Communicative aspects of participatory video projects

An exploratory study

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Abstract

This exploratory study analyses the functions and implications of participatory video projects in rural development settings. The term ‘participatory video’ refers to a bundle of innovative usages of video technology which enjoy growing popularity in many corners of the world. After the first trials in the late 1960s participatory video has developed into several different directions and there is no consensus of what the term actually stands for. In the current literature participatory video is closely associated to the burgeoning field of participatory approaches such as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), even though its application goes beyond the idea of participatory research and learning in many instances.

There is by no means a consistent, established way of using the tool; experience and knowledge about what good practice is differ from person to person and in the literature. This study therefore categorises the varying approaches into a typology based on a review of the relatively scarce literature on the subject. Through a conceptual distinction of different project goals, three basic kinds of participatory video are identified, i.e. therapy-, activism- and empowerment-type video.

The central part of the study consists of three case studies, from Mexico, Tanzania, and Vietnam respectively. In each of these the functions and implications of participatory video use are identified. A particular focus is put on the second case study, the ‘Fisherfolks’ Project’, as the relatively biggest amount of background information has been available. A number of theories and concepts are tested on this case in order to deepen the understanding of the potentials and limitations of participatory video. The concepts and theories applied to the case include pluralism, the platform approach, soft systems thinking; Habermas’ theory of communicative action and ultimately the principle of participation as applied in PRA. It is found that participatory video is appropriate to facilitate processes such as mediation, conflict management, capacity building and empowerment.

Since the study is of exploratory nature, a considerable stress was put on the identification of interesting fields of further research. A list of easily available participatory video literature (in the appendix) has been compiled to provide a starting point for such research.

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Abbreviations

DRDS  Department of Rural Development Studies
FAO   Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FTP(P) Forest, Trees and People (Programme)
IRDC  International Rural Development Centre
nd    no date
NGO   Non Governmental Organisation
pers. com. personal communication
PAR   Participatory Action Research
PLA   Participatory Learning and Action
PRA   Participatory Rural Appraisal
PRODERITH Programa de Desarrollo Rural Integrado del Trópico Húmedo - Programme of Integrated Rural Development in the Tropical Wetlands
RRA   Rapid Rural Appraisal
SLU   Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet - Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
SSM   Soft Systems Methodology

Glossary

Following words are frequently used in the present paper, often without further specification. They usually refer to actors or groups of actors involved in participatory video projects. The intention behind this simplification was to keep the text more fluent.

- community ... rural villages involved in participatory video projects
- development communicator... the person(s) facilitating participatory video projects; also called video facilitator; sometimes the term is used in a more general way to refer to person(s) facilitating participatory media projects
- people ... rural people participating in participatory video projects
- policy makers ... all stakeholders except for the people (in the Fisherfolks’ Project)
- stakeholders ... key persons or groups of persons who hold a stake in the development process
- video facilitator... the person(s) facilitating participatory video projects
Introduction

"... the technical development of electronic media does not necessarily move in the direction of centralizing networks, even though ‘video pluralism’ and ‘television democracy’ are at the moment not much more than anarchist visions.”

(Habermas 1987: 391)

The following scene may be regarded as evidence that ‘video pluralism’ is no longer a merely anarchist vision: in a village in Mtwara, Tanzania, an enormous crowd of two thousand people gathered around a simple, normal-sized TV-set to follow in attentive silence an unedited video that lasted for about four hours. The video has been recorded the same day, finished only shortly before the video screening took place. It was about the people of the village participating in a workshop in which the area’s political, social and environmental problems were discussed.

This example is a snapshot from a participatory video project. ‘Participatory video’ is an umbrella term for a variety of approaches developed over the last 30 years. To start out with a very broad definition: participatory video refers to a bundle of alternative applications of video technology in development projects. Its goal is to bring about social change. There is no single accepted way of doing participatory video. This is not surprising, since participatory video experiments have taken place all over the world, often without taking notice of other similar projects. The labels chosen to describe what had been done have varied: community video, alternative video, grassroots video, grassroots television, process video, etc. (Media Development 1989). Whatever the label, most project designers would claim that participation was a central element in their projects. This is not surprising considering the importance of participatory project design in current development policy rhetoric.

Participation

"The use of participatory approaches has exploded in recent years” (Chambers and Guijt 1995: 4). Today, there are hardly any development project plans that do not contain participation as a major element. Together with accompanying concepts like ‘empowerment’, ‘capacity building’ or ‘good governance’ it is one of the buzzwords of current development discourse.

In relation to video the attribute ‘participatory’ refers to the idea that people should not only be receivers but also producers of messages. This has to be seen in contrast to mass media like television or newspapers where people are normally only receivers of messages. Shaw and Robertson (1997) stress this aspect in their book ‘Participatory Video’. They describe participatory video as a "group-based activity that develops participants’ abilities by involving them in using video equipment creatively, to record themselves and the world around them, and to produce their own videos” (ibid: 1). This is but one understanding concerning the purpose of participatory video. Several other views exist, as shall be shown in the categorisation section. However, the definition stresses many elements that are common with many participatory video projects: It is a creative use of the technology, people are involved in the video production process, and it is a group-based activity.

In a certain sense, participatory video can be seen as a PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) tool. PRA evolved in the 1980s as a new way of doing research and planning. Developed
mostly in developing country contexts, it is a “growing family of approaches and methods to enable local people to share, enhance and analyse their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan and to act” (Chambers and Guijt 1995: 5). In practice, PRA works with a large spectrum of methods both, qualitative and quantitative. The theoretical base of PRA and the question if participatory video is a PRA tool is dealt with in the theory section.

The developing country context

What is a 'developing country’?
The developing country context is central to this work, as the video projects analysed are located in developing countries. But what is a developing country? This is a difficult question, especially as the term 'developing country’ is losing popularity and appropriateness. Firstly, many countries in Asia or Latin America have reached a standard that is no longer comparable to many other, much poorer countries in, say, Sub-Saharan Africa. Secondly, the gap between rich and poor people within countries increases all over the world, so there are ‘underdeveloped regions’ or ‘marginalised people’ in many countries, even if the statistical figures like the gross domestic product locate the country in higher ‘developed’ spheres. Thirdly, the concept that high-income countries are regarded as developed and low-income countries as underdeveloped is ever more criticised. Specifically questioned is the still common idea that the low-income countries have to follow the same path as the rich-income countries in order to be considered ‘developed’. More recent views stress that development should not be seen as a “result of political manipulation”, but rather as "an evolving historical process or a planned innovation” (both quotes: Bell 1996: 8). In other words, development is not an outcome but a process. In a process, to pinpoint the major difference, the direction is not always predictable since it is negotiated. However, as the term developing country is so widely spread, I will use it in my thesis. It appears that there are no new terms invented yet that are accurate without being too clumsy.

Communication in developing countries

Developing countries are complex environments. Information about specific settings is generally difficult to obtain, as information networks tend to be poor and insufficient. Especially marginal rural areas often suffer from very limited information supply. Accordingly, little information about those areas is available. Mass media like newspapers and television are concentrated in central areas like big cities. They also prefer to cover issues and events that are relevant to people in those central areas. Only radio seems to have the capability to function well on a decentralised basis. In many developing countries a transistor radio is the most likely existing link ‘to the world out there’.

Grassroots radio1 is growing rapidly. As with participatory video the idea of grassroots radio is that people produce messages for themselves. Information relevant to the community, such as market prices or the date of the next community meeting are announced on the radio, usually by community members who work on a voluntary basis. The radio station potentially advances to a communication platform for the community. The idea of grassroots radio has similarities to the idea of participatory video. In fact, grassroots radio has developed much faster than participatory video, which makes it very interesting to compare the two. Especially in Latin...

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1 Again, like in the case of video, there are many labels for this form of application: ‘community radio’, ‘creative radio’, ‘rural radio’, etc.
America grassroots radio is receiving support in many places and from many donors (Riano 1994).

Another important aspect of communication is literacy. A large percentage of the population in developing countries cannot read or write. Therefore written media are hardly of any relevance to them. Rural cultures often live in an oral tradition that functions differently than a bureaucratic written word culture. Yet those two cultures necessarily have to meet and communicate occasionally as they do not live in isolation from each other. The language systems they use are different and in many instances neither is willing to adapt to the language system of the other. Misunderstanding and conflict, consequently, are unavoidable.

A broader concept of literacy includes media literacy. When watching a movie, for instance, one has to understand certain types of narrative logics in order to understand the movie. These narratives differ in different cultures. Jassey (pers. com.) notes that East African TV series, for example, use the widespread 'Hollywood' narratives whereas West-African series often appear totally obscure to West Europeans since their narrative traditions are different.
The question for this study

Problem statement and research objective

There is evidence that the use of participatory video in development projects is increasing. Participatory video is in the process of becoming an important tool for facilitating communication in development work. Yet to date there is still no clear view what the term ‘participatory video’ actually stands for. Experiences and knowledge are spread in different places in different persons’ heads, in fugitive literature such as project evaluations, workshop reports, or unpublished theses, and in strictly theoretical literature that often covers broader aspects like participatory communication, not explicitly addressing video. The overall picture, which the present author obtained in the course of his studies, indicates that there is a poor specification of what participatory video can achieve, what dangers and pitfalls it involves, and for what purposes it has proved appropriate.

This study tries to address some of these questions. It is an exploration of the functions and implications of participatory video projects in developing countries. As an outcome of the study, the author expects to provide a list of ‘important issues’ concerning participatory video that could be of use for anyone who is interested in the field.

Research question

The leading question for this study can be formulated as follows:

‘What are the functions and implications of participatory video projects which pursue the goal of improving communication between rural communities and stakeholders outside the community?’

Subquestions derived from the main question are:

‘Can participatory video support a step towards ‘communicative rationality’ (in the sense of Habermas)?’


‘What are the constraints of a ‘development project structure’ in relation with participatory video?’
History of participatory video

How it all started...

In many literature sources on participatory communication the ‘Fogo Process’ is referred to as the birth of participatory video (e.g. Riano 1994, Media Development 1989). The Fogo Process evolved out of a series of events in 1967 on Fogo Island, a small island outport fishing community off the Eastern coast of Newfoundland, Canada. Its creative use of simple media tools, predominantly video, provided a model of development communication practice that was far ahead of its time. The ‘rhetoric’ around current participatory video projects quite often shows clear resemblance to the visions and goals of the Fogo Process (Don Snowden Program for Development Communication 1998). What happened?

In 1965 Donald Snowden, then Director of the Extension Department at Memorial University of Newfoundland, read the Economic Council of Canada’s ‘Report on Poverty in Canada’. Enraged because he felt the report dealt with poverty using purely urban values, Snowden got the idea to produce a series of films to present how the people of Newfoundland felt about poverty and other issues. He wanted to show that poverty did not have to mean economic deprivation. It could also mean isolation and the inability to access information and communication media, as well as the lack of organisation. Teaming up with the film maker, Colin Low, Snowden took Low to about four or five different areas in Newfoundland for potential filming. In the end, Fogo Island was chosen as the best potential place to initiate what was later to become known as the ‘Fogo Process’.

In 1967 there were less than 5,000 people living on Fogo island. However, they lived in ten separate settlements with no much communication between each. The island represented the type of isolation and lack of information or organisation that Snowden wanted to show as alternate indicators of poverty in the province. Fogo island was also going through an economic slump. Having been dependent on the fishing industry for 300 years, the inshore fishery had been dropping, forcing 60% of the men to go on welfare. This brought about the possibility of resettlement (the government had decided that outport communities not able to make a living through fishing any longer were to be relocated to areas of Newfoundland that were more economically viable). The islanders, however, did not want to move. But with minimal communication between members of communities, poor organisation, lack of local government in most communities, lack of unions or producer co-operatives, and altogether lack of confidence, the picture seemed dismal.

Snowden believed the islanders could form a co-operative and become organised so that they could preserve their way of life. He took Colin Low to the island and introduced him to Fred Earle, a Memorial University extension worker. Together, Earle and Low went to a meeting of the Fogo Island Improvement Committee. They introduced the concept of filming on the island which was agreed upon by the committee. It was to be a project that used film to assist communities in coming to terms with some of their problems. It was intended to help the people realise that they had problems in common and to move towards building co-operation and development.

The community members interviewed clearly identified a number of island issues: the inability to organise, the need for communication, the resentment felt towards the idea of resettlement, and the anger that the government seemed to be making decisions about their future with no community consultation process. Low decided to show the films to the people of Fogo and thirty-five separate screenings were held with the total number of viewers reaching 3,000. This became an important part of the process. It was realized that people were not comfortable discussing issues with each other.
other face-to-face. Instead, they were quite comfortable explaining their individual views on film and having those opinions played back to other community members. By viewing the films, the islanders started to realise that all the communities were experiencing the same problems; they became more aware of these problems and what needed to be done to solve them.

There was controversy back at the university about what the political consequences for the institution would be because of the blatant criticisms of the government that occurred in the films. After some discussion, it was decided that the Premier and his cabinet should view the films. This was phenomenal since it allowed fishermen to talk to cabinet ministers. It was also successful: the Minister of Fisheries, Aiden Maloney, asked to be able to respond to the commentaries. The government point-of-view was filmed through him and shown back to the communities. This brought about a two-way flow of knowledge between community members and decision makers. From this point things began to happen on their own. The films simply helped contribute to an island-wide sense of community and assisted people in looking for alternatives to resettlement.

It is not known for certain what would have happened on Fogo had the filming never been done. What is certain is that the fishermen formed an island-wide producers’ co-operative which handled and processed large catches, enabling them to keep the profits on their island. Unemployment of able-bodied men disappeared, and the government directed their efforts into helping people to stay. The films created an awareness and self confidence that allowed people-led development to occur (largely based on a summary of: Don Snowden Program for Development Communication 1998).

Snowden, with no doubt the patron of this remarkable video experiment, achieved that the Fogo Process was incorporated within the innovative ‘Challenge for Change Program’ and ‘The War on Poverty Program in Canada’. By the mid 1970s Snowden and his colleagues were being asked to experiment with the Fogo Process in various parts of the Arctic and Alaska, Africa and Asia. Snowden died suddenly in 1984 while working on a project in Bangladesh. Today the ‘Don Snowden Program for Development Communication’ keeps Snowden’s legacy alive by continuing to apply the Fogo Process approach in a variety of activities.

... and how it developed.

In the 1970s and 1980s participatory video saw many applications all over the world\(^3\). As they were scattered and unregularly documented, it is difficult to identify a ‘trend’ in its development. Many projects operated on a small scale with small budgets, often not taking notice of other on-going projects with similar intentions. The exchange of experiences occurred, if at all, at conferences, in workshops, and through informal communications. One is left with the impression, however, that some designers of video projects developed their conceptions of ‘good participatory video practice’ completely on their own. They arguably missed the chance to learn from valuable experiences made in other participatory video projects in some instances. Practitioners argue, to their defence, that a flexible and culturally sensitive approach like participatory video precludes standardised, deterministic performance guidelines. They say that each context requires a very specific approach which is difficult to derive from experiences made in other places (Media Development 1989).

In the following a few projects from Africa, Asia and Latin America are described. It is an attempt to give a crude idea of the diversity of participatory video projects throughout the (development) world.

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\(^3\) Although not subject of this study, it is important to point out that many participatory video projects and experiments took place in the Western World, too. Heyn (1979), for example, provides an analysis of community communication with video in Great Britain during the 1970s.
Identity (de)construction in Colombia

Latin America is the continent where probably the most video projects have taken place (Riano 1994). Inspired by Freireian Pedagogy (Freire 1970) many grassroots media initiatives have emerged as a counterstatement to state-controlled mass media. They stand as a proof that TV screens can show other things than telenovelas all day long. Rodriguez (1994), to take just one of the many examples, gives an account of Colombian women producing video stories. For these women living in marginal areas of Bogota the first step was to learn that making video did not mean copying what they saw on television every day. Rodriguez (1994: 155) picks out one woman’s statement aptly describing the initial discomfort: “But we are not pretty; how can we be television actresses?” Only after a while did the women realise that they were given the chance to present their own reality, their houses, families, friends, their own city, etc. and not someone else’s reality. The video fostered a process of finding their individual and collective identity; after having shared their views they were inspired to take collective action.

