and safe (confidential) spaces are well-documented (e.g. Vaughn 2011; Shaw 2015) as a

² *Invited spaces* are forums set up by agencies such as government, national or international non-government organisations (NGOs) in which citizens are invited to participate.

³ *Claimed or created spaces* are opened by citizens and controlled more independently by them.

necessary prerequisite for the most marginalised and vulnerable people. The linked idea I pursue in this study is that of enabling space – a social context in which the necessary relational conditions for inclusive engagement can evolve. This report therefore unpacks what was done during the five video processes studied to support inclusive and collaborative environments for interaction at different stages.

The comparable concepts of social performance (Goffman 1990) and performativity (Butler 1990) are also relevant to this endeavour. Goffman (1990) saw all social practices as public or everyday performances through which the ‘self’ is actualised, but distinguished between the different performances people give depending on context. Butler (1990), talking specifically about gender, re-moulded performativity with a distinctive Foucauldian twist, in suggesting that a given facet of identity is not dependent on binary differences, but on repeated performance of stylised acts conditioned by dominant social norms. By extension, all identities are not inner cores of being, but a consequence of active doing in reality (Shaw 2012b). This study therefore explored what the video processes offered in generating the conditions for people to find and form agendas and to rehearse expressing their views backstage before performing influencing activities frontstage in different social spaces. I also looked at how they became social actors through the performance of various video production and playback roles.

The associated concepts of bonding and bridging communication processes encompass both the interactional purpose and the activity content. I extend the Making All Voices Count programme’s conceptualisation of bonding and bridging (Kelbert 2014) by applying them to the aims of video processes for accountability. In this context, bonding communication is considered to create trust and connections between participants and project actors through sharing experiences and developing mutual purpose. It was involved at the group-building, exploration and communication action stages of the video processes, but also later during video-mediated exchange with potential allies. Bridging refers to social exchange intended to connect the project actors – diagonally (Goetz and Jenkins 2001) with better-positioned actors such as non-government organisations (NGOs) or businesses, or vertically to leaders and duty-bearers,

financing agencies or authorities – to promote commitment to working together on solutions (Conklin 2005). But this is an ambitious aim. It can be more realistically seen as a useful step in sounding out and developing allies. In exploring this concept in the video processes studied, I look specifically at how video was used to catalyse and mediate exchange.

The third conceptual leg is the idea of power-shifting processes. I see power as embedded in relational dynamics and played out in the interactions of everyday life (Foucault 1980). Echoing others (e.g. Rowlands 1997; VeneKlasen and Miller 2002; Gaventa 2006), I draw on the concepts of: power within, which is the self-esteem, self-awareness, self-confidence and sense of ‘can do’ that underpins self-efficacy; power to, which is the capacity for action or agency; and power with, which is based on building shared understanding across differences and mutual purpose, but is also reflected in the power of collective action, social movements and alliances. These three manifestations of power point to a fourth aspect that marginalised people can develop: power over (VeneKlasen and Miller 2002), which is the influence of the more powerful actors in any context over those who are less powerful.

I do not underestimate the challenge of transforming power dynamics in unjust or unaccountable contexts. However, I am interested in the small wins (Fenwick 2004), and tiny shifts in dynamics that matter to people. I pursue the idea that people’s positioning (Davies and Harré 1990) in social context is not stable but fluid depending on how relationships are manifested in each interaction. In particular, I explore whether and in what circumstances video enabled people to take up new positions, or resist the positions others assumed for them. This builds on the idea that video production, or presenter–audience conventions, can be utilised to re-position marginalised participants to give them more influence than usual (Shaw 2012b) during engagement with others. The implicit expectation of a screening event is that audiences will watch and listen to the producer’s message or story, and that a video producer will direct the action, which participants will then use to change things.

Table 1 maps these three key concepts onto the four stages of the PV process identified in Section 1.

Table 1 Framing the relational conditions for accountability through video processes

Basic PV process	Enabling spaces	Bonding and bridging communication	Power-shifting processes
Group-forming and building	Opening and enabling safe space to rehearse expression backstage	Progressive cycles of short video recording and playback exercises with turn-taking	Power within – building self-esteem, self-confidence and sense of ‘can do’ (self-efficacy)
Group exploration and reflection toward collective agency	Stepping in / out between the safe space and familiar local environment to develop agendas and performance capacities	Exploring experiences, ideas, issues, opinions and solutions through in-camera edited exercises and discussion on playback	Power to and power with – building group agency and group consciousness, understanding and meanings
Action through collaborative production	Pursuing agendas by story-telling and articulating messages in created space	Making short video stories, messages and clips for particular audiences	Power to – increasing as people move to action Power with – developing through collective awareness, identities and purpose and the energy of collective action
Performing influence through video-mediated exchange	Performing influence frontstage in public space (claimed or invited) within community or between social interests and levels	Directing videos or showing videos to different audiences (peers, wider community, leaders)	Power to and power with – to challenge power over and foster potential allies

2.1 The possibilities and tensions of video processes

The extended participatory video process is grounded in previous research (see Shaw 2012b), which explored participants’ gains, likes and dislikes during 11 video projects. They commonly reported small but valued shifts in their social positioning, from realising they had something worth saying, speaking up and being heard in public, to taking on (and being seen performing) responsible roles. Many respondents appreciated the relational aspects of the team dynamics generated, as well as working together on common concerns. Some reported increased confidence that they could act to change their circumstance (Shaw 2012b). This suggests potential benefits

for particular individuals and groups, comparable to similar research into community arts and media (e.g. Carey and Sutton 2004). However, the possibilities are uncertain, and more knowledge is needed about how projects deliver, for whom, and when, if it is to inform decisions on appropriateness to a specific context.

Furthermore, the same research on the use of participatory video as an empowerment-focused process found that there were inherent tensions and ethical dangers in the video projects studied. Eight main process possibilities were identified at four key project stages, each intrinsically linked with a tension or risk (Shaw 2012b). The extended video processes used in Kenya were developed to address some of these practical challenges.

This practice framework for PV practice clearly separates videoing for internal group reflection in the group-building stage from producing materials to show to external audiences later to avoid damaging exposure. It anticipates multiple cycles of video-mediated action followed by deliberative exchange, and that this will happen in more and more diverse social spaces as the process evolves. This is due to the increased risk of audience backlash in more heterogeneous forums, and is reflected in the separation of horizontal and vertical bridging stages in the framework. However, this does not mean to suggest only one video-mediated exchange in the community and one with leaders. Depending on participants' starting capacities, the intention is that groups flex their influencing muscles progressively: first, internally within the group; then with their peers outside the process;

then with the wider community; then with external allies; and later with less sympathetic audiences, as they gain confidence and experience. Multiple-loop processes also present a more realistic chance that PV will bring deeper insights or move beyond issue identification to generate community-led solutions. Additionally, longer-term processes can often prove more ethical due to the increased possibility of establishing ongoing relationships with influential stakeholders who can assist (Mir 2013).

The extended approach reflects the uncertainty of outcomes and the unavoidable risks of videoing as an intervention, by incorporating assumptions about the potential and likely challenges at each stage. Although it is too linear to reflect real-life practice, it assists as a practice conceptualisation device and as backdrop to this report.

3. Methodology for studying accountability pathways in context

There is little existing knowledge on practical ways to build pathways to accountability from the social margins, nor is such knowledge available for capture from the outside. Instead, improvements need to be constructed from within (Shotter 2006) by drawing on the experiences of the participants, practitioners and other stakeholders directly involved. Although these project insiders' views are necessarily subjective and partial, they are vital to understand the particulars of how to navigate emerging processes (Reason and Bradbury 2006). This enabled me to focus on the broader questions of whether and in what circumstances videoing can shift power relations in the complex social territory between practitioners' intentions, the interests of the project group and the wider accountability ecosystems.

I carried out both retrospective and current studies of two extended video processes applied as the main driver of participatory action research (PAR) by two communities living in poverty in Nairobi. Additionally, I explored three shorter PV processes used in parallel with the RCA at three sites in urban and rural Indonesia.

3.1 Study process

During stage 1, I evaluated the previous video processes in Kenya and Indonesia through retrospective analysis of previously unexplored project data. Cross-case analysis informed stage 2 methods. Stage 2, the current project, involved new fieldwork in Kenya and Indonesia. In each country, I carried out three sequential activities. Firstly, I worked with key local actors to evaluate the previous processes and outcomes. I then accompanied them in new PV fieldwork and supported them to conduct engagement events with local, county and national decision-makers. Finally, these new experiences were evaluated through further participatory exercises.

Data at both stages was generated through participant observation, focus groups, semi-structured interviews, informal conversations, participatory learning activities, practitioner-researcher diaries, videoed discussions, interviews and evaluations, and reports. Stage 3 involved qualitative analysis, with key participants involved in collective visual analysis activities in situ.