Culture preservation in Brazil

The Kayapo Indians of Brazil have used video to preserve their cultural traditions for succeeding generations (Ogan 1989). In the middle of the 1980s a few anthropologists stayed with the Kayapo in order to produce a ‘conventional documentation’ of Kayapo culture on video. The Kayapo, however, realised that they could use video for their own purposes, too. They borrowed video equipment from the anthropologists and started recording on their own. They found that video was a handy medium to preserve their customs and knowledge for future generations. (The elder Kayapo feared the loss of their local knowledge since the Kayapo youth were not interested in those customs at the time.) Terence Turner, an anthropologist, commented on the emerging electronic library of the Kayapo, “Though most of the Kayapo are illiterate (…), they have developed incredible skill with the camcorder” (Ogan 1989: 3).

This kind of surprise is often stated in accounts on video projects. But this case is a good example demonstrating that video is not too sophisticated a technology for marginalised rural people. The Kayapo quickly realised what the medium was good for and handled it without the ‘interference’ of a development communicator.

Video letters in Nepal

To improve communication between women in a remote rural village and the centrally located development and governmental organisations was the goal of a project in Nepal. The women of the village recorded questions concerning legal problems related to domestic violence or divorce on video and sent them to the Women’s Legal Service Project in the capital, Kathmandu. From Kathmandu they received videotaped solutions in return. In that way video helped women to obtain information on their legal position and mobilised them to protect their rights. In the further course of the project the women realised that they needed to fight for a place in the male-dominated community meetings, where many legal issues were dealt with. Inspired and empowered by the video experience, they managed to get a place in them (Ogan 1989).

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4 Telenovelas are daily melo-dramatic television ‘soap operas’, very prevalent in Latin-America.

5 Scientists, surprised at the video skills of ‘primitive people’, are probably only struck in their pride when realising that, when it comes to video, they are more or less on the same literacy level as the people.
Contributing to policy development in Tanzania

In Northern Tanzania, the opinion of pastoralists towards a new management plan for the Ngorongoro Conservation Area was recorded on video. Ngorongoro is a ‘multi-purpose area’. It is a haven of biodiversity, a famous safari destination, an important source of income for the government, and also home for about 40,000 Maasai pastoralists (Taylor and Johansson 1996). The new management plan included a declared commitment to participation and, on its completion in 1995, its supporters as well as a subsequent evaluation reported that all was well with the planning process. However, when members of the FTPP6 (one of them was Lars Johansson) visited Maasai residents in the area, they heard nothing but complaints about the management plan. The FTPP members recorded the complaints on video and edited the material into a tape, which was shown to the responsible planners. The video revealed that the Maasai had not at all the feeling that they had been sufficiently involved in the planning process. They criticised both the unparticipative nature of the planning process and the content of the management plan (Lane nd).

The video project widened the gap between the different groups in the planning process. Some conservationists, donor representatives, scientists and local leaders claimed that the video project was biased and irresponsible. Others saw strong evidence for the Maasais’ arguments and supported a rewriting of the plan. In retrospect, the Maasai did not achieve much, but according to Johansson (pers. com.) they would have been even worse off if the video project had not taken place.

Women’s empowerment in India

The experiences of Video SEWA (Stuart 1989) are among the most often cited examples of participatory video in the literature. SEWA (Self-Employed Women’s Association) was established in 1972 in India with the purpose of organising poor and self-employed urban women. Since its establishment it has organised women into trade unions and co-operatives, supported legal protection for women, improved women’s access to markets, etc. In 1984, Martha Stuart, a participatory video pioneer, held a video production workshop at SEWA. The women attending the workshop, many of whom could not read and write and never before had they seen a video camera, were deeply impressed by the possibilities of video. This inspired them to form a co-operative named Video SEWA. Since then video has become an integral part of SEWA’s activities. Video is used to spread information, to raise awareness about social or economic issues, to reach decision-makers and as a training tool. In one concrete example, video was used to prepare bidi workers (women who roll the indigenous cigarettes) for a court case against unfair rejection of their work and subsequent pay cuts by their contractor. A mock court with a judge, witnesses, defence lawyers and court audience was set up. The cross-examination was recorded and then watched and reviewed by the women who had to testify. A SEWA lawyer discussed the video with the women. This experience effectively helped the women to prepare and gain confidence for the court hearing (Video SEWA nd).

The technology

6 The Forest, Trees and People Programme (FTPP) is co-ordinated by FAO. The Department of Rural Development Studies at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences in Uppsala, facilitates the East Africa component for FTPP (Lane nd).
Much could be written about the technology aspects of video but this would be beyond the scope of this thesis. For a short summary of the history of video technology see Shaw and Robertson (1997). Just crudely summarising the general trend over the last 30 years, one could say that video equipment (both cameras and videoc recorders/players) have become cheaper, lighter, less fragile, and smaller. Picture and sound quality has improved; the art of filming has always been a question of talent and training rather than equipment.

Digital video is among the latest innovations which have reached the level of ‘wide-spread affordability’. Some advantages of digital video are worth mentioning here: Digital video allows for computerised editing, which makes editing simpler, more flexible and less linear. Sequences can be exchanged and copied without loss; sound and picture can easily be separated and exchanged; subtitling becomes easier and cheaper. People without editing experience can participate in the editing process. An example of this is described in case study two.
Categorisation

A number of authors have presented their understanding of participatory video. While still no generally accepted definition of participatory video has yet emerged, there are several ‘claims’ as to what participatory video means or what the term stands for. Almost any piece of literature that describing a participatory video project offers some kind of definition of participatory video and a ‘background’ philosophy. For the latter, Freire’s pedagogy (1970) is often chosen as the main reference.

Only a few books have been published that deal exclusively with participatory video. Three are listed below; they are considered to stand for certain ‘traditions’ in participatory video making:

- Shaw and Robertson (1997), *Participatory Video*
- Harding (1997), *The Video Activist Handbook*
- Braden and Huong (1998), *Video for Development*

In the following distinctions, continuums, and classifications are suggested that help to work out the differences among participatory video projects. They are often used to explain and justify certain procedures within a project. By and large, they are largely derived from the three books above, but also from other sources.

Process / Product

The distinction between process and product appears in many literature sources on participatory video (e.g. Kawaja 1994). A project can have its focus on the process of production or on the product, the actual video, or on both, as Johansson (pers. com.) argues. He figures that it is not sensible to set up a dichotomy with process and product as poles since in many participatory video projects both aspects are important.

Often, however, project designers claim that they entirely focus on the process in order to prevent being ‘discredited’ as a (mere product-oriented) documentary filmmaker. The difference between documentary and participatory video is hardly worked out in the literature despite the recurring ‘struggle’ to mark that difference. The following differentiation is inspired by and adapted from Mda (1993), who tried to clarify the difference between literary theatre and popular theatre.
Table 1: Difference between a documentary and participatory video

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Documentary</th>
<th>Participatory Video</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who shoots the video?</td>
<td>documentary maker /director</td>
<td>people and video facilitator together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(individual author/directors)</td>
<td>(collective authors/directors)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who writes the script?</td>
<td>documentary maker</td>
<td>no script or jointly formulated script</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who decides on content?</td>
<td>documentary maker</td>
<td>people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who constitutes the audience?</td>
<td>undetermined (mass) audience</td>
<td>determined audience, direct addressing of the audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is feedback expected?</td>
<td>not necessarily, the audience may think about it</td>
<td>yes, definitely; people are empowered to act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process or product?</td>
<td>product-oriented</td>
<td>process- and/or product-oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the paradigm behind?</td>
<td>monism, objectivity</td>
<td>pluralism, subjectivity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(adapted from Mda 1993: 47, by Huber, this thesis)

Johansson (pers. com.) defines the difference between participatory video and documentary-style video in a very simple way; “With a documentary you are finished when the video is finished. With participatory video it usually takes longer. You finish when your goal has been achieved.” It may be added that in some projects the video was never finished as the development problem was solved ‘on the way’, that is during the process of production (Riano 1994).

According to Johansson (pers. com.), another ‘odd’ type of video adds a further confusion: non-participatory video films on participatory projects. Sometimes, producers of such films claim to have made participatory video only because the content is about participation.

**Form / Content**

Related to the distinction between process and product is the one of form and content. In the production of a video the focus can be either on form or on content. With both there are trade-offs (ibid). When focusing on form, the content is ‘fitted’ into a predetermined structure. Structuring elements can appear in the form of a script, a certain story line, requirements concerning length, language and picture quality, etc. When focusing on content, the above elements are neither decided upon beforehand nor are they as important. It may turn out that a ‘raw’ unedited video serves the purpose better than a ‘formalised’ edited one. This was the case in many of the Video SEWA experiments.
Benefit for Individual / Collective

Participatory video can have its focus on empowering individuals (often ‘against’ other community members) or on empowering collective groups of people (‘the community’). The example of the ‘video letters’ had its emphasis on helping individual women to claim their rights. This, hopefully, motivated also other women to do the same and maybe even encouraged the men to change their behaviour so that one could speak of an impact on the collective. In the first place, however, the intended beneficiaries were single women or small groups of women within the community.

In the Ngorongoro case, by contrast, the goal was to help the whole community to get a self-designed message across. The production process arguably changed the relations among people within the community, too, but above all the Ngorongoro process aimed at improving communication between the community and the policy planners.

Again, this distinction does not describe genuinely exclusive categories but rather provides an analytic tool to examine different cases. Braden and Huong (1998) point out that changes in the personal relationships within a community are easily overlooked. Awareness and caution concerning internal changes are very important, not least from an ethical perspective. There is a danger that project outcomes like "Women dare to speak out now thanks to the participatory video project!" are undermined by post-project outcomes like "Women are even more suppressed now by men because they have spoken out!" Braden and Huong (ibid) stress that careful study of social and cultural boundaries is necessary to understand the power relations at work. Project evaluations need to include examination of intra-community changes and not treat communities as one homogenous body. Communities in developing country contexts may be highly socially stratified and contain a range of conflicting interests. Divisions between rich and poor, between men and women, or traditional leaders and bureaucratic leaders, may also be a reason for reluctance in participation.

Distinction of development goals

The following typology distinguishes three different development goals of participatory video projects, or more accurately, development goals determined by project planners or donors. They are not exclusive; an ideal project may integrate several of the goals described below. The development goals also transcend the border between participatory video and non-participatory video to a certain extent. But they have nothing to do with the purpose of ‘conventional’ video making.

Type 1: ‘Therapy’

This label might sound dramatic. Softer terms like ‘group development’, however, would fail to make clear the difference to the other two types. The book of Shaw and Robertson (1997) describes the concept of therapy in participatory video:

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It has to be pointed out that Shaw and Robertson do not use the term ‘therapy’. The examples in their book often go beyond the idea of therapy as described here. It is also worth noting that Shaw and Robertson wrote their book for video practitioners preparing workshops for elderly or physically disadvantaged people. The examples given are not from development settings.
Participatory video work utilises video as a social and community-based tool for individual and group development. Used in this way, video can be a powerful aid in the cultivation and realisation of people’s abilities and potential. It is a group-based activity that revolves around the needs of the participants. Video is used to develop their confidence and self-esteem, to encourage them to express themselves creatively, to develop a critical awareness and to provide a means for them to communicate with others. Participatory video is predominantly used with those disadvantaged by physical, attitudinal, educational, social or economic reasons, who would not usually express themselves through video, or attend a training course. Active participation is an essential component. Group members operate the equipment for themselves, and a primary objective is the development of their control over their work. (Shaw and Robertson 1997: 11)

This conception of participatory video has a clear focus on process. Kawaja (1994: 131) describes participatory video projects with minority women in Canada that are best classified as ‘therapy’. The purpose of those ”process video” projects, as they were labelled, was to allow women to investigate their own reality. Women formulated their individual and collective histories in the form of stories or theatre and recorded them on video. Watching these histories on video enabled them to see themselves as through a mirror; they learned how they were perceived by others. Kawaja (1994: 142) states, ”As social intervention, process video is biased towards reflexivity rather than toward direct political action or intervention”. Thus options for social change are not directly addressed in therapy-type video projects, although the reflexive experience can of course be empowering and motivate for political action.

In general, the videos produced are only valuable for the project participants themselves, not for other people. The tapes ”play a role in a process rather than standing on their own as ‘products’. The end product in and of itself does not confer meaning” (Kawaja 1994: 144). Consequently the distribution of therapy-type videos on a larger scale is usually not intended.

‘The thrill of holding a camera’ is another important aspect of this kind of participatory video. Attaining control over a creative, prestigious tool like the video camera or the cutting board has a positive therapeutic effect on the participants’ self-esteem. Pushed by that experience participants decrease their ”feelings of powerlessness” (Shaw and Robertson 1997: 13) which they have built up through repeated experiences of inferiority in society.

**Type 2: ‘Activism’**

Again, it was difficult to find a label. The term ‘activism’ was chosen for its broadness. Associated terms are ‘lobbying’, ‘campaigning’ and ‘advocacy’. In ‘The Video Activist Handbook’ by Harding (1997) only few of the described examples and applications fall into the realm of participatory video. He sees a video activist as someone ”who uses video as a tactical tool to bring about social justice and environmental protection” (Harding 1997: 1). As a master example he mentions the beating of Rodney King in Los Angeles in 1992, which was filmed by an amateur standing on a balcony nearby. The footage was broadcast hundreds of times on TV channels around the world and subsequently used in court at the trial. Harding concludes from this example that ”people suddenly realised the power of the camcorder” (Harding 1997: 1).

The Rodney King example had nothing to do with participatory video. There was no dialogue between the filming and the filmed. However, in many similar examples video activists follow members of grassroots movements to demonstrations in order to protect the members from police violence by filming the event. Having video evidence at hand might assist people to avoid charges like false arrest. In England, to state another example from the book, the organisation, ‘Undercurrents’ produces a grassroots news magazine with the slogan ”the news you don’t see on the news”. The issues of the magazine are videos promising ”ninety minutes of high-energy, passionate, in-yer-face action” (Harding 1997: XV). They report, for example,
about social and environmental protest actions. Again, this is a very interesting bottom-up initiative that questions traditional mass media, but it is hardly participatory.

An example that did include participation to a certain extent is the following: The group around Harding produced video letters for a group of residents that suffered from a noisy and polluting aluminium factory in Wales. They collected local testimonies and included video evidence shot by the residents themselves. The video letters were first sent to the owner of the factory. When they figured that this would not be enough they sent the letters to other stakeholders, like bank officials, local journalists, the local council, etc., in order to create pressure against the aluminium factory (Harding 1997). If this example should be considered as participatory video depends again on the broadness of the definition. However, the point is that in activism-type video it is the activist, who plays the largest part, in contrast to the therapy type, where the people or participants directly concerned are the main actors.

The last example builds a bridge to the third type of participatory video, namely ‘empowerment’. The Ngorongoro case (Lane nd) had features both of activism and lobbying. In Ngorongoro the goal of the activist was to represent the voice of indigenous people in the decision process concerning a policy plan. He facilitated the process of recording local opinion statements. In contrast to the examples above, the presentation of the video to the stakeholders was arranged by the Maasai themselves. This was unlike ‘traditional’ activism or lobbyism, where the activist would ‘own’ the video material and be the main decision taker about its distribution.

Type 3: ‘Empowerment’

This is the category which is most relevant to this study. Empowerment is located somewhere in the middle between ‘therapy’ and ‘activism’. It integrates the two approaches by using the full potential of both, the people and the development communicator. The boundaries between subject, producer, and viewer collapse with this approach. Everybody is involved in the three key activities: filming, performing (being filmed), and watching the film. In addition, the development communicator plays an active role as a facilitator. This is the main difference to the therapy cases. The development communicator is not just directing but also involved in the communication and learning process. This, of course, makes it all the more complicated. The development communicator "experiences a constant struggle to find a balance between being directive and letting participants take initiative, between structuring and letting things evolve spontaneously, and between authoritarianism and nondirective dialogical approaches” (Kawaja 1994: 141). The people’s task is not much easier. They need to adjust rapidly to a very creative but at the same time very demanding goal-oriented approach. People have a double responsibility: their active engagement is required in the production of the video and also in the distribution of it. If a participatory video project of this kind succeeds, it can be expected that people have been truly empowered.
**Towards a Typology**

Putting the three categories into a table may further clarify the differences between the approaches. The categories in the left column partly integrate the distinctions made above.

**Table 2: Comparison of development goals**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Therapy</th>
<th>Activism</th>
<th>Empowerment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is the role of the ‘development communicator’?</td>
<td>catalyst</td>
<td>activist, lobbyist, campaigner, advocate</td>
<td>mediator, researcher, facilitator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process or product oriented?</td>
<td>process oriented</td>
<td>product oriented</td>
<td>process and product oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on form or content?</td>
<td>content</td>
<td>form and content</td>
<td>content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who has control over the equipment?</td>
<td>people</td>
<td>activist</td>
<td>both, video facilitator and people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is a script developed?</td>
<td>often</td>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>seldom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If yes, by whom?</td>
<td>people</td>
<td>activist</td>
<td>people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who does the editing?</td>
<td>people (if at all editing is done)</td>
<td>activist</td>
<td>video facilitator (sometimes supported by people)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who benefits from the participatory video project?</td>
<td>the video-making people</td>
<td>people affected by ‘the issue’</td>
<td>the video-making people, people affected by ‘the issue’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who is the target audience?</td>
<td>video-making people themselves</td>
<td>mass media audience, stakeholders</td>
<td>stakeholders and/or people themselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who owns the produced video and distributes it?</td>
<td>people</td>
<td>activist and people</td>
<td>people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suitable as a research/ PRA tool?</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes (Huber, this thesis)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At this point it may be added that development goals are often not made explicit. Many consider the slogan ”We do participatory video!” as sufficiently explanatory. Sometimes it is also the other way round: Goals are clearly named but at the same time it is stressed that the project is very process-oriented. It is actually impossible to determine the goal at the outset in more process-oriented projects. In those projects, the goals emerge in the interaction process and are ideally defined by the community, not by the development communicator. However, there are only few examples of this kind of project. One of them is a project that took place in Vietnam (see case study three: ‘The Vietnam case’). As Braden and Huong (1998) report, no explicit goal was inscribed in the project design. Understandably, it is difficult to find funding for a project like that. In the Vietnam case, Oxfam funded the project as an explicit pilot project to study the potential of process-oriented video.
A final remark concerns the question of whether the ‘service’ of video making was suggested on the initiative of a development team entering a certain scene (‘video push’) or if the service of making a video was requested by local people (‘video pull’). The Media Centre in Mtwara, Tanzania, is starting up a service agency offering participatory video-making as a service which can be ‘pulled down’ (Johansson 1998). Otherwise there are hardly any documented cases of video-pull.
Theories

This chapter offers a short review of current theories and concepts in disciplines providing important theoretical inputs to this study. The common relevance of these disciplines, which provide the basis for the conceptual framework of this study, is discussed in the last section of the chapter.

Communication theory

Sender-oriented communication theories

Almost any account on the development of modern communication theory starts out with a discussion of the Lasswell Formula and/or the Shannon/Weaver model. (In most of the cases this is done to mark the difference to a ‘better’ model that is presented later in the text.) These models, constructed in the late 1940s, represent a very linear understanding of communication. Information according to these models is something that flows from sender via medium to receiver. It is a mechanistic one-directional process. When the models were developed, mass media were regarded as a very powerful and persuasive influence on society. Therefore the models saw the sender as actively deciding upon the content of the message whereas the receiver was seen as a passive victim penetrated by the message (Mda 1993).

In current theoretical understanding these two models are no longer accepted. Many authors criticised them for their false underlying assumptions. Luhmann, for instance, offers a simple but convincing argument against the linear models. He argues that the "thing metaphoric" (Luhmann 1995: 139) of information is flawed from the start because the sender does not lose anything when sending off a message. Similarly, the audience does not gain anything; it merely interprets the message in one way or another. For other arguments especially with reference to development communication, Mda (1993) provides a good summary.

Despite the heavy criticism, the models still resonate in debates on communication, not least in development communication (ibid). The omnipresent claim, "We must inform people better!" or "We must educate the people!" frequently draws on a linear understanding of communication. In fact, many governments still rely more or less exclusively on top-down communication. They ‘send off’ messages through mass media and hope for impact. Feedback is not appreciated as it might question the system. Poor communication of this kind usually goes hand in hand with poor development.

A major reason for the popularity of the linear models may be found in their simplicity. The separable elements, sender, message, medium, receiver allow easy structuring of a communication process. Current models are more abstract and complicated.

Softening up the linearity

In a second phase of communication theory, in the 1950s and 1960s, the linearity of the above models was relaxed. The one-step model was transformed into a two-step model, which in turn was modified into a multi-step model; the ‘opinion leader’ became the subject of extensive research and the audience was upgraded through the ‘uses and gratification’ research tradition (Mda 1993). However, in mainstream research, communication was still regarded as transmission rather than dialogue or interaction. Since the theoretical advancements primarily
took mass media studies as their empirical base, the concept of communication as a directional flow of information prevailed. Mass media, in fact, had grown into big bureaucratic institutions, which excluded possibilities for receivers to respond. While mass communication theory was rapidly progressing, communication science somewhat forgot to discuss other forms of communication.

_Giving up linearity_

In the third phase, numerous models of interpersonal communication have evolved. They see communication as a process in which participants share information with one another rather than transmit (e.g. the theory of symbolic interactionism described by Blumer 1992, or the convergence model of Rogers and Kinaid 1986). The models collapse the distinction between sender and receiver at the same time as they replace the concept of ‘transmission’ with the one of ‘transaction’. The new models allow not only a better understanding of interpersonal communication; they also cast a different light on mass media communication.

In more recent debates, constructivist and systems perspectives have entered the field. After a long battle to define its boundaries communication science finally is subject to an interdisciplinary opening-up. Fiske (1982), to name one of the important newer authors, contends that as communication is central to the life of any culture, the study of communication must involve the study of culture of which it is an integral part. The study of communication without the study of culture is meaningless, according to Fiske. This is only one example how much broader the context of communication science has grown in current understanding. Today’s communication science is bound to learn from and contribute to such diverse fields as linguistics, cultural studies, organisational theory, anthropology, etc.

_Habermas’ Theory of Communicative Action_

Habermas chose an interdisciplinary path from the start; his extensive work is widely recognised, not only in communication science but also in many different disciplines. Within the field of communication, Habermas’ (1984, 1987) theory of communicative action has had a profound impact. In fact, there are hardly any authors in (non-mass-media) communication theory that allow themselves not to draw on Habermas’ work in one way or another. It seems that ‘nothing goes’ without Habermas.

For this study, Habermas’ distinction between strategic and communicative rationality is particularly interesting. In his theory of communicative action, strategic and communicative rationality refer to two different kinds of rational action: In strategic rationality each of the actors uses power, threat, enticement, deception, or simply faked communicative action to achieve his or her ends; strategic action is oriented towards success. Communicative rationality, by contrast, is oriented towards reaching an agreement and consensus (verständigungsorientiert)

This concept of communicative rationality carries with it connotations based ultimately on the central experience of the unconstrained, unifying, consensus-bringing force of argumentative speech, in which different participants overcome their merely subjective views and, owing to the mutuality of rationally motivated conviction, assure themselves of both the unity of the objective world and the intersubjectivity of their lifeworld. (Habermas 1984: 10)

Habermas regards open communication channels as an important precondition for social progress to take place. The members of society need democratic communication fora in order to solve social conflicts discursively and to generate consensus. Therefore it is "indispensable that

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8 ‘Instrumental action’ is a third type of action set out by Habermas (Burkart and Lang 1992). Instrumental action is success-oriented, just as strategic action, but non-social.
societies develop institutional and structural conditions that allow their members to discuss and exchange ideas and arguments in truly uncoerced ways” (Hess 1997: 88).

According to Habermas four conditions or “validity claims” need to be fulfilled for mutual understanding (‘Verständigung’) to occur:

1. **Comprehensibility**: The speakers must use linguistic expressions that are comprehensible and intelligible to the listener.

2. **Truth of propositions**: The speakers must say things about the world as they know it.

3. **Truthfulness**: The speakers must sincerely mean what they say, so listeners are able to trust them.

4. **Rightness according to norms**: The speakers must choose language and behavioral expressions that are normatively and morally acceptable to the listener. (Hess 1997: 89, Habermas 1984: 23)

The above preconditions describe the ideal and are therefore not necessarily asserted as realisable. But they provide a good tool to structure and examine communication in both the private and the public sphere. By checking the degree to which the preconditions are fulfilled, communication problems can be analysed.

**Development policy and theory**

**Modernisation**

"During the late 1940s and 1950s most development thinkers stated that the problem of underdevelopment or ‘backwardness’ could be solved by a more or less mechanical application of the economic and political systems of the West to countries in the Third World. They assumed the difference was one of degree, rather than of kind” (Servaes 1996: 31). Growth was regarded as the natural solution to the problem. Therefore development policy promoted economic growth by all means and expected a trickling down of welfare effects to the poorer strata. This approach was given the label ‘modernisation’. Development was equated to a move from traditional society to modernity, with the United States of the 1950s as a role model.

**Reorientation and critique of the modernisation paradigm**

Recognition grew in the 1960s that there was little evidence of the hoped for trickle-down effect. The approach to development shifted towards a stronger emphasis on employment and basic needs. The International Labour Organisation coined the slogan "from redistribution from growth to redistribution with growth” (Hewitt 1992: 229). The focus was still on growth, increasingly debt-led growth, yet a few more variables were considered.

In the more scientific sphere the dependency perspective challenged the modernisation paradigm. The dependistas (this label was given as many critics were from Latin America) applied Marxian structuralist theories of imperialism to explain the wide gap between rich and poor. They saw the main reason for this gap in the neo-imperialistic domination of the periphery by the centre; that domination was achieved through a combination of power components such as military, politics, industry, culture, or in other words, through hegemonic power.
The lost decade

In the 1980s development went ‘backwards’ according to many observers. The increasing adoption of neo-liberalist thought among the rich Western countries struck the low-income countries hard. Debt repayments, growing protectionism among the OECD, and the problems related to an increasingly unpredictable international market to mention some of the characteristics of the 1980s brought many developing countries in severe economic crisis. The structural adjustment policies promoted by the World Bank and IMF often made the living conditions of the poorer more difficult, particularly in the initial phase of the adjustment programmes.

The ‘crisis in development’ led to new proposals regarding development policy. Already in the middle of the 1970s, the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation (1975) argued in their famous publication that development should be more than just economic and industry-led growth. ‘Another Development’ was suggested, a more holistic one including social, economic, cultural, and religious elements. ‘Another development’ discarded the idea of a universal model of development and argued instead that each society should find its own strategy.

Similarly, a number of ‘Third World’ scholars developed a paradigm which became known as ‘multiplicity’ or ‘multiplicity in one world’ (Kumar 1994). It suggested a polycentric instead of a Western ethnocentric perspective and highlighted the interdependency and diversity of societies in the world.

Current policy trends

Today there is a diversity of approaches to development. They are sometimes applied parallel to one another even though they may be contradictory. Mechanistic growth-oriented approaches in the tradition of the modernisation paradigm are still adhered to by development institutions all around the world. At the same time many of these institutions may promote ‘another development’, funding projects which induce qualitative changes that go beyond quantifiable economic growth.

The influence of the newer paradigm and, to a certain extent, also political correctness have brought forward today’s key concepts in development policy, for example, sustainability, empowerment, participation, capacity building, and gender. These more qualitative characteristics of development have been discussed at several international UN conferences over the last decade, particularly at the Rio Conference in 1992. Through analysing the failures of development aid it became clear that ‘the people’ and (limited) natural resources were factors that often had been ‘underestimated’ in development projects. This growing awareness, accompanied by a growing appreciation of the contribution of more qualitative approaches, explains the importance of the above key concepts in today’s policy texts.

However, while the rhetoric and the scientific debates have advanced quite far, development practice, as many argue, still lags behind. In general, donors still prefer to support projects that produce immediate quantifiable outputs, rather than long-term qualitative change.

Extension

The term ‘extension’ is commonly used in relation to agricultural information services for rural regions. It is the communicative arm of development policy. There are debates as to whether extension should be seen as a field in its own or just as an integral aspect of development policy. Röling (1988) fostered the establishment of extension as a scientific discipline by simply calling one of his books ‘Extension Science’. The word ‘extension’ itself has
connotations of a directional process, of disseminating a message from the centre to the periphery and that is also how the modernists have seen it.

In the 1950s and 1960s the mass media, particularly radio were felt to play a key role in promoting agricultural modernisation. The benefits of modern agriculture were unquestioned at the time – it was merely a matter of getting the message out to the people. The extension model of the time was mechanistic, directional and associated with the linear communication models of Lasswell and Shannon and Weaver: the ‘diffusion model’. The model was criticised for a number of reasons, including its weak empirical base, the negligence of situational variables, the exclusive focus on the sender and its pro-innovation bias (Christoplos and Nitsch 1996). Despite this, the concept has continued to play a prominent role in the thinking of policy planners and extension staff.

In the late 1960s the concept of ‘social marketing’ emerged from the thinking of American marketing models. In this view, the mass media should not just market agricultural technologies but also social ideas, practices and non-agricultural products. McKee (1994) mentions an example in which nutritious infant food was marketed within a development project focussing on child survival. Compared to the diffusion model, the theoretical underpinning in the social marketing concept was hardly innovative. It still adhered to the linear communication models, only the scope of application was widened.

Christoplos and Nitsch (1996) mention two lines of thinking that provide an alternative to the diffusion model. The first focuses on farmers’ needs. The “relevance model” (ibid: 32), as they label it, assumes that farmers can articulate their needs and share them with the extensionist, who in return can offer a bundle of technical solutions to chose from. This supposition relates to the uses and gratification tradition in communication theory, shifting the focus from the sender to the recipient, and to older needs-based traditions in community development interventions. Critics argue that in practice it is often impossible to isolate discrete needs, which can be targeted by specific technical measures.

The second line of thinking cited by Christoplos and Nitsch is the platform approach. The starting point for this approach is the recognition that extension in development countries is increasingly confronted with complex realities. The interplay of human activities (economic, social, cultural, etc) leads to conflict situations, where discrete ‘solvable’ problems can no longer be identified. Decisions on these situations are taken on various levels among various interests. Hence an agreement between an extensionist and a client on a complex issue is likely to fail if not all stakeholders are included in the communication process. Röling (1994), for example, suggests that extension should move away from ‘consulting target groups’ towards the establishment of platforms that can foster dialogue between interdependent stakeholders. More concretely, this means the creation of institutional settings where people can meet and communicate to reach an agreement about conflict situations. The extensionist can function as a facilitator or mediator in these settings.

Development communication and participation

A field of its own?

It is difficult to define development communication as a field on its own. Development communication integrates certain aspects of development policy, extension and communication science; it is about "the utilisation of the media, both mass and interpersonal, to initiate and advance the process of development" (Mda 1993: 43). Various forms of indigenous media and
their (potential) role in development communication are currently discussed in the literature, such as dance (Mlama 1994), theatre (Mda 1993), stories and songs (Mwangi 1996). To a certain degree, the findings in this literature bear relevance for the study of participatory video.

Many theories that fall into the realm of development communication have already been touched upon in the previous paragraphs. For example, the paradigm shift from modernisation to dependency to multiplicity is sometimes dealt with under the heading ‘development communication’.

There is, however, a concept which has not been sufficiently elaborated yet in this study, that is, participation. As already noted, the word ‘participation’ has become an indispensable part in current development jargon. It seems that no development projects can be proposed without using participation in one way or another. The additive, ‘participation’, is attached to many development-related fields: participatory research, participatory communication, participatory rural appraisal and, of course, participatory video. The following section describes Paulo Freire’s concept of ‘conscientisation’ because Freire’s work is extensively cited in the literature on participation and because many authors use his writings to legitimise the participative features of their development projects. He has influenced in fact a whole generation of scholars and activists engaged in development projects, particularly at the region of his origin, Latin America (Pradip 1994).