Table 2 Key aspects of case study PV projects

Project	Project partner and setting	Participants	Key issues	Methods	Timescale and project structure
Kenya 1	The Seed Institute, Mwiki informal settlement, Nairobi	Community members, vulnerable children, and disabled children and parents	Disability in context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PAR • PV • Drawing and essays • Collaborative film-making • Community walks • Decision-maker events 	2012–2013 Nine months including two 12-day training and accompaniment visits 2017 11 days
Kenya 2	Spatial Collective, Mathare slum, Nairobi	Youth mappers, community activists, young women	Personal insecurity, health and sanitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer-led PAR • PV • Social mapping • Collaborative film-making • Community walks • Decision-maker events 	2012–2013 Nine months including two 12-day training and accompaniment visits 2017 11 days
Indonesia 1	Reality Check Approach, Indonesia, Bima village	Family living in poverty and their friends and neighbours	Rural poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RCA • Immersion • Video diaries • PV 	2014 Four days – video diaries Four days – PV / immersion Two days – video training
Indonesia 2	Reality Check Approach, Jakarta office	Two groups of office boys ⁴	Friendship Boys and school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video diaries • Participatory video • Policy-influencing production • Decision-maker events 	2015 Six days – PV training and process accompaniment Four days – policy-influencing, editing and focus group discussions 2017 11 days
Indonesia 3	Reality Check Approach, Indonesia Lombok village	Students and parents groups	Education Children's demands on parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RCA • Digital story-telling • PV • Decision-maker events 	2015–2017 Five days – RCA Five days – digital story-telling, Four and a half days – PV

⁴ Office boys are young men who fulfil low-status roles such as cleaning, fetching and carrying.

Real Time (<http://real-time.org.uk>). Partners also ran video-mediated action research (VAR) activities themselves.

My ongoing partnership with RCA in Indonesia (www.reality-check-approach.com/indonesia.html) provided the other case studies. Indonesia also exhibits a mismatch – this time between state incorporation of accountability approaches such as participatory budgeting, and the difficulties of making them meaningful due to lack of transparency, inclusion and response (Feruglio and Rifai 2017). RCA is a research method that involves staying in people’s homes, learning from them through informal interactions and embodied experiences, and participating alongside them in everyday activities. From 2014, I worked with local RCA researchers to support them in incorporating video diaries, PV and policy-influencing production. My input took place at three key junctures and involved using video exercises during an RCA family stay in rural Bima, a short PV process with two groups of office boys in Jakarta, and the current process with parents and students in Lombok village (see Table

3 below). In addition, RCA researchers carried out a variety of videoing and digital story-telling activities from 2014 to 2016, which we also considered.

3.4 Summary of fieldwork for the current project

New fieldwork took place in Kenya in December 2016 and Indonesia in February 2017. In each country, there were three days for participant reflection and learning, two days for planning, four days for a short video process (split between the two groups in Kenya) and two days for engagement with decision-makers. The new video processes – and the new videos produced both during the processes and prior to the fieldwork as research prompts – are summarised in Table 3 below.

I now turn to exploring how the propositions for improved PV practice played out in the two countries. Each of the next four sections reflects on one proposition in depth to exemplify how key practice tensions were navigated in each context.

Table 3 Summary of new video processes and videos produced

	The SEED Institute group	Mathare Mappers group	RCA core team
New video process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video session with disabled children and parents • Recording narrative and visuals for video • Rough edit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video session with young women • Recording narrative and visuals for video • Rough edit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four and a half days PV process with a parents’ group (am) and a students’ group (pm) • Video editing • Village screening
New videos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>James’ story</i> – impact of therapy provision and future needs https://vimeo.com/210796262 • <i>Community walk</i> – previous decision-maker engagement mediated through videoing processes https://vimeo.com/210787267 • <i>Decision-maker – engagement</i> as above but showing some of the PV processes https://vimeo.com/210815730 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Focused input effective change</i> – on sanitary towel project https://vimeo.com/210791551 • <i>Catalysing change</i> – community-led action on garbage https://vimeo.com/210785121 • <i>Unintended consequences</i> – why leaders need to learn from communities https://vimeo.com/210798121 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Lombok parents</i> – https://vimeo.com/210797794 • <i>Lombok students</i> – https://vimeo.com/210797988 • <i>Friendship drama</i> – two dramas by office boys – translated https://vimeo.com/210792961 • <i>Why boys leave school</i> – discussion starter on boys’ education – translated https://vimeo.com/210815032

4. Ensuring inclusive engagement during group-forming and building

At the group-forming and building stage, videoing provides the interactional context to open and support enabling safe space, to mediate bonding communication between group members, and to build 'power to' and 'power within'. Participants are often inspired to join video projects to gain skills that are perceived as culturally or economically valuable (as in the case studies):

I feel really, really happy because ... we are taught to use camera. We have never touched it ... before, and now we know how to operate it.

Lombok Ina (mother)

Practitioners assume that video provides an incentive to people who would not usually engage. However, while it may attract some participants from the social margins, it may deter others (Shaw 2016), which can exacerbate their local positioning. For instance, in Kenya and Indonesia, some men were eager to participate because they believed they

would be able to use the equipment, whereas some women stood back for the reverse reason. Alongside evidence that successful videoing increases a sense of can do (self-efficacy) – particularly for those who thought they would not be able to do it (Shaw 2012b) – this means that group formation and development needs careful attention, otherwise the opportunity to build the capacities of those who feel less able may be lost. This leads to two fundamental challenges when using videoing processes to initiate pathways to accountability for marginalised people: (1) how to meaningfully reach the least influential in any particular setting; and (2) how to ensure that all group members have equivalent opportunities to participate in group processes.

4.1 Including some people versus exacerbating marginalisation for others

Although wider community participation can develop over a long-term project, PV is basically a small-group activity. When forming the group the facilitator, mindful of local power dynamics, needs to strike a balance between empowering those who readily take part and avoiding further marginalisation of those who may be reticent. Potential group members need encouragement to overcome the opportunity costs (lost time and income), and any resistance may be their protective strategy if these outweigh realistic gains, or if they perceive damaging exposure. PV guidelines suggest spending time context-mapping, building relationships through community gatekeepers and offering taster sessions in situ for participants who might self-deselect without extra input (Shaw and Robertson 1997). However, the short-term nature of much PV intervention by external facilitators often precludes this.

Two strategies were used in the case studies. In Kenya, PV processes were embedded in the local context through the partners, SEED and Spatial Collective. First, an Institute of Development Studies (IDS) colleague and I trained local practitioner-researchers from the two communities in basic PV and PAR. The SEED



PARTICIPATE, IDS

Training participatory video practitioners in Nairobi.



REALITY CHECK INDONESIA

Video playback during immersion stay in rural Indonesia.

core team in Mwiki included a trained teacher, a community organiser and a mother of a teenager with disabilities. The Spatial Collective team included three young people from the youth mapper group in Mathare. The mappers involved their peers in the wider group before starting their VAR processes. SEED ran videoing training for children attending their unofficial school, then supported the children's group to investigate disability issues through video, alongside their essay and drawing research.

By contrast, in Indonesia, professional RCA researchers were involved. They had previously felt compromised when recording video diaries covertly during family stays, but also worried that videoing openly might change the power dynamics between them and their host families. In response, an RCA co-researcher and I used PV while staying with a family on an immersion visit. Based on RCA's approach to reaching the poorest people in a village, we began with our hosts in their home, and then moved outwards to involve young people and women in the neighbourhood as the process unfolded. While different to RCA, it was a novel way to start PV. In this situation, the family home

provided a safe private space (although this would not necessarily be the case if there was any family conflict or gender-based violence occurring, for example). Here, we found the exercises helped rather than hindered relationship-building with participants, which was aided by the specific camcorder's inbuilt projector. This meant we could screen material to neighbours in the evening, with the host family at the centre of the interaction.

Both these approaches to group formation had potential for subsequently engaging those at the margins, but also highlighted practical tensions. In Indonesia, the family-level focus raised the potential for backlash. For instance, on the second day, a neighbour scolded our families' mother for letting me hang out washing. On discussion this was interpreted as jealousy that we had stayed with the family, especially as they had very low status. Another neighbour demanded our attention throughout, despite having recently exacerbated a livelihood issue for our family, and it was tricky to maintain the family focus without offending anyone. While these examples raise immersion method tensions not specific to video usage, they clearly exemplify the risks of short-term engagement stirring up

local feelings, and experience suggests this can be amplified by the use of video (Shaw 2012b).

By comparison, the Kenyan project involved peer rather than professional researchers, which solidly grounded the research in the community. Relationships evolved over time as the video processes developed – something that is not possible for external practitioners on short fieldwork visits. The relational outcomes were valued; for instance, the disabled children opened up to the school children more readily than the adults, which led to new research insights. The friendships established through bonding interaction contributed to the disabled children feeling more accepted, and the school children gained self-esteem from the responsibilities they took on to raise disability awareness (power to, power within). However, there were ethical risks in exposing the children to difficult emotional issues, and while the SEED adults thought that sharing experiences helped the children's resilience, they also reflected on whether they had provided enough follow-on support.

Furthermore, the children with disabilities had fewer opportunities than the other children to participate actively, which illustrates the kind of intra-community dynamics that can sustain marginalisation. Ethical PV is highly contextual, and specific groups may need additional support to provide equivalent opportunities (Shaw 2016). The SEED adults had intended to run video sessions with the disabled children, but expressed a lack of confidence to do so following the first training input. On the next visit, the school children ran a video session with the disabled children, and one of the disabled teenagers was taught how to use the camera one-to-one at home. One of the SEED facilitators thought the disabled children videoing was a high point, but it was ambitious to expect the school children to facilitate this when the adults had felt unprepared; we reflected on whether enough had been done to involve the disabled children in video activities at this stage.

Alternatively, they could have started with a disabled children's group, which could have driven the process. This would have given more potential to shift their positioning (power to, power within, power with). However, extra external accompaniment was required, and so to support the SEED group, a session took place with the disabled children during the current project. Nevertheless, given the entrenched negative attitudes to disability that SEED faced, it is obvious that iterative cycles of activity were necessary to

shift community expectations. SEED's choice to instigate interaction by pairing school children with disabled children was a pragmatic first step, because the disabled children were stigmatised and hidden at home. This is why it is important to contextualise ideals about what should happen with knowledge of the local reality.