**Conscientisation**

Freire’s writings have to be seen as a response to the pedagogy of extension education practised in the Brazil of the 1950s and 1960s, which he found deeply paternalistic and non-participatory. He observed how people lived in poverty, exploitation and silence having lost the ability to understand and articulate their own oppression. Freire believes that conscientisation is the key to subvert this ‘Culture of Silence’ as he calls it. He defines it as a process of “learning to perceive social, political and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (Mda 1993: 45, quotation originally from Freire). Freire’s concept of learning is not one of hierarchical teaching and information transfer. He suggests a dialogue between scholar and teacher in which they jointly explore new questions and new alternatives. For Freire, dialogue is a therapeutic and an emancipatory experience, which can result in actual liberation and activism. Authentic participation is a necessary precondition for dialogue to take place. Both teacher and scholar are actively involved in the production of new knowledge.

In some aspects Freire’s work is akin to Habermas’ theory of communicative action. Both theorists argue that teachers (or experts, extensionists) have to refrain from the temptation to treat their knowledge as inherently superior to their audience’s (Hess 1997). They have to accept that indigenous views are equally valid and meaningful as theirs. Both also stress the importance of horizontal communication, which naturally includes participation as an important element. Both stress the importance of dialogue or communication for constructive problem-solving. Hess (1997), however, remarks that there are also some differences between the two: Freire demands a change in the character disposition of the teacher. To him, the ideal teacher is loving, encouraging, listening rather than paternalising, instructing, teaching. This demand has been criticised as being too idealistic. Habermas, by contrast, “defines the conditions for communication less in terms of the personal dispositions of the speakers involved, than in terms of the formal structure of the communicative situation” (Hess 1997: 88-89).
Participation

As noted, Freire was one of the first to stress the importance of participation. His writings certainly had an impact; since the publication of ‘Pedagogy of the Oppressed’ a staggering number of publications on participation and participatory communication has come out, all of them including a variety of definitions and categorisations concerning participation. This makes it very difficult to gain an overview over the field. There are an amazing number of typologies of participation, isolating different levels of participation with pseudo-participation and ‘genuine’ participation as poles (see e. g. Besette and Rajasunderam 1996). Cohen (1996: 246-7) provides a very detailed "Checklist for Use in Identifying Participatory Components of Projects”.

A helpful distinction, which occurs regularly, is the following: Participation can be used as a means to reach a certain goal, e.g. the involvement of people’s knowledge in the building of a dam. Or participation can be an end in itself, e.g. in projects with a focus on capacity building or education for democracy.

Within a development project participation ideally is an integral component of all stages of the project: problem identification, project formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. A participatory project is likely to be ‘sustainable’ as there are no difficulties in ‘handing over’ the project result to the people. In order to foster participation in development work a number of tools and techniques are applied to facilitate the dialogue between development researchers and the local people. These tools and techniques have become known as Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). Related approaches are Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) and Participatory Action Research (PAR).

RRA emerged in the late 1970s as a response to the development practice of the time. It was impossible to further ignore the flaws in the ways development had been conceptualised. The failures of development practice were becoming all too evident. RRA and later PRA provided practical means for development work that was in line with the emerging new paradigm promoted by Freire and others. The paradigm shift can be seen as a step from ‘one-way transfer of information’ to ‘mutual reciprocal learning’. The difference between RRA and PRA lies primarily in the degree of extraction. RRA, according to Chambers, is a process of learning by outsiders in a cost-effective way. PRA goes further; in PRA the understanding is jointly created by outsiders and insiders, the information stays with the people and is also analysed and applied by them. The outsider has more the role of a facilitator supporting the production of new knowledge, rather than a researcher.

The toolboxes of RRA and PRA contain a large variety of techniques for communication; many of them serve for focussing and for visualisation e. g. ranking, mapping, diagramming, transects, calendars, time lines, etc. Participatory video can also be regarded as a focussing tool and certainly it allows visualisation. Yet there are only few development professionals who use video as just one tool amongst others. Commonly, they either do not use it, or they use video only.

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9 The ‘Rural’ in RRA and PRA respectively should not be interpreted too tightly. Even if developed in rural contexts, the tools of RRA and PRA are nowadays applied in ‘non-rural’ environments, too. The ‘A’ may also stand for assessment or action (Mikkelsen 1995).
Conceptual framework

An overview of the theories discussed

The previous chapter discussed the theoretical progression in disciplines related to the broad fields of communication and development studies. It has been indicated that to a certain degree a parallel development in these disciplines can be observed. Taking communication theory and development policy as an example, it is evident that the massive mass-media based information campaigns for certain agricultural products in the 1950s were closely related to the mathematical theories of communication of the time.

Table 3 puts the theoretical development of the disciplines – somewhat purposefully biased – into a three-step order. For each discipline three dominant paradigms are identified. Thus by looking at the ‘paradigm’ columns, the theoretical development of the various disciplines can be compared. Some similarities are quite obvious, some are less so. In the third row theories and concepts falling under the ‘new paradigm’ are noted. These theories and concepts in the new paradigm are arguably more interdisciplinary and therefore ‘closer’ to one another than the ones under paradigm 1. The current understanding of ‘sustainable development’ provides an example of this convergence; it smoothly integrates the fields of communication and development:

In sustainable development, everyone is a user and provider of information considered in the broad sense. That includes data, information, appropriately packaged experience and knowledge. The need for information arises at all levels, from that of senior decision-makers at the national levels to the grass-roots and individual levels (Ramírez 1998: 9 quoting UNCED).

Another example is the already mentioned ‘cross-over’ concept that integrates communication and extension theories: the platform approach. It combines the ideals of Habermas’ theory of communicative action with modern understanding of communication and is promoted as a new approach for extension. Reflecting on the new meanings attached to communication and extension some authors revive the old formulation saying that “extension is communication” (e.g. Christopoulos 1996: 5, italics by Huber).

Table 3: Comparing the theoretical development of various disciplines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Paradigm 1</th>
<th>Paradigm 2</th>
<th>The New Paradigm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication theory</td>
<td>linear models</td>
<td>uses and gratification,</td>
<td>convergence,</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>multi-step-flow of</td>
<td>constructivist</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>communication</td>
<td>theories</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extension</td>
<td>diffusion model</td>
<td>social marketing,</td>
<td>platform approach,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>relevance model</td>
<td>participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development theory</td>
<td>modernisation</td>
<td>dependency</td>
<td>multiplicity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development policy</td>
<td>growth</td>
<td>redistribution, basic</td>
<td>sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>needs and growth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Also interesting in this respect is:

| Methodology in development research | extractive quantitative surveys | RRA | PRA/PLA, action research |

(Huber, this thesis)
The theoretical framework for this study

It is argued in this study that participatory video emerged from the ‘new paradigm’. Thus it can be understood only with this new paradigm in mind. A meaningful interpretation of participatory video projects has to involve several disciplines, as the implications of a project are various and unpredictable. Therefore concepts from disciplines other than communication science are applied in this study, although the primary focus is on communicative aspects of participatory video. Yet all the concepts applied in this study are derived, directly or indirectly, from the ‘new paradigm’.

In the following it is concretised which concepts are relevant to this study. The listing is perhaps not absolutely complete. Since the study is of exploratory nature it appears unrealistic to draw a conceptual boundary around it that is ‘100% waterproof’.

Pluralism

The concept of pluralism (Daniels and Walker 1998, Christoplos and Nitsch 1996, Ramirez 1998) is central to this study. It provides a broad philosophical foundation for the analysis. As it has not been touched upon in the theory section, it is shortly presented here.

Daniels and Walker position pluralism between two alternative thinking modes, monism and relativism.

At its core, pluralism is a philosophical position about values. It can be contrasted with two other philosophical positions – monism (also known as absolutism) and relativism – which are often represented as polar opposites. Monism operates from the premise that there is on and only one reasonable system of values. Relativism, on the other hand, assumes that all values are situational, that they are contextually defined, and socially constructed. In any given situation, therefore, any particular value system may take precedence over others. (Daniels and Walker 1998: 5)

In contrast to monism, pluralism accepts that reality is socially constructed by the human observer. It emerges from continuous communication among people in a community. Pluralism recognises that people have multiple views and values in life and that all of them are relevant, since they shape their action. A pluralist understanding of a conflict situation in a development setting, for example, would recognise that multiple actors are involved in the conflict; that they pursue possibly competing interests and that they exert an influence on the other actors and on the setting. These actors are ‘stakeholders’, since they hold a stake in the development of the situation.

The question for a pluralist analyst, then, is not one of who is right or wrong, or how can the conflict be resolved? Conflicts are principally seen as an inherent part of social organisation and sometimes unavoidable. In a pluralist view the interest lies in the ‘management’ of a conflict situation. As it is accepted that consensus between stakeholders is not always realistic, ‘management’ is broadly defined as “the generation and implementation of tangible improvements in a conflict situation” (Daniels and Walker 1998: 9); or as consensus on action to improve the situation, as systems thinkers would put it (Checkland 1994).

In its openness to various viewpoints, pluralism, however, also has limits, which distinguishes pluralism from relativism. "(…) pluralism departs from relativism, because while the former acknowledges the possibility of standards that exist independent of a particular context, the latter does not. Pluralists recognise that there are some universal truths to human nature that can provide the basis for deep conventions that are the foundation of evaluation" (Daniels and
Walker 1998: 7). Pluralism thus is neither relativist, nor monolithic – it is an open-minded position that maintains the option to judge in a normative way.

Participatory video is based on pluralism. The aim of participatory video is to bring viewpoints to the surface that are otherwise not represented in public discourse. It gives a voice to those who are neglected by the conventional topdown communication networks. In a pluralist perception, the views of marginalised people in rural communities are salient and relevant, since they are decision takers just as the policy planners, scientists or civil servants. By bringing viewpoints to the surface, participatory video can contribute to a rich understanding of a situation which is often necessary in order to take successful decisions.

**Communicative Action**

Within the field of communication theory and extension Habermas’ theory on communicative action provides an essential input (Habermas 1984, 1987; Hess 1997). Habermas noted in his massive publication that modern mass media can never safely centralise the flow of communication as "there is a counterweight of emancipatory potential built into communication structures themselves" (1987: 390). This present study views participatory video as an example of emancipatory communication. (It is important to stress, however, that participatory video generally avoids the use of mass media channels. The tapes produced in participatory video projects are not transferable commodities; they belong to a certain context and convey little meaning outside its context.)

This study analyses the potential of participatory video to lift interaction among communities, stakeholders outside the community and development workers from strategic rationality to the level of communicative rationality. The four validity claims of communicative action are applied to the cases in the analysis section in order to examine in how far the goal of reaching an ‘ideal speech situation’ can be achieved.

**Platforms**

A concept building on Habermas’ theory of communicative action and pluralism is the platform approach to communication (Röling 1994, Christoplos 1996, Ramírez 1998). Röling (1994) argues that conflict situations in development settings are often not adequately managed by the existing administrative or economic institutions. The conflicts prevail because not all stakeholders affected by the conflict have been represented in the decision process concerning an improvement of the situation. It is argued that existing institutions with their rigid procedures, schedules, and rules are not capable to manage complex conflict situations. For long now, there has been a search for new institutional frameworks that can handle such situations. The search has been stimulated both from the theoretical (Habermas 1984, 1987) and the political (Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation 1975) sphere.

Röling suggests the creation of platforms for negotiation (as described in the theory section). Participatory video can play a double role in here: One possible function of participatory video is to offer rural communities an opportunity to be represented on an existing platform. Or a participatory video project can become a platform in itself, with the video camera as the central communication medium. This latter function is likely to be used within the community, perhaps in preparation of a ‘bigger’ message that is produced for use at a higher platform level.

Hildyard et al aptly point out the link between Habermas and Röling, critically relating the claim for uncoerced horizontal communication to the platform concept:

The majority of participatory projects rest on the dubious assumption that simply getting different ‘stakeholders’ around the table will lead to consensus being reached that is ‘fair’ to all. This only
holds, if it is assumed that the participants are equally powerful or if inequalities can be treated as a purely technical matter. This is rarely true. Facilitating measures may be important in negotiations but they are not enough to grant marginal groups the bargaining power they require to overcome the structural dominance enjoyed by more powerful groups. (Hildyard et al 1998: 34-35)

The question of whether participatory video can increase the bargaining power of marginalised communities is also dealt with in the present study.

**Soft Systems Thinking**

Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) as developed by Checkland (1981) contributes to the understanding of development projects that follow the new paradigm. The current interest in SSM in development theory and practice can be interpreted as a reaction to the realisation that development work is regularly confronted with messy and intangible problems. The ‘hard’ assumption that these "problems are clearly definable and amenable to expert diagnosis" (Bell 1996: 37) has too often proved inappropriate. In a soft approach the formulation of 'tight' problem definitions with linear, instrumental methods, is avoided. SSM focuses instead on "taking a set of actors through a process of shared problem appreciation, learning about the problem and taking collective action to improve it” (Röling 1994: 391). The objective of SSM is to stimulate reflection, interaction and learning; Checkland himself describes SSM as a ‘learning system’ (1994: 87).

It is argued here, that participatory video facilitators often follow, explicitly or not, a soft approach in their projects. Reflection is inherent to the medium of video, it is interactive and allows learning in a constructive way. Participatory video projects are process-oriented and require a flexible design to be successful. Projects progress in iterative cycles, as in SSM, through four basic acts: "perceiving, predicating, comparing, and deciding on action” (Checkland 1981: 17). Roughly translated into ‘video language’ this would mean: reflecting, speaking (in front of the camera), watching the video and discussing it, learning and acting, new reflection, recording new statements, and so on. As in soft systems thinking there is no clearly identifiable project end; at best, it leads to a situation which satisfies a large number of people.

**PRA**

Finally the theoretical underpinning of PRA is of interest to the present study. Many participatory video projects claim to use PRA methodology or at least apply rhetoric that reminds one of PRA. For this reason it seems sensible to examine what projects actually achieve in terms of empowerment, participation, or conscientisation. The theoretical claims of these concepts are critically applied to check if self-imposed project goals (like ‘empowering people’) are reached or not.

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10 It has to be noted that SSM is not applied as a research method but as a useful way of thinking and learning about complex phenomena.
Methodology

General approach

Participatory video has not yet been subject to extensive research. There are hardly any attempts to conceptualise the numerous uses and effects of the tool. Based on the current literature on participatory video, it appears impossible to draw justifiable boundaries around the study (‘this is how far participatory video’s impact reaches’), which would be a precondition to determine causal relations. Participatory video, as already mentioned, is process-oriented, not just product- or goal oriented. Conventional evaluation methods are generally not tailored to take processes into account, since they focus on ‘end-products’ like stable opinions or manifest behavioural changes instead of opinions and changes ‘in the making’. All that makes it rather difficult to ask concrete questions, or formulate meaningful hypotheses that cover relevant and interesting aspects.

This study refrains from applying the conventional research approach of testing predetermined hypotheses. The hazard of researching questions that, after having gone deeper into the field, turn out to be irrelevant or simply ‘wrong’, is thereby avoided. Current literature on qualitative research supports the step away from the classical approach of verifying or falsifying hypotheses, particularly in fields that have not been subject to extensive research (Denzin and Lincoln 1994). The purpose of this thesis, therefore, is the articulation of hypotheses and improved conceptualisations of participatory video-related issues as a result of the research process. In this relation, this study follows the principles of ‘exploratory research’. A guideline for students in agricultural systems research from the Department of Communication and Innovation Studies, Agricultural University Wageningen (Rap 1997), has extensively described this approach. Rap summarises the idea of exploratory research as follows:

Exploratory studies have as their major purpose the articulation of concepts and the development of hypotheses. Less concern is devoted to the description of qualitative relations among variables, the verification of hypotheses and the generalisation of research findings. A difference to other research designs is that exploratory research considers the research objects in their daily (or natural) circumstances and not in artificial or experimental settings. (Rap 1997: 3)

Also relevant to this study is the ‘grounded theory’ approach (Strauss and Corbin 1990), which shares certain principles with exploratory research approaches. Strauss and Corbin (1990: 24) describe the grounded theory approach as a “qualitative research method that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon”. Thus the main purpose is theory building, not verification or falsification of theories.

This study does not systematically apply the toolset of grounded theory methodology but makes use of one of its paramount principles, that is, the continuous interplay between data collection, analysis and theory. Exploration bears an element of unpredictability, and therefore requires flexibility. This flexibility is achieved through the interplay between observing, proposing and checking, or in other words, through constant comparisons. Grounded theory is therefore sometimes referred to as the “constant comparative method” (Strauss and Corbin 1994: 273).
Sources

The data for this thesis are taken from a variety of sources: technical and non-technical\textsuperscript{11} literature, videos, formal interviews, ‘personal communications’, and seminars.

The (written) literature used in this study can be categorised as follows.

- Literature A consists of a variety of technical and nontechnical literature on alternative video uses, including participatory video. This literature is quite diverse; besides scientific publications, it includes, for instance, project reports and evaluations, newspaper clippings, and seminar handouts. The chapters on historical development of the method and categorisation take this literature as a base.

- Literature B consists of scientific literature on theories and methods. It plays a major role in the chapters on theories, conceptual framework and methodology.

- Literature C, finally, is on the cases. It contains technical literature in form of project evaluations and descriptions and nontechnical literature like, for instance, handouts, unpublished drafts, and personal mails.

With very few exceptions, the literature is in English; literature on participatory video in languages other than English is not covered by this study. This can be seen as a limitation since there is interesting material from Latin America (Riano 1994), yet available only in Spanish and Portuguese. Some further limitations may be noted here: As most of the sources were not readily available at the outset of the study, much time was invested in the literature search. This steady quest for new material resulted in much of the relevant material arriving at a very late stage of the research process, for various reasons: some book orders took very long; interesting articles were accidentally discovered while browsing the internet; colleagues found interesting articles and gave these to the author almost at the end of the research work, etc. Hence the data collection was also guided by chance to some extent. (A few books or papers on participatory video could never be obtained because they were out of print and could not be found in any databases.)

Another limitation can be found in the diversity of the material. The literature varies enormously in the degree of specification, the scientific level, in explicitness, etc. This has made it very difficult to converge or compare literature. The literature describing participatory video projects, for example, is sometimes very detailed and descriptive, sometimes very philosophical and abstract. Thus a certain degree of flexibility and inventiveness is required to work out parallels and differences between video cases.

Two formal interviews were conducted within the study. Both of them were focused, open-ended, having general theoretical as well as specific technical issues of participatory video as a theme. One interviewee was Lars Johansson, who is a consultant working professionally with participatory video. The other was Katja Jassey, who works at the Swedish International Development Agency. She is an anthropologist with experience of participatory video projects in Africa. A number of informal conversations with people at DRDS also provided valuable inputs to the study.

Finally, this study builds on the analysis of ‘participatory videos’, or better formulated: video material that was produced within participatory video projects. This video material plays only a supportive role in this study. It is not separately analysed, for example in the form of a content

\textsuperscript{11} Technical literature: Reports of research studies, and theoretical or philosophical papers characteristic of professional and disciplinary writing.

Nontechnical literature: Biographies, diaries, documents, manuscripts, records, catalogues, etc. (adapted from Strauss and Corbin 1990: 48)
analysis. The material is used for illustration of the cases and (for the author only) a visualised picture of the setting. The unclear copyright legislation makes it impossible to add the videos to the document as attachments.

Admittedly, the decision to put low priority to the analysis of videos came only after some time in the research process. At the outset of the investigations the author believed that availability of ‘the video’ of a project would be a dominant argument for the choice of cases. As the work progressed, however, it was realised that the videos per se were only very static snapshots. Many projects produce hundreds of videos, and most of them have only a very short ‘life expectancy’ as they are constantly improved, re-edited, replaced, or discarded. Thus no video can be considered the most important one - they all just represent a certain stage in the process. In addition, they generally contain little contextual information (and normally no written support material is available), so they are difficult to understand and interpret. The problem of language has to be considered, too.

There are, of course, also practical arguments. Participatory videos are very difficult to obtain. Frequently they are not intended for wider audiences; the producers of the videos (either the video facilitator or the people) keep their copies without distributing them to other people. They often view the videos as rather personal or local affairs. The lack of clarity concerning copyright also limits access to participatory video material.

The cases

The study includes three case studies, presented in the following chapter. The book ‘Case Study Research: Design and Methods’ by Robert K. Yin (1989) functions as the main methodological guideline. Yin’s definition of a case study goes well together with the general research approach described above:

A case study is an empirical inquiry that:
- investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when
- the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which
- multiple sources of evidence are used. (Yin 1989: 23)

With regard to the presentation of the cases following general choices have been made.

The composition of the case studies follows a "linear-analytic structure” (Yin 1989: 138). Yin recommends this structure for explorative studies and thesis-writing. All three cases first describe project and context, then explain how video was applied and finally elaborate on the implications of participatory video usage. Case study two extensively examines the findings in the light of the conceptual framework.

The cases are non-comparative, since they differ considerably from one another in their scope and function. Setting up of a comparative framework would have involved too many ambiguous compromises. However, the three case build on each other to some extent, in that the second draws on the conclusions and insights of the first while the third provides additional aspects that have not been covered by the first and the second.

The following sections describe the distinct functions of the cases and the reasons for their choice.
**Case 1 - PRODERITH**

Case study one deals with a large-scale Mexican programme conducted in the 1970s and 1980s and supported by FAO: the Integrated Rural Development Programme for the Humid Tropics (Spanish acronym: PRODERITH). The programme produced an enormous number of videos and has been called "the most successful and experienced Rural Communication System anywhere in the world" (FAO 1996: xvi). This praise may of course be challenged, but in its scope and size the Rural Communication System had hardly any forerunners.

The PRODERITH case has been chosen for its broad spectrum of video uses, which provides a first overview of participatory video’s possibilities. The source material for this case stems primarily from three FAO publications (1987a, 1990, 1996), which all extensively describe the programme. Additional inputs are taken from other literature, for example Ramírez (1998), who categorises the degree of participation in the PRODERITH project.

This case study tests the applicability of the message development model of Nair and White (1994) as a framing instrument. The model has already been applied by White and Patel (1994) to the analysis of participatory video projects. Therefore, it appeared sensible to test the model in this study, too. The author decided, however, not to apply the model for cases two and three. The arguments supporting this decision are given in the discussion part of case one.

**Case 2 - The Fisherfolks’ Project**

This is the most extensive and richest case study of the three. It deals with the emergence of an interest organisation for fishermen along the coast of Southern Tanzania. Participatory video played an important role in that process, supporting communication at different hierarchical levels, both vertically and horizontally.12

For case two, a broad spectrum of information sources has been available. Most importantly, the author could conduct interviews and informal conversations with Lars Johansson, who co-facilitated a number of video recordings in the process. He has extensively applied participatory methods in development work and could draw on that experience when facilitating video ‘sessions’ in the Fisherfolks’ Project. Other sources include a number of published and unpublished papers on the Fisherfolks’ Project, a summary by Johansson (1998), which is largely used in the case description, and some of the video material produced in the project.

**Case 3 - The Vietnam experiment**

This case is about a quite distinct video project conducted in Vietnam in 1995. The reason for its distinctiveness was the rare decision to explicitly leave open the subject of the project. Thus the project was indeed process-oriented, leaving the decision of the project’s purpose to its beneficiaries. The purpose of this case study is to illuminate additional aspects that have not been sufficiently treated by the first two cases. The main source for this case, the book ‘Video for Development’ by Braden and Huong (1998), contains a variety of analytical observations, which are matched with/against the author’s observations from the first two cases, following the aim of providing a richer picture of possible participatory video uses, functions and implications.

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12 This distinction between communication on the horizontal and vertical dimension is frequently made in the present study. The horizontal dimension generally refers to the relations of people within communities and between communities. The vertical dimension, by contrast, refers to relations between the community and politicians, donor officials, NGO staff, etc.; in other words: between the community and stakeholders outside the community.
Case 1 - PRODERITH

Case description

Mexico

Mexico has a tradition of elaborating grand plans and designs (FAO 1996). This is reflected in large-scale development programmes such as the Plan La Chontalpa in the state of Tabasco, which became operational in the mid-1960s. That programme’s major aim was to expand irrigation in arid areas. Apart from heavy technology investments in agriculture, it contained a variety of supporting features like provision of credit, technical assistance, etc., but the whole programme never really got accepted by the people: "The peasants never identified with it, nor did they use or maintain the infrastructure properly” (ibid: 3). The reason for this was found in the programme’s lack of participation - the project was imposed on the peasants; they were completely left out in the planning and design process. Learning from this, the Government decided that participation needed to be an integral part of future development commitments. Thus for the planning of PRODERITH13 peasant participation was actively sought.

PRODERITH

The first phase of PRODERITH lasted from 1978 to 1984, the second phase, which is less relevant to this study14, from 1986 to 1995. The programme’s overriding goal was "to increase agricultural production and productivity in the tropics, improve the living standards of peasant families, and conserve natural resources” (FAO 1996: xiv). Primarily, this was to be achieved through investments in water and drainage infrastructure. Loans from the World Bank and FAO supported the programme.

PRODERITH attempted to avoid the mistakes of earlier large-scale development interventions in Mexico. Reviewing Plan La Chontalpa, the lack of communication between project planners and beneficiaries was identified as a central reason for its failure. To avoid repetition of this mistake, PRODERITH decided to allocate more resources to the support of communication and participation: "The Programme took a novel approach from the start. Before beginning any intervention whatsoever, it sent promotores15 to live with the communities. (…) Their role was to get to know the people, win their confidence, and start to discuss possible development actions that PRODERITH could support” (ibid: 18). These promotores as well as other staff received extensive training in issues of communication. Unlike other projects of that time, not only natural scientists were trained, but also a number of social scientists.

13 ‘Programa de Desarrollo Rural Integrado del Trópico Húmedo’ - ‘Programme of Integrated Rural Development in the Tropical Wetlands’
14 The second phase of PRODERITH was much larger in scale involving about 90.000 families, as compared to the first phase, labelled a ‘pilot project’, in which 5.000 families were targeted at (FAO 1996). PRODERITH II had a broader communication approach incorporating various kinds of media like posters, wall newspapers, radio, audiotapes, leaflets, and video. Because of its large scope and dimensions, the author decided not to treat the second phase of the programme in this analysis.
15 Promotores are described as "development workers with good inter-personal and group dynamic skills whose task is to promote discussion and analysis and generally prepare the ground for development actions” (PRODERITH 1996: 18).
In a second step of the programme, field units were created as teams of multi-disciplinary specialists staying in the programme areas. They were supported by ‘methodology groups’ who provided communication inputs, i.e. simple printed materials and videos. The idea of using video for the inclusion of peasants in the research process had come from a professional involved in one of the first initiatives. What seemed a rather unconventional idea in the beginning developed into a core element of the whole programme.

*The Rural Communication System*

FAO (1987b) had had positive experiences with video in a programme in Peru that was successfully operating at the time PRODERITH was initiated. These experiences together with positive results from more or less coincidental field trials in Mexico, led to the selection of video as the prime medium for the carefully introduced communication system (FAO 1996: 21). The ‘Rural Communication System’, as it was called, had the explicit goal to improve communication between programme staff, people and other stakeholders involved. Undoubtedly, the fact that communication was an explicit feature of the programme from the beginning marked a pronounced difference to many other projects, in which communication is expected to happen ‘naturally’, without any funding or support.

Within the first phase of PRODERITH 345 videos were produced. They were shown to more than 260 000 people in about 8200 sessions (ibid). These figures aptly indicate the scale of the whole project. It can hardly be compared to any other video project in the world. Despite its size, the programme was relatively experimental and flexible. The use of video was not restricted to any binding guidelines; rather, the applications were an outcome of repeated trials and improvisations in the field. As such, video was used without ideology concerning a predetermined ‘right way of doing participatory video’.

The Communication System was steered by a ‘Central Unit’ in Mexico City where the larger part of the communication staff was based. Only small teams of two or three people were outposted in the project areas. All videos passed the central unit. “The outposted staff sent their recorded cassettes to the Central Unit with an outline script, and all editing was done there” (FAO 1996: 27). Naturally, this centralisation was criticised for potential censorship and manipulation. Also in terms of logistics, sending back and forth fragile videotapes, the centralisation was bound to involve troubles.

The Communication System used ¾-inch U’matic equipment. The production units turned out to be surprisingly stable, some of the equipment functioned for more than 15 years. The playback units were more sensitive due to constant plugging and unplugging. Special wooden cases were built to facilitate transport of the equipment. In general, technical constraints seemed not to pose any serious limitations to the creativity of production.

*The use of video*

The Communication System worked in three different areas; in all of these areas video was used to facilitate communication:

a) Communication for participatory analysis of farmers’ problems and development options (...);

b) Communication to facilitate education and training, mainly for peasants but also for PRODERITH staff;

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16 Interesting in this relation is that, despite the importance of communication in the programme, the Rural Communication System took up only 1.2% of the total costs of PRODERITH. The total cost of the programme amounted to 145 million US$ (FAO 1996).
c) Communication to provide a flow of institutional information to improve co-ordination and management. (FAO 1996: 21)

In the following some examples of concrete applications are given.

add. a) At the beginning of the project, the Communication System needed to create an entry point into the community, to gain trust and overcome people’s scepticism built up through negative experiences from prior programmes. A short video about PRODERITH usually opened up the dialogue. Videos about issues known to be of concern to the community, for example, about certain animal diseases, introduced information for a first discussion. The aim was to stimulate curiosity about the medium and about its alternative potential beyond mass-mediated entertainment. Participatory videos showing how other villages tackled their problems, so-called ‘testimonial videos’, proved very successful in motivating people to address their own community problems. Discussions following the video screenings were also recorded and used as a further stimulus. They provided a mirror of the community’s individual perceptions. The interplay between expressing views on video, watching the video, reflecting on it and then expressing new views brought forward a rich picture of the community’s problems and suggestions for solutions. In many cases problem perceptions shared by the whole community emerged. The benefit was on both sides. PRODERITH secured an overview of ‘the issues’ of a community while the community evolved a perspective on how they could participate in the project and get help to solve identified problems.

In one Mayan community that had had a series of very negative experiences with development programmes, it proved particularly difficult to create an entry point. A video capturing an old man’s story finally broke the ice. For hours, a proud 82-years old former revolutionary charismatically held forth about Mayan culture, the Revolution, about life in the past and the present, thereby putting the experiences of the community in a historical perspective. For the first time, the community saw someone speaking Mayan on screen. This experience boosted their self-esteem; they asked to watch the video over and over again and eventually started to recognise the practical values of their culture. Discussions with the field staff developed and gradually a climate of openness towards the programme emerged. The PRODERITH team also benefited in that they learned about the history of the place and the significance of Mayan culture (FAO 1987a).

The following example (which provides the base for the application of the Nair/White model; see below) shows how the Communication System learned from ‘local science’:

In one Project area, the technicians had proposed a drainage plan to cure the regular flooding that occurred in a particular place. A peasant thought that the plan would not work because, in his opinion, the technicians were wrong in their analysis of the cause of the flooding. The peasant was video-recorded as he explained his reasons, scratching a diagram in the soil with a stick to illustrate his point. This tape was shown to the technicians. They studied the situation again, and they found that the peasant had been right. Many members of the community had been standing by when the recording was being made with the peasant, and the fact that PRODERITH engineers took into account his opinions and changed their plans created a sense of self-esteem and participation in decision-making. (FAO 1996: 24)

This example is consonant with the principles of PRA. The scratching in the soil reminds one of mapping, a typical focusing tool. The process of video recording itself also functioned as a focusing tool. The warning message of the peasant would probably have received less attention if the team had just taken written notes on the peasants’ remarks.

In another project area, the videocamera was given to peasants to record their criticism of a PRODERITH field team being behind schedule in the building of drainage infrastructure. The tape was labelled ‘Material for Discussion’ and shown to the PRODERITH management. They reacted to the tape in a constructive way and even ”authorized its widespread use as a means of informing all concerned regarding the level of discontent in the project area” (FAO 1987a: 19).
The tape was also shown in other villages, eliciting positive surprise that PRODERITH was capable of self-criticism.

add. b) and add. c) Video was used for the education of both peasants and PRODERITH staff. In the villages, educational videos were usually shown in the presence of a specialist who could comment on the videos’ content and lead follow-up discussions. According to FAO (1987a: 20), the main function of educational videos was to ”introduce information” for discussion, not to convey it.

Videos were exchanged vertically and horizontally, between all hierarchical levels. One briefing tape even reached the President of Mexico. Arguably, videos given to such high-level audiences fulfilled a ‘public relations’ function (FAO 1987a). They provided a lively proof from the grassroots showing that change really happened. Within the Central Unit, videos were used to keep staff up-to-date with the programme’s progression and the filmed stories of successful projects helped to motivate staff. Another valuable function of the videos was that of ”a sort of institutional memory” (ibid: 22). As archival material, videos had the advantage of being much more accessible than stacks of paper and tiresome project documents.