Finally, both the Kenyan and Indonesian experiences raised the need for cycles of training and accompaniment if local practitioners are to have a fully grounded understanding of the soft skills needed by a PV practitioner.

4.2 Generating inclusive dynamics and group-bonding

Early video recording and playback exercises aimed to develop participants' expressive confidence and production skills. Success can expand people's sense of 'can do', as has been well documented (e.g. Shaw 2012b). This was reflected in participant feedback:

We have seen outsiders with cameras, but nobody has given them to us to use before. I thought cameras were only for educated people, but we can do it.

Lombok Ama (father)

Group-bonding also resulted from the video exercises, which prompted sharing and discussion of experiences. However, developing power within, power to and power with through capacity-building and awareness-raising is not achieved by the video equipment itself. In this respect, experience suggests that handing out cameras without facilitation can be a disempowering experience for many participants (Shaw 2012b), as is corroborated by others (Bivens *et al.* 2017). Instead, the potential lies in how participants are supported through the inevitable challenges, which is a relational matter (Shaw 2015, 2016). The main PV difficulty, common to other non-video mediated participatory processes (Mansuri and Rao 2004), is how to create inclusive space for interaction against the tendency for project processes to be taken over by the most dominant participants. As such, practitioners faced the intrinsic practical tension between using their agency assertively to build team dynamics, and evolving group direction. There is also an associated balance between facilitating tasks as appropriate to the group and fulfilling individual support needs. There were two linked approaches: using video exercises to ensure that all

participants had equivalent chances (shifting group power imbalances) and, through this, generating mutual and collaborative dynamics (power with).

As is typical, videoing with the parent and student groups in Lombok village (Indonesia) began with one participant using the camera and the others sitting in a semi-circle. One practitioner supported the camera operator, the other joined the seated group. The first exercise followed the statements in a round format. The camera was switched on and each person said their name, the microphone passing from person to person. Then someone else became the camera operator and the exercise was repeated, each person stating what animal they would be and why. Subsequent exercises included 'questions in a round' and 'chat show'.

Video material was played back after each exercise. The first few times people see themselves are crucial; they typically feel uncomfortable or embarrassed but this can be quickly overcome by the facilitators creating space for people to air their feelings and realise those feelings are normal (relational practice). It also helps build trust if practitioners join in, in front of the camera (Shaw and Robertson 1997). However, parents in Lombok were atypical – they revelled in watching themselves 'in the movies' from the outset:

It was a fun process, we laughed a lot ... and I forgot my worries and loans.

Lombok Ama

And it feels ... awesome to be gathered with friends.

Lombok Ina

In contrast, some girls in the student group were intensely shy. Rather than running an all-girls session, which might have provided a 'safer' space, we provided extra encouragement by telling them we could do it with them, and staying close (relational or soft skill aspects of facilitation). They became noticeably more confident, and we reflected that had they avoided certain roles, they would have been progressively side-lined as the other participants grew in self-assurance. This illustrates the need to achieve a balance between promoting equal opportunities for all participants but avoiding coercion. Whether participants experience this positively depends on the relationships established within the group and between participants and practitioners. The group-building stage is thus vital in laying the project groundwork.

Practitioner intervention to ensure role-swapping is part of the power-shifting process. It is often valued highly by participants, as is the team



Lombok parent's group watch playback.

dynamic generated (e.g. Shaw 2012b). For example, one Kenyan participant felt the best part was the “video exercises bringing the team together because each member had a role to play”. In all five case studies, the shot-by-shot documentary exercise – where all participants take turns as director, camera operator, sound, presentation, floor management, etc. to produce and direct one shot – was reported as a high point, corroborating prior research identifying it as a key process juncture in generating collaborative dynamics (Shaw 2012b). This exercise was the first time participants left their ‘safe space’ to film as a team outside (developing public performance capacities).

During the screening at the end of the Lombok process, the village chief asked how the mothers had become so confident speaking up on camera when they normally do not talk at village meetings. This may be due to the disruption of gender dynamics achieved by our method. The Indonesian practitioners also observed how this approach could help to avoid some participants dominating others. During the video process with office boys in Jakarta, one participant was very overbearing and critical of others, which was undermining. To solve this, they drew up a rota placing him in front of the camera first, rather than operating it (which was what he wanted). The fact that this was more challenging than he imagined meant his attitude shifted dramatically. Afterwards, he followed the practitioner’s lead in telling the others what they had done well, rather than finding fault. His energy

was redirected into encouraging the more reticent participants as overseer of the rota.

The PV approach acknowledges the inevitable power imbalance created by the intervention dynamic, and experience suggests that assertive facilitation is necessary at the beginning to disrupt traditional relational dynamics rooted in gendered social norms (Shaw 2016):

I learned to ensure enough roles to include everyone ... I also learned how to be ‘firm’ to manage the dynamic to level the playing field.

RCA practitioner-researcher

However, being firm did not come easily to all the local facilitators. Assertive behaviour can be considered rude in Indonesia, and the PV approach was also very different from RCA’s usual methods, which aim to decrease power differentials between researcher and researched through (for instance) wearing simple clothes and arriving on foot. On the second day, when I was directing role-swapping and production activities, the villagers took the RCA practitioner aside to express their concerns that I was angry. This led to a pertinent (and humorous) discussion about the role of direction when coordinating a film-making team, and parallels with the difficulties parents were having setting boundaries with their children (the topic of their video). This incident emphasises the importance of outsiders being sensitive to the local cultural context, which was aided through collaboration with local partners.

Questions to stimulate practitioner reflection at the group-forming and group-building stage

- How will you reach and meaningfully involve the least influential people in your context?
- Can you spend time context-mapping, building relationships or running taster sessions before activities begin?
- What strategies will you use to form the video group? Can you set up relatively homogenous groups to minimise power differentials between participants?
- Are there local partners who can help, or will this favour / exclude particular constituencies?
- Would starting with some community members who can be gatekeepers to find others help or hinder in finding potential participants? How would you identify those people?
- What will you do during the early stages to ensure that the process is not dominated by more vocal participants at the expense of the more reticent?
- How will you ensure that necessary convening input to build inclusive dynamics at the start does not prevent group agendas developing as the process progresses?
- How will you balance your input between individual and group needs?
- Can you better tailor activities and approaches to your context?



Lombok parents during the shot-by-shot exercise.

REALITY CHECK INDONESIA, IDS

5. Developing shared purpose and group agency through video exploration and sense-making

Although participants are experts in their own lives and have embodied knowledge of their lived realities, their perspectives are not usually fully formed and ready to be communicated to others. This is particularly true for marginalised individuals and groups, who may have internalised damaging norms and need to discover and nurture a voice. Videoing activities can provide the rationale and means for people to practise articulating ideas, which helps them to decide what they think and is part of building power with and power to. However, this comes up against the common assumption that the main purpose of PV is group video-making for external audiences.

I thought we could quickly record policy messages from the community and distribute them online. I realised participatory video processes are about bonding groups and developing people's strength to engage.

SEED researcher

This quote illustrates two well-recognised video process tensions (see Shaw 2012a; Bivens *et al.* 2017): firstly, balancing the evolution of group agendas with the priorities or interests of outside influences, such as external researchers or donors; and secondly, balancing encouraging open expression so people's voices are heard with the risk of inappropriate public exposure. These are discussed in more detail in this section.

5.1 Allowing space and time to cultivate group agendas versus external influences

In Mwiki and Mathare (Kenya), time was spent on in-camera exercises, free from external production pressure, to allow things to evolve organically and build group awareness and understanding (power with). For example, the core teams and the school children group all took part in videoing exercises such as the shot-by-shot documentary (described in section 4) and the shot-by-shot drama. The latter can be run without planning, as the first documentary was, or through storyboarding, whereby each participant draws a picture to tell a story. The picture sequence that resulted became the storyboard for a video narrative, with the group considering how to order the pictures and adding extra panels where necessary to make the story work. The drama was then recorded (with usual role rotation). These kinds of exercises reduced the pressure on participants to plan a complete documentary or drama before they knew what that might involve.

In both Kenyan case study sites, the issue of personal security arose through these activities. To illustrate this, insecurity is a compilation of some of the video exercises recorded at this stage (<https://vimeo.com/210795089>), and the Mathare group also incorporated insecurity as an additional research priority. However, emergent issues such as this can be at odds with the priorities of external researchers when videoing processes are used as research methods. During the process with office boys in Jakarta, for example, it became apparent that RCA Indonesia had an implicit agenda in wanting to explore why boys leave school early. In contrast, the theme that arose repeatedly in the video exercises was the importance of friendship, in terms of personal resilience, belonging and getting a job. Both groups of office boys recorded a drama on friendship during the three-session process (<https://vimeo.com/210792961> shows one group's shot-by-shot drama and their storyboarded video).

In this case, the disparity between the researchers' and participants' agendas was negotiated because an earlier statement-in-a-round exercise about the boys' school experiences had been run, which generated relevant material. Thus, a short video was also made during policy-influencing production training to fulfil RCA's communication needs (see *Why boys leave school* <https://vimeo.com/210815032>). Nevertheless, the importance of friendship was the more grounded insight from

this process, which was useful as it resonated with other RCA research contexts (such as with the students in Lombok).

5.2 Balancing the need to protect confidentiality with respect for participants' choice

In Kenya, the extended videoing process clearly separated recording and playback for group development purposes from video-making for external audiences. Practitioners treated early video materials as confidential due to the risks of exposure (Shaw 2012b). This was part of creating safe space and a crucial step in engaging those who are most vulnerable, excluded and lacking in confidence. In the case studies, the issue of informed consent was a continuous one, rather than determined at the start when people are less likely to appreciate the potential consequences of showing the videos they produce. For example, the insecurity shot-by-shot exercises were treated as confidential (as is usual) but participants later agreed to their use for teaching purposes and in this report.

It is thus important to be clear that videos will not automatically be shared with all audiences. At the same time, practitioners should avoid preventing video-sharing for paternalistic reasons bearing in mind participants' desires to be heard. For example, the office boys in Jakarta were very keen to distribute their friendship drama immediately on their mobile phones.

There may also be peer or other pressures to show material. For instance, the students in Lombok wanted decision-makers in Jakarta to see their video, but some did not want it screened to the parents. However, there was considerable pressure from the parents, who wanted to see it. As practitioners, we backed up the students' preference. However, we felt we had to leave them a copy on their phones, as it was their video. That meant we had no control should one of them show it to the parents, despite the group agreement not to. The RCA practitioner left his phone number with participants and encouraged them to call if there were any issues later.

The added danger in using visual processes as research methods is that product expectations can be created by practitioners as well as by outside financing agencies. For instance, the RCA team reflected on their previous use of digital story-telling in Lombok prior to the video project. Three researchers had worked for a week with the parents' group, the students' group and a teachers' group, producing 32 digital stories, which were



SPATIAL COLLECTIVE, REAL TIME, REALITY CHECK INDONESIA, IDS

Screen shots from insecurity and friendship dramas in Kenya and Indonesia.

analysed for research insights and used for policy communications. However, doing such extensive work in a short timescale proved technically and emotionally demanding, which caused tensions and reduced their capacity to talk to participants about the emotive matters that emerged. On reflection, they realised the large number of digital stories was linked to the targets set out in the funding bid.

The RCA practitioners also felt uncomfortable that they left after having raised some difficult issues through the process, which the villagers wanted help to solve. They recommended less pressurised schedules and the provision of follow-on support for similar projects in future. Nevertheless, videoing and other visual processes have more potential to navigate these kinds of ethical issues if there is either ongoing collaboration with communities or at least the chance to sequence progressive engagements.

5.3 Progressing from group issues to community-led solutions

It is unlikely that deep insights on the barriers to change, or community-led solutions to address them, will arise through single-loop action research processes (Maurer and Githens 2009). Likewise, videoing processes based on one cycle of activities are more likely to lead to superficial content that confirms existing norms (Shaw 2012b). This is because it takes time for participants to open up and unpick assumptions critically together. To give a more realistic chance of building power with – both through evolving deeper insights and developing stronger

capacities to pursue agendas – video processes are better approached progressively (see Shahrokh and Wheeler 2014; Shaw 2015; Bivens *et al.* 2017). In the SDG era, moving from communities identifying problems to forging community-led solutions is likely to need multiple cycles of improvement action and reflection (Shaw 2015). Nevertheless, practitioners' desire for more time with participants is tempered in the current climate of short-term financing. If it happens at all, longer-term engagement often has to be delivered through a sequence of projects financed by different partners, raising questions about how different methods should be combined and sequenced for particular people given their starting point and the wider context (see Bivens *et al.* 2017).

The current project provided another chance to engage with the same parents and students in Lombok through a four-day PV process. RCA Indonesia had previously analysed the individual digital stories these groups had produced on education, which showed that parents mostly felt inadequate, worried about finances and powerless, and wanted their children to be happy, while the students mostly felt boredom, fear and anger, disliked being labelled naughty, and wanted more time to play. On the second day of the video process, participants were asked what they remembered about the digital stories, and then in groups they synthesised the main messages (or themes) in the stories. The RCA practitioner thought this collective sense-making process helped validate RCA's research insights because the themes identified by participants were very similar. Moreover, he thought that running the PV after

the digital story-telling process enriched it, as it enabled the learning to go further through the use of the narrative framework.

As participants in various countries have related very easily (Robertson and Shaw 2014) to the visual symbolism of Freytag's (1863) plot pyramid (comprising five stages: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and denouement), I adapted this in Lombok (and in both Kenyan contexts) to facilitate video-making for an external audience by inexperienced producers. Rising action contained examples of the issue (e.g. from the parents' perspective, children's demands), and culminated in the most extreme example as the climax. The falling action comprised suggestions as to solutions, which helped shift the discussion to what could be done. Finally, denouement became a message to decision-makers about the groups' wants and needs.

This simple and accessible framework enabled the two groups to plan and construct a focused video narrative, which was then recorded using the in-camera edited statement format as the basis for the video. On the third day, parents and students worked in sub-groups to storyboard visual sequences to illustrate the narrative. They then took turns recording these and watching the edit take place. The two videos – *Lombok Parents* (about financial pressures <https://vimeo.com/210797794>) and *Lombok Students* (on their experiences of education <https://vimeo.com/210797988>) – were completed

ready for mediating bonding communication among villagers at the screening event on the fourth day, and bridging communication with decision-makers in Jakarta.

Although time was short, we were able to produce a video for two reasons. Firstly, the in-camera editing technique not only involved everyone but also facilitated a speedy production process. It assisted in maintaining group direction of the editing process, which is often a key sticking point of participant authorship. Secondly, it was possible to accelerate the video process in this case because it built on the previous digital story-telling work, which culminated in a strong message that could be taken to decision-makers. The RCA practitioner also felt more comfortable that we had left the villagers in a better situation, having instigated discussions on how to tackle their problems with neighbours and the chief. On reflection, the practitioners wondered whether the PV process could have happened before the digital story-telling, as a less intense way to bond the group.

It is clear that this group could have gone further with more time; this was only a starting point in generating community-led change processes. How far it is possible to get in any one iteration of video activities depends on the individuals and the context, as well as on their previous experiences. Some will already have developed collective agendas and be ready to advocate from the outset. Others may need multiple cycles of activity before they are ready to communicate externally.

Questions to stimulate practitioner reflection at the video exploration and sense-making stage

- How will you ensure there is sufficient time to develop communication capacities free from production pressure? Will you separate recording and playback for development in safe spaces from video production for external audiences?
- How will you ensure that sessions are confidential, and avoid financing agencies or local stakeholders wanting to see early material?
- Can you combine video activities with other participatory, visual or performative methods such as drama or drawing?
- What will you do to document research insights and lessons from discussions or in the activity dynamics?
- Can you clearly identify the audience(s) for different materials? Will there be enough time to separate out production for local audiences or research purposes and policy-influencing? What production process and level of production quality is appropriate at each stage?
- How will you ensure you are confident and comfortable with facilitator approaches and technical aspects of an exercise before using them with a group? Is it possible to set up a support group so you can reflect honestly together to learn from the difficulties? How are you going to develop your skills?
- Is it possible to work over the longer term with people, or sequence iterative cycles of input? What will you do if you work at a distance? Can you train local facilitators? How will you support and accompany them to develop as practitioners?
- How can *iterative* videoing processes be financed and supported to more ethically and effectively prepare groups to engage with duty-bearers?



Mothers of disabled children meet for support.

THE SEED INSTITUTE, REAL TIME, IOS

6. Enabling horizontal scaling through community-level videoing action

Horizontal scaling of group engagement through bonding and bridging communication is important both for catalysing community-led change processes and for leveraging government responsiveness (Fox 2015; 2016). At this stage, videoing can bridge communication between the group and the wider community, while playback can instigate bonding on how to solve issues together (Shaw 2012b). This occurred in both the Kenyan projects:

... the highest point is that we've been able to engage the community through ... coming together and doing something instead of waiting for the government to come and do so.

Mathare Mapper practitioner

This strengthens the pathways to accountability from the margins, because it can nurture new social actors: both the core video group as they act to motivate others, and those who are drawn in

(power with and power to). However, as activities move outwards to involve people in the wider community, there are parallel risks. This highlights the recognised practice challenge (Shaw 2015), which is how to increase collective leverage through horizontal bonding and mitigate the risks of entrenching differences and perpetuating unequal power dynamics.

6.1 Building community bonds and collective action through video-mediated exchange

Once collective agendas had been established, the Kenyan teams made videos and used them to engage community audiences. For example, the Mathare Mappers group explored health and sanitation issues over a three-month period, supported by local production expertise. They

recorded video material alongside their social mapping research, including interviews with residents and visuals of problems such as open sewers. They then edited the material and organised local screenings:

The visual aspect ... made it interesting, so more people sat down to discuss than would have done otherwise ... Policy influence was happening at the grassroots ... they were the decision-makers.

Spatial Collective manager

The video meetings attracted community elders, women and young men, who all identified solutions. For instance, a young man suggested that youths could be involved in collecting rubbish. During reflections, the Mathare team considered that these screening events were important in generating commitment to the community-led waste management scheme instigated by one of the Mappers (see *Catalysing change* [©https://vimeo.com/210785121](https://vimeo.com/210785121)).

As part of the second Kenyan accompaniment visit, the production process also shifted the focus towards solutions using Freytag's (1863) narrative arc as in Lombok (Indonesia). An IDS colleague and I supported the SEED and Mathare Mapper teams to storyboard policy messages for UN decision-makers, and guided their collaborative film-making with partner Real Time. The Mathare Mappers video, *Working Together for change* ([©https://vimeo.com/210789695](https://vimeo.com/210789695)), became part of Participate's online and New York exhibitions, and was incorporated in the documentary *Work with us* ([©https://vimeo.com/album/4488354/video/80075380](https://vimeo.com/album/4488354/video/80075380)). However, the Mathare team also showed this video in a community forum as before. After playback, the community reflected on how torches are shined onto security light sensors to turn them off, and the young men formed patrol teams to deter muggers.