Finally the videos had also recreational value. Apart from PRODERITH-related issues, the Communication System dealt with a number of cultural and children’s stories. And to make the educational videos more attractive, they added humorous feature films or cartoons at the beginning or end of them.

Testing the Message Development Model

[Note: This section (kept in smaller font size) is not fully in line with this study’s approach and conceptual framework. It thus stands somewhat outside the study.]

The ‘message development model’ of Nair and White (1994) provides a framework for the analysis of the use of video by PRODERITH. In order to have a specific reference point, the author chose a concrete ‘event’, namely the one in which the peasant disproved the engineers’ findings on video (for reasons of simplification, the video is called ‘the flooding video’ in the following sections). It is described in the grey-framed paragraph above. In the following section, the model is shortly described.

Description of the model

The ”message development model” of Nair and White (1994: 350) structures the process of message development and identifies the degree of participation in this process. There are four phases of message development:

Phase 1: Definition (of audience, problems, needs, solutions, …)

Phase 2: Design

Phase 3: Production

Phase 4: Evaluation.

Nair and White identify as the two relevant groups the ‘intended receiver’ and the ‘development communicator’. The term ‘intended receiver’ stands for the group of people to be involved in the production of a message, that is the ‘people’ or the ‘community’ (using the present study’s terminology). ‘Development communicator’ stands for “a trained professional or paraprofessional who is linking the bureaucrats, experts and scientists to the grass roots intended receiver” (ibid: 352). Participation is measured in three dimensions: high, medium and low. As a theoretical basis for their model, the authors state the concept of ‘transactional communication’. They offer following definition: ”Transactiona
communication is not a ‘one-way’ persuasion process. It is a dialogue, wherein sender and receiver of messages interact over a period of time, to arrive at shared meanings” (ibid: 347).

White and Patel (1994, in Nair and White 1994), applied the message development model to two video cases. For this purpose they adapted the vocabulary of the model to video language and made three changes: They added an entry-level phase; the levels of participation were eliminated (i.e., high and low); and they took in the researcher as a participant in the process (White and Patel 1994).

The research settings of the two video cases were a dairy farming area in northern New York and the village of Sonori, Maharashtra State, India, where the population faced problems with waste water disposal. “In both cases the researchers believed that by involving the farmers/villagers in the message development process, addressing issues of concern to them, insights regarding participatory roles in development communication would come about” (ibid: 360).

The adapted model finally had the following shape:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phases of Message Development</th>
<th>Intended Receiver</th>
<th>Development Communicator</th>
<th>Researcher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Entry Level Phase</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Emergence of the problem</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Communication of the problem</td>
<td>+ ✓</td>
<td>✓ +</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. …etc.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓ +</td>
<td>✓ +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase I: Define</strong></td>
<td>… etc.</td>
<td>… etc.</td>
<td>… etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase II: Design</strong></td>
<td>… etc.</td>
<td>… etc.</td>
<td>… etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase III: Produce</strong></td>
<td>… etc.</td>
<td>… etc.</td>
<td>… etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase IV: Evaluate</strong></td>
<td>… etc.</td>
<td>… etc.</td>
<td>… etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
- ‘+’ indicates active involvement in the process;
- ‘-’ indicates non-involvement in the process;
- ‘✓’ indicates active interactions among the groups (White and Patel 1994: 372).

17 In order to save space I refrained from depicting all variables of the model since they are visible in Table 5.
Application of the model

Table 5 depicts the video-adapted version of the message development model (White and Patel 1994) applied to the PRODERITH case.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phases of Message Development</th>
<th>Intended Receiver</th>
<th>Development Communicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Entry Level Phase</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergence of the problem</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication of the problem</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>&lt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking external assistance</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan video strategy</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase I: Define</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verify intended receivers</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarify the problem</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>&lt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assess needs</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>&lt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map alternative solutions</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>&lt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select innovative solutions</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>&lt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase II: Design</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refine strategies</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refine message content</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrate communication forms</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create video format</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan message support for delivery context</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase III: Produce</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan video pre-production</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>&lt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produce video-tape</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>&lt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video post-production</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field test pilot tape</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restructure pilot videotape</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Package videotape and message support materials</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase IV: Evaluate</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disseminate video messages</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct evaluation</td>
<td>+ (?)</td>
<td>&lt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solicit feedback</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>&lt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redefine needs of intended receiver</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>&lt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redesign video package</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(adapted from White and Patel 1994 by Huber, this thesis)

Remarks:
- ‘+’ indicates active involvement in the process;
- ‘-’ indicates non-involvement in the process;
- ‘<’ indicates active interactions among the groups;
- ‘?’ indicates missing information or unclear information.

‘Development communicator’ refers to the Rural Communication System, ‘intended receiver’ refers to the peasants. The category ‘researcher’ (introduced only in the adapted version of White and Patel) was cancelled out, as the role of the researcher(s) in the described case was unclear.
The allocation of the three symbols (+, -, <> was not easy for the given case. A considerable degree of interpretation or ‘decoding’ was necessary when filling-in the symbols. As the model had been an operationalisation based on two rather similar video cases (White and Patel 1994), the labels were quite specific. Therefore they did not always fit the video case analysed here. The present author, however, chose not to rename the labels.

For Phase II it was not possible to fill in the pluses and minuses. Partly information was lacking, yet it also became clear that in the given case ‘design’ and ‘production’ had happened in parallel, not in sequence.

Discussion of the model

The model gives an overview concerning the question, ‘Who is actively involved in which phases?’ For instance, the more technical aspects of production (cutting, editing, writing context material) were exclusively in the hands of the PRODERITH staff, while the formulation of the problem itself, the floodings, was identified by a local peasant. The model shows that the development communicator always had a role to play in the production of the flooding video, which cannot be said about the peasant who actually had ‘the message’. Presumably, some important decisions concerning the content of the video were also taken at the cutting board at the Central Unit in Mexico City. The peasant was not present then.

Nair and White (1994) point out that in case of high participation on the side of the intended receiver, the development communicator is only needed at the beginning and the end of the process. In Mexico this was not the case. Control over the video equipment was hardly given out of hands by the PRODERITH staff; their assistance was always necessary. The model indicates that participation and control were not equally distributed; the peasants were excluded from certain important steps.

Some features concerning production of the flooding video, however, are not aptly reflected when applying the model. Formulated differently, the phases of the model (II and III, perhaps even I) do not describe what actually happened in the production of the video. This was not because the phases were not gone through. Rather the two or three phases merged into one big phase: Design and production were not planned prepared activities, taken one by one. The peasant just told his story - without greater preparation, without a script or a story line. It was no linear process with a nicely edited video as an end result. Instead, the different phases were taken several times. The process of message development involved a learning or improvement circle, which could be visualised in the following way:

*Figure 1: Learning cycle.*

(a community with a problem)

new perception of the problem

watching and discussing the video

recording a message on video

perceiving the problem

expressing the problem

recording a new message on video

regarding the process of production as a learning loop, it becomes clear that the phases are gone through several times and not always all steps are taken. The linearity of the model cannot describe these loops.
White and Patel anticipate this critique by writing, "While the model appears to be linear, it is actually lateral and can be interconnected situationally" (1994: 370). Then, however, it is difficult to understand why they refrain from changing the model by, for instance, connecting the phases with loops. An explanation for this may be found in the fact that the video projects described by White and Patel actually had a much higher degree of ‘linearity’. The projects produced nicely edited videos, which were very similar in its structure following the same kind of story line (ibid). There was more focus on the design of the video than in the PRODERITH case.

The labels for the headings under each phase are somewhat problematic. "Refining the message content" (point two in phase II), for example, is not a static decision taken at a particular time. Rather it is a constantly recurring activity: in phase I and II problem perceptions are shared; in phase III several statements are recorded; the material is discussed, modified statements are recorded; and finally the editor selects and organises the material. Thus ‘refinement’ is taking place all the time.

Lastly, the labelling of the model, a point admitted by White and Panel (1994), needs improvement. The model’s name ‘participatory message development model” already puts the focus on the message. It stresses the goal, not the process. The term ‘participation’ is problematic, since people involved are not just participating in message making - they actually are making messages. The model’s name obscures whose message is to be brought across, if it is the people’s or the development communicator’s? Even more inappropriate is the label ‘intended receiver’. Peasants in the given case are both producers and receivers of messages, just as the "development communicators” are. By using the term ‘receiver’ the model still relates to the vocabulary of linear communication models, even though the authors claim that the model’s background is ‘transactional communication’.

The outlined arguments support the decision to refrain in the present study from applying the model to the remaining two cases. Participation in ‘process and product-oriented” video as in the PRODERITH case cannot be aptly interpreted with a linear step-wise model.

Achievements of the Communication System

The flexible approach of the Rural Communication System brought forward interesting applications. The following list provides a summary of the programme’s positive achievements.

- The Communication System succeeded in giving the peasants a medium to articulate their perspective towards the development proposals. The peasants were ‘listened to’ by the field staff. The peasants also learned about the development plans of PRODERITH through videotapes. They were informed about upcoming projects within the programme, inspiring projects from neighbour villages, etc. The screenings were followed by discussions, which fostered a shared understanding of the viewed material. In other words, video opened up a communication channel that was open in both directions.

- Video stimulated internal debates among the peasants. Reflecting on the statements of peasants from their very own village was like ”looking into a mirror” (FAO 1996: 22). As described in the example of the old Mayan who told about the history of his community, repeated video viewing helped the peasants to get a better understanding of their own situation, their past, present and possible future.

- The Communication System distributed the videos both horizontally and vertically. Apparently this did not induce any problems. Evaluation videos describing successful village projects, for example, were used to motivate staff on different levels (vertical dimension) and to inspire peasants in neighbouring villages (horizontal dimension).
Problems

PRODERITH offered to the rural population only limited opportunities to participate. This is problematic with regards to the given conceptual framework. The following points support this critique.

- The development proposals were exclusively formulated by PRODERITH, probably far away from the field in the main office in Mexico City. Using the same words as above, one could argue that the farmers were only ‘listened to’, they could comment and criticise but not actually assist in the formulation of proposals. Thus it is somewhat justified to argue that PRODERITH imposed projects, even though the peasants’ considerations were taken into account in one way or another.

- Throughout the whole programme video communication necessitated PRODERITH staff. In the first phase of PRODERITH there were no attempts to hand over the Communication System to the peasants. There was little interest in ‘capacity building’, i.e. the establishment of structures in which development processes can happen without involvement of development intervenors.

- Finally, editing was completely centralised. Other participatory video initiatives (e.g. Video SEWA nd) stand as a proof that editing can be done collectively, with peasants and video facilitators collaborating around the cutting board.

Other observations

The video equipment used by the Communication System proved stable. The technology itself was not ‘too sophisticated’ as critics of the programme had argued (FAO 1987a). Yet the fragility of the video equipment in use could be taken as an explanation why all control over video resources (esp. editing) was centralised and not shared with the peasants.

The issue of ‘quality’ (of a video) deserves attention. Quality refers to the trade-off question ‘form or content’. FAO (1987a: 24) notes that the Communication System considered ‘aesthetic and affective quality’ of the videos as very important. However, some poorly produced videos, for instance one on liver fluke (ibid), had an enormous impact anyway, because they were on issues highly relevant to the peasants at the time. They could instantly apply the information gained through video. Bad picture and sound quality appeared to have no major negative effects.

Categorisation and additional remarks

The use of video by the Rural Communication System and the Mexican peasants comprised all three types of video according to the typology presented above (Table 2).

The example of the old Mayan had features of ‘therapy’-type video. The peasants’ experience of seeing themselves on screen had a tremendous impact. For the first time they saw their fellows on screen, even speaking their own language. Through video an artificial distance was created. They gained an objectified perspective of their life and environment. As through a
mirror they could experience and discuss the reflection of themselves, which enabled them to better formulate what they wanted (FAO 1996).

The low degree of participation in the process of producing the video, however, does not fit the ‘therapy’-ideal. The video equipment was hardly given out of the hands of the field staff. The idea of letting people gain control over the medium, so that they can produce self-determined messages, was not pursued by the Communication System.

Participation was generally restricted in the PRODERITH programme. The peasants were not involved in the formulation of the development proposals. They could comment on the proposals and their remarks certainly had an influence but it was not ‘their programme’. Ramírez (1998) has described the level of participation in the programme as ‘functionalist participation’: "People participate by forming groups to meet predetermined objectives related to the project, which can involve the development or promotion of externally initiated social organisation. (...) These institutions tend to be dependent on external initiators and facilitator, but may become self-dependent" (1998: 25-26).

Participatory video of the ‘empowerment’ type occurred when peasants were given the video equipment to record their complaints concerning field staff. They directly addressed the field staff, by using a medium, which allowed them to express themselves in the oral domain. No development worker had to ‘translate’ their complaints into written bureaucratic text.

In the same vein is the example of the peasant explaining the flooding, a proof that the programme was capable of allowing self-criticism. Expert views were not considered as inherently superior to local views. The appreciation of local knowledge was an example for the pluralist viewpoint of the programme.

Showing videos produced in a participatory way to high-level audiences contained elements of ‘activism’. Arguably, presenting the development project on video with ‘credible voices’ describing the advancements was more convincing than a written report. Such videos touch the viewer and focus his/her attention. The beneficiaries of the project are visible, not just hidden behind aggregate figures. Such messages from peasants to high-level audiences, could be labelled ‘bottom-up testimonials’. They support Public Relations activities, as was the case when PRODERITH gave a videotape to the President of Mexico. Similarly, bottom-up testimonials could be used for fund-raising, lobbying, or advocacy.

**Conclusion**

Although participation was limited in the PRODERITH programme, participatory video played a crucial role in allowing ‘rich’ communication, both vertical and horizontal. The flexible approach brought forward interesting applications. With regards to the research question, following ‘functions and implications of participatory video’ have been identified.
Table 6: Functions and implications of video in PRODERITH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functions of video</th>
<th>Implications of video</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• ice-breaking: when entering a community</td>
<td>• more bottom-up communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• informing about a development programme, possibilities to participate, etc.</td>
<td>• individual and collective identity construction, video as a mirror</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• supporting and facilitating discussions</td>
<td>• appreciation of local knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ‘listening’ to rural people</td>
<td>• increased self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• as a qualitative research tool</td>
<td>• improved media literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• as a PRA tool</td>
<td>• experience in handling video equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• for project evaluation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• for education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• for entertainment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• motivating communities and staff through positive examples</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• fostering reflection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• allowing feedback and critique</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• internal and external PR for the development agent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• for project documentation (‘institutional memory’)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Huber, this thesis)
Case 2 - The Fisherfolks’ Project

This case study analyses the use of participatory video within a complex development process in Tanzania. The case is methodologically distinct, as the process, which started in 1993, has not yet come to an end. Quite on the contrary, the dialogue between various stakeholders, partly facilitated by participatory video, has led to an array of dynamic processes, which continue to unfold. Some of the project’s implications will be visible only in the future.

This study covers the development up to April 1998. In order to provide a comprehensive overview, the following case description is organised in chronological order. To a considerable extent it is based on a summary by Johansson (1998).

Case description

The setting

Within the districts of Kilwa, Lindi and Mtwara along the coast in Southern Tanzania live an estimated 50 - 80,000 people, who partly rely on marine production. They are spread among three towns and 55 villages along the 400km stretch of coast. The coastal villages are geographically isolated with poor infrastructure, and the area as a whole is economically and politically peripheral. There are virtually no motor vessels, the supply of ice is very limited, and most of the fish is locally marketed. Sea products are exported only to a marginal extent. The southern part of the area is dominated by a distinct ethnic group, the coastal Makonde, whereas people along the coast of Kilwa and Northern Lindi originate from many different groups. kiSwahili is the most widely spoken language in the area.