Bringing various community stakeholders together can build shared commitment to action, which is assumed necessary to resolve complex real-world problems (Habermas 1984). However, if such a forum is too diverse, it can bring unexpected negative reactions or can embed disparities. The five extended video processes studied therefore anticipated that participants would rehearse initiating exchange in relatively homogenous forums (such as with peers) as a first step, and

then, as their confidence grew, would organise video-mediated exchange with more diverse audiences (building power within and power to). For example, the Mwiki team started with the disabled children at home, then engaged the parents and stakeholders in schools, and then other community constituencies. Later, as their capacities and awareness increased, they engaged with local education authorities and national policy forums such as Nairobi County's post-2015 workshop.

The multiple strands of video-mediated research also deepened SEED's appreciation of the complexity involved in developing power with (Waituri 2014). Originally, they thought that more wheelchairs would be the solution for disabled children, but they began to recognise other issues preventing access to education and health care. Moreover, they collected children's individual views, such as that of a blind boy who just wanted to play without running into the wall, and one child who dreamed of having a birthday party. Examples like these provided everyday, real-life issues they could tackle. While research activities could have taken place without video mediation, SEED felt that the method helped create a relational platform:

In the area of disability, it has been a real experience working with the video ... People have been brought together, thought about the issues together, and understood and addressed their needs. After being listened to ... people gain a lot of trust in us, and [we] develop a feeling of responsibility.

Waituri 2014: 33

SEED made its own video about the problems disabled children experience in accessing health care ([©https://vimeo.com/album/4488354/video/221259870](https://vimeo.com/album/4488354/video/221259870)) and, during the second accompaniment visit, they collaborated with Real Time to produce a policy message *Forgotten and ignored* ([©https://vimeo.com/210791930](https://vimeo.com/210791930)), which was also part of Participate's bridging communication intended to influence global policy-makers. However, as a result of the local bonding exchange, and with support from the community administration at chief level, they instigated meaningful changes such as securing weekly allowances for disabled children.

The SEED team also encountered major challenges, with activities coming to a standstill (described as the low point of the process). They experienced shortages of funds for day-to-day



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Children with disabilities and leaders watch video playback during PV workshop.

operations, office flooding, closure of the Eureka school, and organisational stagnation when finances dried up. At this point their sense of influence was decreasing (power with, power to). This was even more difficult because the process had raised hopes among the children and their parents, despite the team's efforts to explain that the research could not guarantee that anything would improve as a result:

That is when we started going uphill ... the community started becoming too expectant. They expected a lot ... because we ... involved the area chief and other NGOs... we had to deliver to them, so we continued.

SEED practitioner-researcher

Of course, change does not happen in linear and predictable ways. Persevering through setbacks can create the conditions for change (Green 2016), such as changes in community attitudes to people with disabilities reported in Mwiki despite strong stigma towards this group (power within, power with). The encouragement generated from the community also inspired the team to keep going despite the challenges.

The other factor that helped SEED persevere was the creation of new *diagonal* (Goetz and Jenkins 2001) alliances with international and Kenyan NGOs, businesses and churches, formed after the Participate project finished. As a result, there is now a nascent therapy room at the informal school, with weekly sessions. We concluded that far more could be done to make diagonal as well as vertical connections using video. In consequence, the SEED group chose to tell *James' Story* (<https://vimeo.com/210796262>) during the current project. It exemplifies achievements as well as further needs, and they intend to use it to galvanise further partnerships.

6.2 Growing and nurturing local champions

Videoing is assumed to have a performative aspect (see Shaw 2012b) in addition to providing the means to pursue priorities with relevant audiences, which can also encourage others to take an active part and thus help grow leadership capacities (power to). For instance, the teams in Kenya were perceived as social actors and became

so through recording videos and then screening them at events they organised. For instance, the mappers reported a shift in self-perception (power within), seeing themselves as social change actors; they feel that the community views them as respectable, and they have continued to develop as community activists (power with, power to). As mentioned, one mapper championed and led a waste management scheme and has now secured UN Habitat support for a recycling centre (<https://vimeo.com/210785121>). Another has instigated a sanitary towel project, and teaches boys and girls about sexual health (<https://vimeo.com/210791551>).

In my view, control of the video equipment gives participants more power (Shaw 2012b), which can contribute to enabling space for them to achieve influence. However, the danger is that some people may use that control to put others on the spot, or to prevent wider access. That is why the PV approach used in these cases involved the core teams turning the camera on themselves first, to sensitise them to the ethical risks, before involving others through similar processes. As experienced facilitators, the SEED team went further in conducting PV sessions themselves from the beginning. Through this

process, the mother of the boy with disabilities gained considerable confidence to articulate and champion disability issues (power within, power to) (see <https://vimeo.com/210815730>). She established five mothers' groups, and over time the mothers have started organising themselves (power with), setting up a solidarity fund that everyone contributes to weekly to help those most in need (see Waituri 2014).

Despite the local impact of these community-led initiatives, it is unrealistic to expect communities to achieve structural improvements without external support – which was the Mathare Mappers' main policy message at the end of their video:

We cannot tackle wider social problems alone, so we want you to work with us not only on prioritising issues, but on implementing specific actions.

Participate documentary 2013

Both groups in Kenya found that leveraging meaningful support (financial or political) from local and county-level leaders was the biggest sticking point. The next section considers the experiences of using video to bridge *vertical* communication.

Questions to stimulate practitioner reflection at the horizontal bonding and bridging stage

- How will you increase collective leverage through horizontal bonding and mitigate the risk of entrenching differences and perpetuating unequal power dynamics?
- Who will be invited to community forums, and how will this be decided?
- In your context, what will the balance be between including diverse stakeholders to surface multiple views and providing a homogenous setting to build capacities and avoid conflict?
- How will the session purpose be framed to invited audiences? What is the hook?
- How many people will be invited?
- How will the session be organised (e.g. will you use introductory icebreakers, watching videos, group work, plenary feedback or discussion)? Could you use participatory video exercises to create inclusive space?
- Is there potential to use video to scale activities by engaging with progressively diverse audiences as the project evolves?
- What activities will take place to engage the wider community beyond video playback?
- Will you run participatory video sessions with them? Can you reflect on the purpose at this stage in relation to previous questions on who to involve, how, when and in what circumstances?
- How will you ensure facilitators have the necessary technical, relational and reflective skills and experience to encourage others, and how will they be supported in adapting practice to context?
- How will you navigate between generating wider community involvement and managing expectations of improvements?
- How will you negotiate between commonalities and diverse issues in your context? Will video processes help or hinder?
- Will the community interaction focus on building mutuality or enabling contestation – with whom and at what stage?

7. Supporting vertical influence through video-mediated communication

PV practitioner-researchers are motivated by the idea of using videoing activities to open dialogue between community participants and decision-makers (e.g. Mistry, Berardi, Verwer and de Ville 2015a), which was echoed by the partners in our five case studies:

In the era where we want to have a better partnership [for] change ... it is a good approach to conduit between ... people, government, and NGOs ...

RCA Indonesia researcher

Videoing is assumed to have the potential to reposition citizens more influentially in interactions with leaders due to presenter-audience role conventions (Shaw

2012b), with the expectation that audiences will watch and listen to the producer's message or story. However, there are risks in using video to bridge social levels because audiences may misinterpret the intention or content (Kindon, Hume-Cook and Woods 2012; Wheeler 2012). The question is, how and in what circumstances can videoing fulfil the promise of bridging or bonding communication, and shift dynamics between marginalised groups and external audiences (power-shifting processes)? In this section, I explore the possibilities and tensions associated with using videoing processes and showing video materials to initiate exchange with county / national-level decision-makers and duty-bearers.



Exploring reality through video in Mwiki.

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7.1 Claiming space for exchange with influential actors through the videoing context

A novel approach in the Kenyan cases was using videoing production as context for engagement during two community walks (see <https://vimeo.com/210787267>) and for process insight (<https://vimeo.com/210815730>), another example of opening enabling space through videoing. We had wanted to bring leaders to interact directly with the communities, and the opportunity arose for video-mediated interactions as it coincided with both the decision-makers' fieldwork visit and the process of producing the policy message video.

SEED invited two influential leaders: the newly elected county representative and a former member of parliament (MP). The group assembled at the unofficial school, where the children ran a short PV session with the leaders and disabled children. (One articulate teenage girl, who desperately wanted to be in school, had not left her house for three years before the event, due to the lack of a wheelchair.) The assembled group then walked through Mwiki village, talking informally, with the leaders invited to push two children in borrowed wheelchairs along the rutted roads to give them lived experience of the difficulties the children face. At strategic points along the route, such as the chief's office, SEED delivered a planned policy message. The walk, planned statements, children's comments and the leaders' responses were documented by a professional camera operator and by the SEED children using the project camcorder:

Today's event has ... given me the opportunity to come to the lowest level ... that a leader can ... We have walked with them, discussed the ... I got touched, when I spoke to her [the teenager] as she only talked about going back to school.

Retired Kenyan MP

The SEED team identified the community walk as a crucial tipping point in their sense of power with, because it brought decision-makers to the area, something they had previously found very difficult to do. Walking together enabled decision-makers to see the reality and listen directly to disabled children, which also raised awareness. Of course, this could have occurred without video mediation, but the videoing context provided a strong engagement rationale and was considered



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Videoing as the context to claim space for influence.

to have given the policy messages greater impact. Mediating the event through videoing processes positioned the SEED team and the disabled children and parents influentially (enabling space), because production roles placed them at the centre of the action and enabled them to direct the walking route and interactions (bridging communication). The video-making performance created a spectacle, which attracted others to join in, and the disabled children became visible in their community where they had been previously hidden at home. Moreover:

Using the video was a very key element ... It was important to capture what the current leaders have to say ... and then show others ... to take exchange forward.