Dynamite Fishing

In 1993, a crew of fishermen ran into a PRA team on the beach. The PRA team worked for the RIPS18 programme that operated in Lindi and Mtwara at the time. The fishermen explained that their villages faced serious social and environmental problems due to the dramatic increase of dynamite fishing along the coast. This perspective was rather new to the team. First, the fishermen’s description indicated that the damage through dynamite fishing was much worse than had been realised by the people involved in the RIPS planning process. Secondly, experts commonly believed that local people were rather ignorant about environmental damage and that they therefore tolerated or even supported dynamite fishing. Quite on the contrary, the fishermen explained that they excepted nothing but one thing from the Government: to take action against dynamite fishing.

The fishermen suspected politically influential people in Dar es Salaam to be financing and protecting a dynamite-fishing network that indirectly employed opportunistic local youth pursuing a get-rich-quick strategy at the expense of the environment and the local economy. Dynamite was cheap, and the initial returns were high, while the risk of getting caught by the police was negligible, and the fines insignificant. Dynamiters initially catch much more than conventional fishermen, thereby significantly decreasing stocks. After a while they just move to other areas or businesses, leaving behind a severely damaged environment.

18 Rural Integrated Project Support, a bilateral development programme funded by Finland (RIPS 1998).
The Government, the fishermen complained, had failed to address their problems for decades. They argued that the authorities did not understand the marine environment, and that they did not care about the fishing in the same way as they cared about other natural resources which people from the mainland are familiar with. Some proposed that the government should let the fisherfolks themselves regulate the fishing, as was the case in Mozambique and Zanzibar. In Mtwa, Lindi and Kilwa, however, police were suspected to be letting dynamiters roam free, after villagers had risked their lives to seize their boats and bring them to the police.

The open-access tenure regime of the fishing areas was recognised as a problem by the fishermen. But they also defended a customary right to exploit fishing areas far away from one’s own village, as a necessary condition to make a living from fishing. They argued that what in fact was required was an agreement among the people along the entire coast about how they themselves could regulate fishing and control exploitation, e.g. through periodically closing certain reef areas for restocking, without excluding artisanal fishermen from other parts of the coast. Furthermore, the Government had to be accountable to communities who tried to defend their environment and livelihoods, and to give priority to the needs of artisanal fishermen over investors’ interests. The fishermen finally suggested that RIPS and the District Natural Resource Officers organise a workshop to discuss the problem of dynamite fishing (Johansson 1998, 1997).

The Sudi Meeting

In February 1994, 40 fishermen from 12 villages gathered on the beach in Sudi for a week-long meeting, together with four District Fisheries Officers and two consultant facilitators from RIPS. The objective of the meeting was to provide an opportunity for people from different parts of the coast to discuss the state of the environment and the future of fishing, and to put these questions on the public agenda. The meeting was structured by PRA exercises that were presented to a video camcorder. The exercises brought forward a clearer picture of the problems related to dynamite fishing. The villagers described the problems as a vicious circle:

![Figure 2: The dynamite fishing vicious circle.](image)

From an individual fisherman’s perspective, the short term return to investment was far greater from dynamite fishing than from any alternative fishing method. Therefore dynamite fishing was spreading very quickly at the time. Young people in particular, traditionally starting out with cheap homemade equipment, were attracted to dynamite fishing and increasingly became dependent on it. Children would run to the explosion sites and collect floating fish instead of going to school. Traditional fishing quickly became locally less effective due to decreasing stocks and other environmental damages such as destruction of mangroves and beach seining.

The meeting resulted in a policy resolution and the establishment of the “Sudi Committee” consisting of twelve men and women who were elected to work for the implementation of the agreed policy. Guidelines were drawn up for pilot projects that envisaged the reversal of the negative spiral by improving the police patrols, improved police collaboration with communities, studies of the environmental effects of various fishing methods, and provision of
alternatives to destructive fishing methods through revolving funds which would supply starting capital to youth for ecologically-sound fishing. To finance these new institutions it was envisaged that fish markets would be established where the local government could collect revenue. As villagers were to build and look after these fish markets, they demanded that 50% of the revenue should be set aside in a marine environment fund to be managed in the interests of the local fishermen. Estimates of the potential revenue from three such fish markets indicated that it was sufficient to finance the expenses of police controls and the starting capital to making revolving loans to youth in all villages. Kilwa Kivinje, one of the most important landing sites, was chosen for a pilot fish market and built within a few months.

Due to the difficulties of communication between the villages, the Sudi Committee could not play an active role in setting up the pilot projects. Instead, the district fisheries officers negotiated with other stakeholders and supplied inputs. One fisheries officer in each district was appointed ‘project manager’ to monitor the pilot projects.

In the meantime, a video programme called Bahari yetu hatutaki (Not in Our Sea), which showed material from the Sudi meeting and complementary shootings organised by Sudi Committee members, was screened in many of the villages along the coast, in official meetings and in the regional headquarters. Sudi Committee members even took it to Dar es Salaam to show it to ministers, judges, and the highest police commander (Johansson 1998, 1997).

The Msimbati Workshop

In December 1996, the participants from Sudi met again for a workshop in Msimbati village to evaluate the pilot projects and review the achievements accomplished. It was bigger, 80 participants staying in the village for a full week, including three MPs and officers from the district council as well as from government authorities like the police. The controversial video had created expectations for change, and the Sudi committee was increasingly seen as representing a popular fisherfolks’ movement for environmental justice.

The meeting brought to light that neither of the pilot projects had performed as expected. The revenue from the fish market in Kilwa had not been controlled by villagers and not used as intended, but just disappeared into the district accounts. The loan schemes had missed the purpose of providing alternatives to jobless youth. The police patrols had been ineffective and expensive. Dynamite had fishing decreased shortly after the Sudi meeting, but at the end of 1996 it was more widespread than ever before.

The fishermen’s representatives put the blame for the shortcomings on the lack of accountability in the district administrations, police, and courts. The politicians, eager to show commitment to a popular cause in front of the videocameras, strongly supported the fishermen. They said that the Sudi Committee had lacked teeth because it had no membership base. Therefore they suggested that the fishermen register an NGO with branches in the villages that could take over the responsibility for the projects from the district administrations and begin to negotiate community-based management of the fisheries. A constitution was drafted and an interim board was elected.

Following a suggestion by the politicians, the ‘Not in Our Sea’ video was shown to the Prime Minister of Tanzania. He reacted positively with a promise to take action, and asked if the dynamite fishermen and dealers of the area were known. A few weeks later he received a list with 400 names. In a speech in a Lindi village he pulled out this list, read out the names of the local dynamiters, and ensured that the Government was finally going to put an end to the practice once and for all.

The first concrete measures against dynamite fishing were taken in Dar es Salaam; all fish arriving in iceboxes at the major outlet for dynamited fish, was inspected and boats and gear
were confiscated. In Mtwara, a rumour circulated that the navy was going to be sent down for a campaign. This finally happened in the end of 1997: the navy quite dramatically turned on hundreds of dynamiters and their relatives. They forced people to surrender several tons of dynamite. After that dynamiting stopped totally and has not come back. After that fish catches increased dramatically within months according to very consistent statements from fishermen (Johansson pers. com.).

The registration of the fisherfolks’ movement, normally dependent on approval of local authorities only, became politicised due to the severity of the accusations, the involvement of the Prime Minister, and of other authorities. Not until January 1998 was the movement, called ‘Shirikisho’, formally registered as an NGO.

Perspectives of the Shirikisho

It is difficult to predict what impact the Shirikisho will have. The organisation is largely carried by village folks with no previous experience of NGO work. They have, however, been remarkably consistent and determined during the four years since they first met in Sudi. Now most fishermen now know about the organisation, even if they have only heard about it, and many seem to be waiting for an opportunity to get involved.

A plan has been drawn up to open Shirikisho village branches in the major fishing villages. The newly-recruited members are planning to re-negotiate the collapsed projects and set up new principles for the management and regulation of the fisheries. At the district level, a small office will be established to liaise with the district administrations. The Shirikisho will offer support for the fisheries-related tasks that the natural resource offices and the police carry out in return for shared control over how the tax revenue which is raised from fishing is used. This will demand a degree of transparency and accountability from the district administrations that they are not used to. The local government will in effect be dependent on the Shirikisho for raising any revenue at all from the fishing, since they can neither establish control of the marketing nor monitor the fishing without co-operation from the fishermen.

The long term agenda remains to change national policy and legislation towards community-based management of coastal fisheries, allowing village groups to e.g., establish quota, check certain practices, or close areas for restocking, without abolishing the customary rights of migrant fishermen. New threats to the villagers’ livelihoods are bound to emerge, such as large-scale prawn farming or tourist projects. Therefore the Shirikisho intends to become a national organisation over the long haul.

The use of video

Background

Finland has supported rural development projects in southeast Tanzania for more than 30 years. In the early 1990s it was realised that co-operation with the Government had deteriorated and that ‘traditional’ projects were increasingly missing their purpose. Therefore, the RIPS programme embarked on an 18-month transformation process to reorient its policy. Local leaders and donor representatives promoted a concept of people-led development that included more participation, and bottom-up initiative. In order to utilise the ideas and resources of local people, the emerging new policy put its focus on media and communication. RIPS supported the establishment of a media centre in Mtwara. Development workers and government officers were encouraged to find new roles as facilitators, reporters and lobbyists for local interests.
PRA methodology was used to identify these local interests, as a planning and research tool (Johansson 1995).

The Marine Environment Project developed as a product of this new thinking. Participatory video, used as a PRA tool and for other purposes, became the preferred medium for enabling interaction among a large number of people and groups on various hierarchical levels. Lars Johansson, the main informant for this case study, co-facilitated many of the participatory video workshops. In the following section the various applications of video in the project are described.

*Video and PRA*

PRA was introduced in the Sudi meeting to promote local initiative in planning. PRA helped the participants to attain a more comprehensive picture of the complex environmental and social problems in the coastal regions. Video was used in a participatory style to document the outputs (posters, diagrams, etc.) of the PRA work. There was no ‘cameraman’ going around and filming silently what the participants had produced. Instead, people actively presented their conclusions in front of the camera. They argued, discussed, drew diagrams in the sand, all without any shyness. They demonstrated their local knowledge in much greater detail than in earlier PRA workshops. Quite contrary to normal filming practice, the camcorder was put on a tripod in the middle of the scene. Thus the camera was in the foreground. A long extension cable was passed around to the people who wanted to speak. They took turns operating the camera so that everybody had the chance to experience the two roles, filming and performing. Sometimes the camera was left unattended while recording took place. It was ‘forbidden’ to take written notes.

The presentations lead to intense debates among the participants. There was no chairman during the presentations but after a while the microphone passed from person to person like the traditional ‘talking stick’ and tacit rules emerged for how to ask ‘for the word’. When the camcorder tape or battery had to be changed, the discussion paused, often in the middle of a statement.

In the evenings, the tapes recorded during the day were played back on the beach using a TV monitor and a generator. The shows were public, and every evening almost the entire population of the host village gathered to review the many hours of video. Even children watched the shows in remarkable silence. Through virtue of the transparency of the workshop, the direct participants gradually attained a status as representatives for the interests of the whole village population.

Johansson (1997) states that the public shows introduced a special reflexivity to the group process. The participants saw themselves on screen often for the very first time. The experience of being confronted with their own performance, in the presence of all the villagers, triggered a profound learning process among the participants. They observed how their arguments and performances were received by other participants. The audience gave feedback during the show in form of remarks and comments or just by applauding or booing. The following morning the participants would improve their arguments, clarify them, find new ways of explaining and present them in a better way. Through this iterative process the arguments became richer, sharper and ultimately convincing in a rational sense.

Johansson eventually edited the material from the workshop, together with recordings from separate meetings with two groups of fishing women, into a two-hour long video, the ‘Not in Our Sea’ video. Members of the Sudi Committee came to Mtwara for part of the editing process, sharing in the making of decisions about how to tell the story. One particular thing they really wanted to show was how men were crippled from dynamite; for that reason additional material of interviews with injured people in hospital was integrated into the video.
The fisheries officers and members of the Sudi Committee showed the video to tens of thousands of people in villages along the entire Kilwa-Mtwara coast. It was found that a whole village could actually follow a video presentation on a large (but regular-sized) TV screen with amplified sound. The interest for the issue was just overwhelming. The video was shown whenever there was an occasion: political leaders, police commanders, court authorities on various hierarchical levels were invited to watch it. As mentioned, even the Prime Minister saw a version of the video. The comments these officials made after the show were also video-recorded and incorporated in subsequent versions that again were to be played back in villages. In this way, a communication loop was established between village communities and policy makers (Johansson 1997).

**Video for evaluation**

After the Msimbati conference, video was used only in a few small-scale events for follow-up and evaluation. One of them was an evaluation of the loan scheme, which started out with a group of jobless youth gathering around the camcorder on the beach. They presented their version of why the loan system had failed. In their view, the local village elite had benefited from the money instead of them. In a second step, the recorded statements of the youth were shown to one of the groups who had received a loan and to the loan committee. Their reactions were recorded, too. A few days later, the youth, loanees, and the village leaders were all invited to a public place in the village where they were confronted with these statements. A constructive discussion followed, in which all parties showed that they were capable of reflecting and analysing their own actions. They reached no agreement, but together they produced a rich picture of the situation and the requirements for succeeding.

Finally, the material from these three occasions was reviewed and discussed by a small group of Shirikisho leaders. They analysed the shortcomings of the loan scheme (it was realised that the distribution policy was a failure), and brought forward a new proposal. Interestingly enough, the final version of the evaluation video was not shown in the villages since it challenged the RIPS consultants and the fisheries officers who had designed the scheme (Johansson 1997). At the time the Shirikisho lacked resources (e.g. generators) to screen it and the donor project staff, apparently not prepared to handle critique, simply prioritised other issues (Johansson pers.com.).

**Video for action research**

Following the loan evaluation another video on a sophisticated fishing practice, kavogo, was produced. The starting point was that a group of fishermen from Mtwara complained about a new law that prohibited a certain kind of fishing gear. The law was introduced following a recommendation from the Sudi meeting and was intended to prevent certain environmentally harmful fishing practices. The fishermen, however, argued that the law text also banned ‘their’ fishing practice, which was not harmful to the sea environment. The group was convinced that the ban was caused by a misunderstanding by the legislators, combined with the interest of certain local people to exclude the fishermen from Mtwara from their waters.

Together with the fishermen a video was produced that attempted to demonstrate that kavogo did not harm the environment. Out on the sea, with the support of a simple underwater camerahouse, footage was recorded on how fish were caught using kavogo. Later the fishermen assisted in editing the material. Instead of an impersonal speaker (like in conventional documentaries), three of the fishermen were recorded as they commented on the material. The resulting video was shown to fishing community representatives at a national meeting in Dar es Salaam. It was intended that also the marine biologists, ‘the fisheries experts’, would see it, but their interest was not too big (Johansson pers. com.).
Johansson (ibid) regards the kavogo video as an example of innovative research documentation; "It’s research on how to fish!" He argues that only little (scientifically) documented knowledge about people’s fishing methods is available. Marine biologists, who often play the ‘expert’ role in negotiations over the sea environment, know much about the biological environment of the sea, but only little about fishing methods. There is little overlap between the expert knowledge of marine biologists and fishermen. The video can facilitate ‘scientific exchange’ between the two groups (ibid).

Facilitation

The purpose of the project was not to experiment with participatory video as such, but rather to use video, among other media, as a tool for facilitation of certain communicative processes. Johansson was employed as a consultant to the programme. He organised the technical parts of video production: providing the equipment, filming, editing. To a certain degree, local people were active in handling equipment (moving the camera, passing around microphones) but it was not intended to offer training in film production as in therapy-type video.

In the video sessions no official chairman was necessary. The ones operating the camcorder unofficially functioned as chairmen as they could ‘give the word’ by focussing people with the camera. This procedure successfully avoided recognised village leaders taking over the scene. Video put them on the same level as all the other people attending the sessions.

No scripts were developed for the recordings, neither by the facilitators nor by the people. People ‘just spoke’ without great preparation. Unlike other projects, people chose predominantly direct speech to express themselves, and not forms of expression like theatre, song or dance. People assisted in editing and could decide about material to be included in videos for distribution. In the kavogo video, the fishermen functioned as narrators to their own film.

Johansson (pers. com.) was rarely present at screenings, even though people often asked for it. They wanted him as a spokesperson but he tried to refuse whenever possible. The people themselves arranged distribution of the videos. Johansson only gave recommendations on who the videos could be shown to but he did not assist in organising the video screenings.