SEED practitioner-researcher

Implicit in this comment is the idea of using video to hold leaders to account because their promises are recorded (power to), but there are caveats. While this was understandably attractive in the context of unresponsive governance in Kenya, there are ethical questions in using video as a 'stick' with which to beat leaders. A clear tension was highlighted between those aiming to build mutual partnerships and those aiming for critical contestation, which needs careful consideration.

Furthermore, the possibility of raising expectations arose once again. Despite the leaders seeming to “really want to know what is happening, they never came back” and did not follow through on their commitments to buy wheelchairs. This was the lowest point of the process, when SEED started “really struggling uphill” (participatory exercise). They thought some leaders may take part in improving their public profile, but knew they would not keep promises. Others may have avoided taking part because they anticipated being pressed to act. SEED also reflected on whether it should have followed up more assertively.

Nevertheless, as the approach was perceived successful, SEED organised another community walk in 2015, targeting local and county decision-makers with relevant responsibilities, something that ultimately led to the provision of weekly cash allowances for the disabled children in the village.

Overall, the SEED team perceived the community walks as significant moments in the children and parents “coming out of stigma” (disability is so stigmatised in Kenya that parents often will not admit to having a disabled child). SEED therefore interpreted the walks as pride processions (power within, power with):

What has really given me joy is ... our processions for disability awareness ... It has enabled a lot of parents and children to come out of stigma ... they accept themselves and are included

... There has been a big impact because the community have really embraced them, and realised they need support.

SEED practitioner-researcher

The risk of unexpected negative reaction to public performances has been documented (Shaw 2012b), but SEED had undertaken painstaking groundwork, so no negative reactions were forthcoming. The community walk approach is an example of creating claimed space (Gaventa 2006) as the events were organised by the SEED team on home ground on their own terms.

This example also illustrates the performative aspects afforded by videoing, as the walks did not need to be recorded or played back for the videoing context to contribute to the dynamics. It was suggested that these video-mediated interactions could help build relationships through enabling positive first connections, but they had seemed most effective with the local / county decision-makers because they had power to change things.

7.2 Bridging vertical communication through video-mediated exchange

A key rationale for bridging vertical communication through video is that it can bring people’s realities to decision-makers in a credible



A SEED Institute engagement with decision makers to discuss future collaboration on issues facing children with disabilities.

and compelling way. Video, like other visual methods, is believed to generate empathy through emotional connection (Shahrokh and Wheeler 2014). The assumption is that leaders' attitudes are more likely to shift if they are personally moved by what they see (Jupp, Nusseibeh, Shahrokh and Wheeler 2014: 60), and stirring feelings can generate a sense of urgency and rouse a response that reading a report might not. However, there is no guarantee that increasing empathy will lead to greater responsiveness (see McGee 2000). Furthermore, there are associated risks in emotional investment, both for participants hoping to see improvements (Shaw 2012b) and for policy-makers who act beyond their usual remit (Jupp *et al.* 2014). The following sections explore two pertinent aspects: how decision-makers reacted to being shown group videos; and the conditions in which they were shown. I discuss the latter first, as it provides the backdrop to the responses.

Five new video-mediated engagements took place with decision-makers at local, county and national levels during the recent Kenyan and Indonesian fieldwork. For instance, the Kenyan Mathare Mappers group held a meeting with ten community-level leaders, including an assistant chief, a county assembly official, village elders, women's, youth and opinion leaders, and security service and church representatives. After introductions, they played the video *Working together for change* (<https://vimeo.com/210789695>) to initiate discussion on how they could build partnerships to enhance security. Some of the exchange was mediated through PV exercises. There were several perceived benefits: the mappers helped others to use the video; the leaders all used the camera, which they valued; and the video exercise helped generate inclusive (enabling) space. As intended, this meant everyone contributed to discussions, and avoided anyone dominating unduly.

The most pertinent insight was from the assistant chief concerning implementation of the new national Constitution. He pinpointed the main paradox – that local leaders feel unable to act because county-level governance is supposed to be citizen-led. So they are waiting for bottom-up leadership, but that is not happening because citizens are not aware of their rights and have not developed organisational capacities to pursue them. His solution was for the local leaders and the Mathare Mappers group to work together so that resources flow more effectively from county government to community level:

My high point was when I heard the decision-makers saying they also really want the change ... I felt they wanted to be part and a parcel of what we are doing ...

Mathare team member

The outcome was a proposal to organise regular forums to build and sustain relationships between community leaders and the group activists. While it remains to be seen what happens next, it was a productive first step (increasing leverage through collaboration). Other high points were recognition for their achievements, and facilitating the leaders to use the camera, which created a buzz and left them wanting more. The PV approach was deemed successful in this context because it gave space for all to talk and find shared ground.

However, SEED found it somewhat more problematic to use PV exercises to mediate exchanges with decision-makers. They ran two meetings with county and national-level decision-makers such as an assistant county commissioner, a community leader (and aspiring MP), a deputy county officer, a parliamentary office representative and heads from the education and health ministries, the labour office, youth department, department for social development, and a school. The SEED team ran some introductory videoing exercises to give the leaders a sense of the project, and to avoid any one person dominating. This raised tension between the perceived benefits of using video to create inclusion (enabling space) and potential discomfort or negative reactions. On the second day, a SEED practitioner felt frustrated when one leader refused to be recorded or to sign the study consent form; we subsequently reflected on the importance of people being able to refuse consent. However, once the camera was switched off:

... there was a tap that just opened and they said so many things ... Then we had very supportive decision-makers ... All the information they gave us was very, very supportive.

SEED facilitator

Counter-intuitively, the intensity of the video context had created a heightened intimacy and connection in the exchange that followed. Nevertheless, we wondered whether these county-level decision-makers perceived the use of video as a threat (in contrast to the value placed on the interaction by community-level leaders in the Mathare case), because they were higher-level social actors who had more to lose, or if they just had more power to refuse. In this respect the

leader who refused consent also dominated the exchange once the camera was switched off, so it was possible the videoing exercises had created more democratic space (as intended). If used in future, leaders need better prior warning about their purpose.

7.3 Fostering responsiveness through showing video materials to decision-makers

As a mechanism for bridging communication, video provides an indirect bridge to audiences when the makers are not present, or a direct bridge when speaking up to leaders in person may be difficult due to capacity or confidence. This section of the report explores decision-makers' reactions to the video materials they were shown, highlighting three main risks: misinterpretation of the message; negative reactions or mistrust; and the balance between generating mutual understanding and provoking critical thinking.

As explained, the Kenyan groups had produced focused policy messages through collaborative film-making activities during the second accompaniment visit. These ready-made videos provided an advocacy link through which the communities could convey their messages. SEED used the videos to prompt discussion in the recent decision-maker engagements:

It helped, that we had recorded videos from the previous years to play to pass a particular message, and ... the message was still important this time because it was the start of what we were developing.

SEED practitioner-researcher

In the SEED context, it was particularly helpful that the disabled children and parents were represented via video and were not required to be present. This avoided raising expectations once more, especially as attending would have been physically uncomfortable for some. The parents and students from Lombok (Indonesia) were also able to communicate to decision-makers in Jakarta by video; they would not have been able to present in person due to prohibitive travel costs. In response, audiences in both countries said they liked hearing from local people directly via video rather than through NGO intermediaries. Surprisingly, given common responses to this kind of qualitative data, some saw the videos as



UN high-level panel member visits Mathare for video-mediated community walk.

evidence rather than anecdote. These experiences illustrated the potential of video to mediate the vertical and diagonal scaling of messages.

However, the Indonesian engagements highlighted the risk of decision-makers misunderstanding the video content or misreading its intent. During reflections, RCA practitioners explained the problem:

RCA is trying to make realities transparent, but communities are outside looking in, policy-makers inside looking out, and there is thick glass between.

RCA practitioner-researcher

They perceived a tendency for policy-makers to relate to stories, but to “see what they wanted to see and hear what they wanted to hear” when interpreting those stories. RCA had also previously found that some decision-makers felt they knew best as experts, at times patronising or criticising participants. Alternatively, some had seen something that challenged their perceptions, but had been offended. This resonated with an experience by SEED in Kenya, when one decision-maker reacted like a “red flag to a bull” on hearing the policy statement “disabled children have been forgotten and ignored”. It resulted in an angry tirade that the video gave an incorrect impression of what government is doing, because “there are institutions that are being set up, and funds available”. The SEED team were told very clearly that the problem was:

... we have not done our homework ... we need to go to the relevant offices, get very, very correct information, so that we don't paint a picture of other people not working on this.

SEED practitioner-facilitator

Moreover, this respondent did not perceive a governance failure in not providing information, but saw it as evidence that SEED needed to reach out better so the state can help. Once more there is a tricky balance between showing videos to generate mutual understanding and shared commitment to action, and provoking critical thinking.

In Jakarta, as in Kenya, the exchange was not only prompted through playing videos but also through PV exercises to mediate the interactions. The opportunity to learn about the videoing approach provided a hook, which was valued by decision-makers. The first RCA engagement was attended by education specialists and planners and a representative from the education ministry. After introductory exercises, they watched two of the digital stories. The first highlighted the financial demands children place on parents so that they can attend school (*Sell the Cow*, <https://vimeo.com/album/4488354/video/221259655>) and the second was about the fear and shame that comes from punishing children for mistakes (*English Lesson*, <https://vimeo.com/album/4488354/video/221267077>). They used the 'chat show' format to give feedback, then watched and discussed the two videos made in Lombok (*Lombok Parents* <https://vimeo.com/210797794> and *Lombok Students* <https://vimeo.com/210797988>). Finally, there was a visual exercise to prompt discussion about how to *bridge communication* between leaders and communities.

The premise is that making people's realities visible can evoke human empathy or even a strong gut reaction, which assumes that videos and digital stories function as communication intensifiers. Most of the Indonesian decision-makers felt sad or angry when they watched the two digital stories. The issue of children's demands resonated with their own experiences as parents. This added weight to the stories, and emphasised the need to support wise parenting. However, the issue of the authenticity of stories was raised, with one respondent in particular thinking there was a mismatch between the stick pictures and voices in the digital stories, and questioning whether the narratives were written by someone else. This was somewhat surprising, as all those attending were RCA allies and the stories were contextualised by the workshop approach and explanation of the participatory processes used.

The digital stories were considered most problematic by the decision-makers in Indonesia as participants could not be seen, and respondents in both sessions favoured the documentary video material because seeing expression was more convincing and less abstract than a written report. This contradicts one argument for using digital storytelling in research contexts, which is that it protects anonymity for vulnerable participants. Nevertheless, it resonated with a previous insight (2015 pilot) that decision-maker audiences prefer documentary materials because they show reality, in contrast to the drama format videos, which they thought unreal.

Overall, doubts about authenticity were more of an issue in Indonesia, largely because of high-profile manipulation of the media. As one government respondent said:

What are the things I need to see to judge whether the stories on video are real? As persons who will do this kind of process with people, what are the things that we need to be aware of to maintain trust or keep the authenticity?

Indonesian decision-maker

The Indonesian decision-makers wanted confirmation of the situation from other information or statistical data before making policy decisions in response to participants' views. RCA uses mixed methods to triangulate research findings, and explained how the stories they had chosen resonated in other contexts. However, they also explained how they used particular stories purposely to connect audiences emotionally and provoke a conversation, which is not really about the reliability of the content. These decision-makers recommended greater contextualisation of both the setting and the participatory processes used in order to increase video audiences' understanding and conviction. Consequently, other videos were made to sensitise future audiences to PV processes and to prompt discussion about why groups show video material (see <https://vimeo.com/218804906> and <https://vimeo.com/218803274>).

The Kenyan teams' experiences emphasised that the strength of video lies not only in identifying issues and involving the community, but also in expanding story-telling traditions to galvanise commitment from leaders. They observed this kind of emotional reaction during the second decision-maker engagement during a screening of *James' Story* (<https://vimeo.com/210796262>), at the



Recording policy messages during collaborative video production in Mathare.

moment when his mother exclaims, after just a few short therapy sessions, “my child could walk”:

We could hear some ladies respond, ‘Oh God, oh my’ ... you could hear from the audience ... they’re connected with the whole story, and they knew that there’s something they could do ... Then we had very supportive decision-makers.

SEED practitioner-researcher

While there are times and places to call leaders to account, contestation can be risky and needs greater horizontal leverage for success. On this occasion, the Kenyan teams tried an alternative approach to use video to show emerging virtuous or positive upward cycles of change. *James’ Story* makes clear the embryonic nature of the therapy he received and the need for additional resources, but it gave enough sense of the potential for transformative change to inspire leaders to want to be part of it. This approach was rooted in the insight that UN Habitat had been moved to back the Mathare waste management scheme because it was well grounded and developing successfully (

<https://vimeo.com/210785121>); the hope is that external supporters will be similarly motivated by the sanitary towel project (<https://vimeo.com/210791551>) so that it can be extended to other areas.

These examples from Kenya offer a glimpse of the possibility of using video more effectively to create the diagonal scaling necessary for vertical leverage. In Indonesia, there was also recognition during the decision-maker engagements that bringing villagers’ videos to external forums was not about providing solutions, but prompting social dialogue, which is a current policy priority.

In conclusion, while it is uncertain whether promised or hoped-for working relationships with decision-makers will result from the engagements undertaken, the decision-makers in each context saw potential in video-mediated exchange. Videoing processes could therefore be applied more effectively in future if the potential to instigate accountable relations is recognised, and if they are applied more strategically.

Questions to stimulate practitioner reflection at the horizontal bonding and bridging stage

- What is the purpose of the engagement? Are you aiming to connect decision-makers with realities, deliver a message, provoke them to think, or inspire them to act? What is most appropriate to show given the communication purpose?
- How will you attempt to tread the line between building mutual dynamics and collaboration with leaders and speaking truth to them, or calling them to account?
- How will you identify and find the most appropriate decision-makers to engage with in this context? Can you find those with the power to implement programmes?
- Do you have any contacts in influential positions who champion your cause and help you initiate and build relationships? If not, how will you find potential allies?
- How will you invite people and frame the engagement purpose so that they are motivated to come and know what to expect?
- Will community participants be involved or their intermediaries? Does this decision present additional communication capacity or dynamic tensions to address?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of leverage from external partners (e.g. national and international NGOs, media organisations, project intermediaries)?
- Are there likely to be negative or unexpected reactions in this context? How will you alleviate the risks to vulnerable participants?
- How will you contextualise the context and the processes used to produce material to aid understanding and conviction?
- How will you prepare audiences so they know you are initiating exchange rather than providing solutions?
- Could videoing or showing videos motivate leaders to take part, strengthen claims for influence, or provide extra leverage by positioning participants more influentially in this context?
- What are decision-makers' views on how ongoing partnerships can develop in this situation?
- How can you build on initial exchange to generate working collaborations?
- What are your plans for following up promises and offers made by leaders during exchange?
- How can you galvanise active commitment on the part of decision-makers to support community-led change?

8. Concluding insights on building accountable relations through videoing processes

8.1 Negotiating the uncertain consequences and intrinsic risks of participatory video

The case studies suggest that a progressive approach to using PV can help develop the *relational conditions* for accountability by creating inclusive and enabling space, and by stimulating *bonding* and *bridging* conversations and exchange. As anticipated, the case studies also experienced unavoidable tensions and risks because the main purpose of their PV engagements was to shift inequitable power dynamics.

Tackling marginalisation and unresponsive governance in highly unaccountable contexts is neither quick nor simple, and it would be naïve to think that video processes can transform harmful social norms, constraining power dynamics and structural inequalities. It is also naïve to think that providing technology alone, without facilitation, can be effective; the case studies show that training and accompaniment (in this case by external agencies, supported by local intermediaries) were also essential relational conditions in opening up space for change. Moreover, what any one group can achieve in building accountable relations depends

on many things, including the starting point of the individuals involved, their circumstances, local support available, intermediary partners and external alliances already in place. For example, the longer processes in the case studies in Kenya required considerable commitment, and in both countries time was a constraint.

Nevertheless, it is important to challenge the success–failure dichotomy of many narratives about practice because there are no perfect projects in the real world. There is instead a partial success–failure continuum (Chvasta 2006), and we need to recognise the small-scale (Maurer and Githens 2009) gains that participants value. For example, both the SEED and Mathare Mapper teams were proudest of mobilising the community to solve problems themselves (power with). SEED helped more than 100 disabled children and their parents to feel less stigmatised, established five parent support groups and secured weekly therapy sessions and allowances for the disabled children; while Mathare Mappers established a waste management scheme and recycling centre, community safety patrols, and a sanitary towel and health awareness project for local girls. However, progress was not straightforward or easy, but rather complex and non-linear. There was a cyclical process of small steps forward and set-backs, with significant frustrations and practical challenges along the way, particularly in leveraging governance responsiveness.

Furthermore, these outcomes clearly cannot be attributed to the Participate intervention alone, although being part of a global effort – and the moral and financial support this offered – was valued. The improvements achieved were largely due to the local PV ‘champions’ in the two teams, working with minimal resources and ongoing support from Spatial Collective and SEED. It may also be that the achievements could have happened without videoing. Nevertheless, those involved felt strongly that PV was a key aspect in driving the action forward, and in stimulating interaction between the community and external agencies. In Kenya, despite the difficulties encountered, the teams felt that videoing energised and encouraged them, such that they have persevered through the challenges well beyond the project timescale. While they need external support to develop further, the video processes have had a ripple effect. The pertinent question here is, what did the PV process add that was different from other participatory methods?

8.2 A conceptual lens to sharpen reflection on video as relational mediator and process intensifier

While practitioners using video to drive longer-term social change processes have previously identified its potential contribution to more equitable relational conditions, the different aspects have not been adequately theorised. This report focused on the application of video as relational mediator, to understand why video proved to be motivating and generative in these cases, using the conceptual frames of *enabling space*, *bonding and bridging communication* and *power-shifting processes*.

Video recording and playback activities were applied, both to create *enabling space* for participation and performance, and to mediate *bonding and bridging communication* within the group and with external others. The attention to these aspects showed what could help and hinder at each stage. For instance, at the group-building and exploration stages, there was bridging between individuals (aided by role rotation), which led to group mutuality and ensured inclusive group dynamics. However, the shifting balance between practitioner direction and group control needed ongoing reflection, linked to contextual factors. Similarly, progressive PV exercises in safe spaces increased most participants’ sense of ‘can do’ and their expressive capacities, and contributed to group bonding. However, this relied on practitioners’ organisational and relational input, and their ability to tailor support to individual and group needs.

The performative aspects of videoing were clearly present in the case studies. Video recording and playback provided the rationale for exploration in public, and reflective exchange within the group and with different external actors at each stage. It was also the means of generating ideas, forming opinions and practising expressing them. However, this needed sufficient time (either through a longer project time frame or sequenced shorter projects) as well as organisation, framing and narrative input from the practitioner(s). Ongoing consent processes – and clear separation of videoing for purposes of group development and videoing for engaging external audiences – contributed to avoiding inappropriate exposure.

Participants were positioned more influentially as community actors due to being in control

of video production and leading community discussions prompted by playback. However, this re-positioning was dependent on the staged approach to developing participants' capacities. The challenges anticipated (including potential for negative audience reactions, entrenching difference, raising expectations, and perpetuating intra and inter-community inequity) require careful thought in the project planning and implementation stages.

The idea of *power-shifting processes* provided a lens for looking at whether video could shift relational dynamics, both within the group and with outsiders, through re-positioning participants relative to expectations. The case studies have illustrated perceived shifts in *power to*, *power within* and *power with*. However, the Kenyan team's reflections on the key moments that shifted dynamics (either positively or negatively) provide the most pertinent insights (see Table 4).

Table 4 Key moments of change or power shifts (Kenya case studies)

Process propositions	Key change moment or power shift ↑	Key barrier or power shift ↓	Video effect
Ensuring inclusive engagement during group-forming and building	<p>Power with ↑ – shift from individual to inclusive group dynamic</p> <p>Power within ↑ – from increased self-efficacy and awareness</p>	<p>Power with ↓ – some people excluded or less able to take part, increasing or perpetuating intra-community power dynamics</p>	Motivating context; can level playing field or be dominated by some, thus perpetuating exclusion
Developing shared purpose and group agency through video exploration and sense-making	<p>Power to ↑ – iteratively builds capacities</p> <p>Power with ↑ – shift to group agency and collective identities</p>	<p>Power within ↓ – due to public exposure</p> <p>Power within ↓ – due to difficult issues raised but not resolved</p>	Recording and playback exercises provide rapid feedback loop, which can amplify feelings of being heard and of being exposed
Enabling horizontal scaling through community-level videoing action	<p>Power within ↑</p> <p>Power to ↑ – shared purpose and emerging local leaders</p> <p>Power with ↑ – collective strength through community mobilisation</p>	<p>Power with ↓</p> <p>Power to ↓ – increased community expectations; negative attitude of wider community and stigmatisation of people with disabilities</p>	Video made people feel important, generating hope and energy to persevere; video positioned community actors influentially, but hard to deliver
Supporting the performance of vertical influence through video-mediated communication	<p>Power with ↑ – Community walk: leaders brought in</p> <p>Power within ↑ – shifts in community attitudes</p> <p>Power to ↑ – reached decision-makers, worked with authorities and leaders, willingness to engage</p>	<p>Power with ↓</p> <p>Power to ↓ – leaders didn't follow through or come back; frustration and organisational stagnation</p>	Video context repositioned groups as significant players and video narratives helped leaders see potential and roused commitment, but this heightened disappointment when no response was forthcoming

It became evident that video can function as a process intensifier, because it seemed to amplify or accelerate the impacts of these moments. However, it also intensified the risks, which were intrinsically connected. For example, the videoing exercises made people feel they were being heard, because of the playback feedback loop. At the simplest level, everyone had a turn to speak and everyone listened to each other, and then the embodied sense of being heard was reinforced on playback. However, this was nerve-racking at the beginning for most participants. If a video is shown externally before this feeling passes, or if the content is too revealing, this might intensify feelings of vulnerability, inability or powerlessness. Experience suggests that how participants experience video depends on the social context and the support available from facilitators (Shaw 2012b). Similarly, the later stages of the processes saw a reported increase in power with through success in mobilising community action or engaging leaders. However, this only served to increase people's sense of responsibility for things they could not control, and to heighten their disappointment when no responses were forthcoming.

8.3 Nurturing participatory video practitioners – training and accompaniment matters

As soft skills are demonstrably crucial to PV practice, providing training and accompaniment for practitioners is vital. Reflection on practitioner development in the case studies suggests that inputs are more effective if they are iterative and responsive. Firstly, practitioners need to become confident in using video. The Mathare Mappers, for example, were so inspired by the chance to make videos that they did not fully appreciate the potential of running PV sessions with others until the current project. This is emblematic of the tendency for PV to become production-orientated, which is somewhat inevitable if there is no practitioner training input beyond this stage. The SEED team were already group facilitators, so started running PV sessions with the children straight away, and wanted to be left to it. However, they did not incorporate in-camera editing early on, as they had not practised the technique alone. They could also have avoided some of the challenges around intra-community dynamics if they had access to further support early on.

After providing basic training for facilitators in both countries, it was helpful to accompany them as practitioners applying PV approaches with their respective local communities. In practice, the realities they encountered highlighted the need to sequence training input and support for practitioners. In Indonesia, for instance, RCA practitioners found the more fluid and responsive PV processes harder to translate into practice than the digital story-telling techniques; I provided accompaniment for their fieldwork in Lombok village so that they would feel more confident about running PV processes alone.

8.4 Fostering responsive governance – the missing links of diagonal scaling and negotiating audience reactions

The biggest difficulties for the Kenyan teams were leveraging state support and sustainable external backing for their efforts. They identified barriers of government negligence, corruption and a lax attitude to responsibilities at every level (e.g. police, officials and community leaders). While leaders engaged and made promises, they did not follow them through or return; the team were constrained by a lack of information from local administration and county assemblies, and found it difficult to target high-level officials with the power to support programme implementation. RCA Indonesia encountered similar barriers to engaging decision-makers in their policy-influencing activities, with some either arriving late or not turning up at all, or attending but not actively engaging. Fostering responsive governance clearly requires longer-term efforts to make connections and develop allies so that there is enough pressure from below to leverage influence.

Nevertheless, the Kenyan teams felt more positive after the recent engagements. Decision-makers turned up, recognised what had been achieved, found common ground, and wanted to collaborate in future. SEED was also given specific information on contacts and organisations to register with, and offered help with introductions, letter-writing and proposal-writing. However, they concluded that further diagonal scaling might help them increase vertical leverage in future. In this respect, there is also more potential to explore the use of video to

amplify connections with powerfully positioned agencies or established social movements.

The recent interaction with decision-makers also generated new insights on how audiences interpret and react to videos produced by marginalised groups (see Table 5).

The key tension identified was between the strategic intention to build mutuality between decision-makers and community actors, through generating shared understanding and commitment to future alliances, and the chance to critique leaders or call them to account. Video presenters need to be clear, before they interact with decision-makers, on whether their aim is to foster connections or to provoke critical thinking; this is vital for making informed decisions on the content of the material and the way an event is

organised. The caveat is that video-making for external audiences is time-consuming and costly, and participants cannot re-edit programmes for every audience.

It was also apparent that decision-makers could be better informed about the purpose of video-mediated exchange beforehand; understanding the context of both the videoing processes and the group situation before they view material will help them make sense of it. With this in mind, I make two suggestions for subsequent practice: (1) to sensitise audiences and prompt discussion about the purpose of video communication before they view videos produced by marginalised groups (<https://vimeo.com/218804906>); and (2) to improve audience understanding of PV processes (<https://vimeo.com/218803274>).

Table 5 Synthesis of decision-makers’ views on video-mediated communication

Tension	Benefits	Interpretation difficulties, negative reactions and contradictions
Communicating people’s messages versus misinterpretation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having things to show provided a direct advocacy link • Audiences liked hearing directly from communities rather than NGOs, and some saw the video as a form of evidence • Audiences preferred documentary formats where people can be seen and heard as believable • Raw rather than edited footage is fine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some said that because the message was a story they mistrusted the process • Video can’t talk by itself – it needs contextualising and focused signposting, and expert view to seal approval
Emotional connection versus negative reaction or mistrust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video content can connect audience with people’s realities – stories were engaging, rather than abstract problems • Shows feelings (e.g. anger / sadness / lack of hope) • Seeing expression is better than a written report and more believable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling the truth is important, but needs to validate facts with statistics or other information • Question of authenticity if audience doesn’t know process and participants’ situation • Some didn’t like drama, as it is unreal, and digital story-telling was mistrusted by some • Risk of negative emotional response or ‘expert’ reaction
Mutual understanding versus provoking critical thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can initiate exchange • Can generate understanding and discussion • Intermediary can help flow between grass roots and policy-makers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video misses the details / depth of a problem • More needed on implications and recommendations • Needs channels of communication to sustain exchange

Nevertheless, learning from the case studies is tempered by the knowledge that whatever the intention, it is impossible to control audience reactions. Communication – whether video-mediated or not – is essentially uncertain, uncontrollable and prone to error (Hook, Franks and Green 2011). This reinforces the notion that the content of video communication is less important than the ongoing exchange it hopes to catalyse.

8.5 What's the message from video-mediated communication at the margins?

McLuhan (1964) famously and somewhat controversially said “the medium is the message”, meaning that the content of any medium is less important than the engagement it affords. By extension, I suggest that one message to take away from the medium of PV is that marginalised people want to be heard, but more importantly, they want authorities and duty-bearers to work with them to solve problems. Focusing on the

relational aspects of PV processes has highlighted the potential to support these wishes.

Many participatory governance and accountability processes, and the theoretical discourses and practical approaches underlying them, do not pay sufficient attention to the need to shape the relational conditions for accountability for marginalised social groups, which only serves to perpetuate or exacerbate exclusionary dynamics. This report has re-framed PV as a relational mediator, grounded through the concepts of enabling space, bonding and bridging communication, and power-shifting processes. Exploring the realities of PV practice at different stages of the process has highlighted its hitherto overlooked possibilities and constraints. The case study experiences explored in this report not only emphasise the need to develop more ethical and effective PV practice, they also contribute to strengthening theoretical and practical understanding of how to engage marginalised people in PV and how to foster support from influential decision-makers using other approaches.

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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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