Johansson found that his role was difficult to pin down. It encompassed many functions: research, mediation, teaching, activism (ibid). Quite interesting is the project-internal development of the relation between participatory video and PRA: participatory video became interesting for Johansson first, as a way of recording the results of PRA workshops, then as a PRA tool itself and finally, as a better method of facilitation, often going beyond PRA.

Technology

Between 1993 and 1996, Hi8 camcorders were used and editing was done on a Macintosh computer. "There were endless problems with this technology” (Johansson 1997). For that reason, Johansson switched to digital video which not only functioned better but also offered new opportunities: loss-free copying, simple re-organising of filmed material, or adding sounds, titles and animations, etc. The new technology suited the iterative, non-linear, progression of the project much better than the old. Johansson states, “The videos become living, dynamic narratives, open for additions and recombination in the course of a learning process” (1997).

19 Jiggins (pers. com.), however, points out that there have been quite a number of anthropological studies of fishermen’s practices and knowledge.
Achievements of the Fisherfolks’ Project

It is, of course, problematic to claim that the Marine Environment Project and the use of participatory video brought about all the changes and nothing would have happened by itself. It is cautiously argued here that the following changes occurred during and after the project, without necessarily being a direct consequence of a particular project input. They are regarded as ‘achievements’ as they are in line with the project’s intentions, which were, using popular development vocabulary, participation, empowerment, and capacity building.

- The issue of dynamite fishing was put on the public agenda. Horizontally, thousands of people, along a long stretch of coast, entered a fierce debate on fishing rights and practices. Vertically, various bureaucratic levels were drawn into the debate; even the highest national level, the Prime Minister of Tanzania expressed his view on dynamite fishing in a speech.

- The Sudi video raised awareness among key politicians and officials who had hardly known about the problems caused by dynamite fishing. Through the video, they started to listen to the villagers even though they initially did not know how to react. As many of the policy makers come from the mainland, their knowledge of the sea was marginal (they allegedly were scared of the sea and hence avoided going there). After having watched the video, their attitude appeared to change. They were touched emotionally, not only by the villagers’ arguments: A shocked MP’s first reaction, which was also recorded on video, compared dynamiting with burning a forest, or bombing a village. They realised that dynamite fishing was a political issue that needed to be addressed (Johansson, quoted in IDS Workshop 1998).

- Arguably, the most important process triggered by the project is the emergence of the Shirikisho. It took more than four years for the popular fisherfolks’ movement, as it is also labelled, to become registered as an NGO. This may seem long but people in a large number of villages, across ethnic and class differences, are now organised to search for community-based arrangements to combat dynamite fishing and manage marine resources. Johansson describes how the video screenings inspired people to form local committees to address dynamite fishing. These committees have started networking and supporting each other, even though their specific interests are sometimes different. With the Shirikisho, they have gained the necessary institutional weight to be taken serious by policy makers.

- The video workshops led to more communication among the villagers and between villagers and other stakeholders. Johansson remembers, that "people had a latent demand to talk" (pers. com.). No shyness kept them off the camera. They frequently said that they had waited for an opportunity to state their view: "For the first time someone comes to listen, not to teach!" (ibid). In the video sessions, it was not only the traditional leaders who spoke out as it often happens in development consultancy. Many villagers got a chance to express themselves, even those who would normally hesitate to say anything in public.

The videos were shown to many politicians and officials whose reactions were recorded whenever possible. This introduced a communication loop which did not exist before (or which took much longer). In the videos villagers could more directly address the authorities who, in turn, could give direct feedback. No intermediary had to transform the statements into bureaucratic text. Of course, authorities were not always willing to talk on video, but many saw it as a smart opportunity to communicate with people who they would hardly get in contact with otherwise (Johansson and de Waal 1997).

- A clearer picture of the problems related to dynamite fishing emerged through the iterative and reflective use of video. The villagers brought forward ‘their version of the story’, saw themselves and others telling the story on video, heard other people commenting on it and
eventually put forward better or improved versions of the story supported by clearer arguments and stronger evidence. The videos ultimately contained neatly collected arguments that enabled a documentary-style learning for the ones who watched it. It could be argued that, to some extent, the videos reflected the villagers’ collective perception of the dynamite fishing issue. This shared perception was not there before; it emerged only through the communicative process induced by video.

- Various stakeholders had to position themselves towards the issue of dynamite fishing. In the broad debate villagers, as well as politicians, police commanders and district officers had to decide which side they were on. The increased degree of communication led to a clearer picture of the actors involved. The rumours about nebulous culprits pulling the threads somewhere in Dar es Salaam were exchanged for tangible lists of names and organisations that were supporting the trade of dynamite. By knowing who the actors were that they had to deal with, ‘by naming the other camp’, the actors were at the same time humanised. This was also valid for politicians. To see politicians on video struggling for convincing arguments proofed that they were only normal people. It demystified their power and position.

- Finally, it should not be forgotten that considerable numbers of men and women actually learned how to make videos. Attaining control over a prestigious technology like video, can contribute to media literacy. Arguably, a medium is demystified when people learn how it functions practically. In the Fisherfolks’ Project people’s ability to be critical and sensitive to media content may have increased. They may have learned that a TV set is not an objective ‘truth machine’, but a tricky medium that can be used for good and bad ends. Since development countries are increasingly penetrated by mass media channels, knowledge about how television functions and how one can perform on it in a preferable way, is tremendously valuable.

Some of the achievements were similar to the ones in the PRODERITH case.

- The fact that someone ‘came to listen, not to teach’, increased villagers’ self-esteem. They were given the chance to explain their situation and problems in their own language. Their local knowledge was valued by the PRA consultants and not just turned down as non-scientific. Both in the PRODERITH and the Fisherfolks’ Project, people had had negative experiences with development programmes. Through the ‘listening approach’ their historically rooted mistrust could be overcome.

- Video helped to form some kind of collective identity. The entire village was interested in the video events and particularly the video screenings; they enjoyed, not least for reasons of entertainment, being confronted with their own culture and found it valuable and important to talk about it. It could be argued that the process enabled people to develop a more comprehensive picture of their culture, their relation to that culture, and the implications of certain cultural practices. In this case, video functioned as a collective mirror, stimulating reflexive learning and interaction. As in other resource conflict situations, people’s transformed sense of cultural identity was based on a common resource, the marine environment, rather than on class or ethnicity (Johansson pers. com.). People or groups of people who would normally avoid interacting with one another were all of a sudden connected through a ‘hot issue’ that everyone considered important. Thus video built ‘communicative bridges’ between people.

- Video provided also a mirror on the individual level when speakers saw themselves on the screen. They learned to improve their arguments and reconsider their statements - it was like a practical course in rhetoric. In the Fisherfolks’ Project, the learning cycle of performing, watching, reflecting, new performing, etc. was hardly constrained by technology. Digital video and decentralised editing opportunities allowed a quick run-through of the cycle.
Problems

The navy’s strike instrumentally stopped dynamite fishing. This was, to put it mildly, a surprising turn in the somewhat chaotic course of events. It remains to be seen, if dynamite fishing stopped once and for all, or if it recurs after a while. The current situation appears not sustainable over the long haul; many of the root causes that led to dynamite fishing have not been successfully addressed yet.

It is difficult to judge the impact of video in the change process. The first years of the project (from 1994 to 1997) could straightforwardly be described as a failure, since the main objective, to stop dynamite fishing, was not achieved. On the other hand, participatory video helped to create a climate against dynamite fishing, which was very important in the given situation, even though it was not foreseen or ‘intended’ that the navy would solve the problem. Instrumental thinking (‘if video, then this and that will happen’) is of course flawed from the start with a tool like participatory video. Process-oriented development work necessarily involves a certain degree of unpredictability. Still, it is difficult to justify a project that has led to heated debates, people being arrested, people being injured (when chasing up dynamiters), mutual blaming, a ‘governmental strike’, and maybe even fiercer conflicts in the future as an outcome. Authorities may turn against the practice of participatory video, perhaps introducing some kind of censorship, and prosecute people that have spoken out on video. The risk that authorities appropriate people’s videos as a weapon against them is not to be underestimated.

Other observations

Some of the group-internal processes that developed during the video sessions and screenings are worth a note. Participatory video seemed to challenge village-internal power relations. During the recording sessions, for instance, it was often the younger villagers who moved the camera and passed around the microphones. Through taking this initiative they somehow turned into informal discussion leaders as they could control selective attention. They attained a powerful position that would normally be taken over by traditional village ‘leaders’. Video statements from the leaders in the village were sometimes challenged during the screenings by protest and ‘booing’ shouts from the villagers. Arguably, the villagers would not always dare to do that in a face-to-face situation. The group dynamic reduced the villagers’ fear to protest against those who decide upon them.

Video also offered a certain degree of protection. When villagers made controversial statements on the screen, they did so in front of a mass audience. Unlike traditional community meetings the villagers were ‘detached’ (both with respect to time and place) from their statements. They would sit somewhere in the audience curiously watching themselves on the screen. The ones criticised by the statement could not immediately respond to the person or, if the critique was severe, release their anger on them. The ones appearing on screen were better prepared for a verbal attack, as they were detached from their statement. In addition, the part of the audience supporting the statement protected them, at least temporarily. Thus the number of controversial statements from marginalised groups probably increased.

It is difficult to judge in how far the video films gave balanced representations of what people had actually said. All through the process statements were recorded and integrated into the videos. Videos were constantly revised and updated with new material; there were many
‘generations’ of a film. People assisted in the selection of the footage material, but arguably the main editor, usually Johansson, still had a profound influence by taking many small but important editorial decisions. His knowledge and feeling of how to best assemble the material has certainly coined the videos. It is, however, beyond the scope of this thesis to analyse if and how editorial decisions, e.g. the inclusion of certain dramaturgic elements, have introduced a bias. Johansson (pers. com.) himself claims that he tried to arrange the material in such a way that it included various viewpoints without being too contradictory. In other words, he aimed at assembling a representation that was both pluralistic and convincing.

A related aspect is the one of quality. From a technical viewpoint, the videos were professionally edited. Johansson tried to avoid raw cuts and shaky pictures, arguing that nobody is served by bad picture and sound quality. Again, the effect of this introduced ‘professionalism’ requires further study beyond the scope of the present study. Performance guidelines for participatory video facilitators have yet to be elaborated.

**Categorisation**

The Fisherfolks’ Project is a clear example of empowerment-type video. The elements and features of an empowerment-video, as described in Table 2, can all be found in the project.

**Linking to theory**

*How to tackle a messy problem?*

The Sudi workshop analysed the dependency of coastal villages on the marine environment. It became clear that dynamite fishing posed a complex problem that was not amenable to a ‘quick fix’. It was impossible to find a ‘root cause’ for the dynamiting, and consequently there was also no solution in the form of an instrumental intervention defined by outsiders.

The conflict was basically one between conservation, exploitation and community interests. Policy makers aimed to create clearly defined and separated exploitation and conservation areas, while people wanted to conserve and use an area at the same time and manage the resources at community level. Policy makers and ‘the communities’ were, however, not homogenous groups. Policy makers, for example, included besides politicians, district authorities and also marine biologists. The latter argued for a ban on almost all fishing practices to conserve the sea as a natural reservoir. And within the local population there were different ethnic groups, each insisting on their customary and traditional rights to seasonally exploit certain fishing areas. In summary, the facilitators faced a ‘messy problem’ as it often appears in natural resource conflicts. In order to deal with ‘messy problems’, SSM (Soft Systems Methodology) has been developed (Checkland 1994). SSM proposes that in complex conflict situations the only way towards improvement is to bring the various stakeholders together. The (hard) assumption that a simple measure like a new law, or extension of a new fishing technique, can solve the problem is negated. Stakeholders need to communicate with one another. Only co-operation between stakeholders, and policies that are jointly formulated, supported and implemented, are likely to have a positive effect.

In the given case the facilitators implicitly followed a soft approach. The project’s focus was on communication and learning. The idea of SSM as described in the conceptual framework, i.e. “taking a set of actors through a process of shared problem appreciation, learning about the
problem and taking collective action to improve it” (Röling 1994: 391), was actively pursued. In the Sudi workshop, villagers and facilitators jointly created a ‘rich picture’ of the problems caused by dynamite fishing. It was then realised that people needed a way to communicate the issues around dynamite fishing to involve other stakeholders in the discussion. Through video, they obtained a tool that allowed them to create messages themselves. Villagers, politicians, authorities, even the Prime Minister, were taken through a learning process, which empowered them to formulate broadly supported policies and action plans to address the problems around dynamite fishing. A great number of people and institutions were gradually involved into an issue which many had conceived of as a marginal local problem only. The Shirikisho established new boundaries to ‘the system’, while the video reports of, for example, kavogo, made visible new system elements.

Creating platforms

Röling (1994) argues that SSM is an appropriate methodology for facilitating the establishment of platforms. In the Fisherfolks’ Project the facilitators succeeded in creating platforms in some instances. One example were the video screenings in the coastal villages, where usually a large number of people was present. They jointly watched and reflected over the videos. In the discussions during and after the screenings, they arrived at a more or less shared understanding about the reasons for conflict, the boundaries of the problem, causes and consequences. Eventually they developed plans for action. In this whole process video enabled people to communicate effectively with one another.

An important requirement for a platform is the representation of the key stakeholders (Röling and Jiggins 1998). This was arguably achieved on the horizontal dimension. At the village screenings, it can be assumed that all important ‘intra-village’ stakeholders were present. Their political influence outside the village, however, was usually not too broad.

On a higher level, the fisherfolks’ movement, the Shirikisho, has indicated its potential to develop into a platform. The Shirikisho members, consisting of a number of village representatives, arrange meetings in which they negotiate community-level action plans. Thus stakeholders from different villages discuss ‘inter-village’ relationships. But to be really effective it would be necessary that the political framework accepted that more decisions about the management of marine resources were taken on the community level, which has not yet happened.

On the vertical dimension (the relationship between villagers and policy-makers), by contrast, it would be going too far to speak of platforms. The videos were shown to a number of stakeholders (politicians, police commanders, marine biologists, etc.), usually one by one, and their reactions were recorded. In these ‘video-supported’ meetings, the villagers lobbied for their concerns, e.g. to have more accountable and effective police patrols. Some of the addressees reacted in a constructive and co-operative way. Others just refused to take the video messages seriously and questioned their credibility. The larger ‘stakeholders’ community’ never came together to negotiate the issue. Important stakeholders (e. g. Japanese trawler captains, RIPS, etc.) were ‘missing’ in the debate or did not show any will for co-operation.

An interesting phenomenon to observe was how some local politicians entered into ‘coalitions’ with the villagers in order to increase their grassroots popularity. This was not negative - the villagers certainly benefited from the political support. But it appeared that there was no honest interest in co-operation. Johansson (pers. com.) reasons that politicians and people were merely using one another to achieve their own interests. The politicians quite rapidly understood how video could help them to lift their reputation. They took a chance to appear in a positive light in front of the camera. Yet they also learned that their words were used as evidence of promises
by the people. This presumably made politicians more wary of what they said. Figure 3 describes the pattern of stakeholder relationships frequently observed by Johansson (ibid).

Figure 3: Stakeholder relationships.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Companies</th>
<th>People</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrators</td>
<td>in conflict with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bureaucrats</td>
<td>co-operating and using each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experts</td>
<td>Politicians</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Huber, this thesis)

The video facilitators are purposefully omitted in Figure 3. In the present case the facilitators avoided being drawn into the debate; therefore they are not considered as stakeholders20.

Conditions for reaching understanding (‘Verständigung’)

Habermas provides a theoretical underpinning for the platform idea. He considers it “indispensable that societies develop institutional and structural conditions that allow their members to discuss and exchange ideas and arguments in truly uncoerced ways” (Hess 1997: 88). Participatory video, as discussed above, has the potential to enable such conditions by opening up a communication channel through which people can solve conflicts discursively, i.e. through ‘communicative action’.

Habermas defines four ideal conditions (validity claims) with reference to the formal structure of communicative situations: comprehensibility, truth, truthfulness, and rightness according to norms (Hess 1997). These need to be fulfilled if speech acts are to lead to mutual understanding (‘Verständigung’). The four validity claims are used in the following analysis as a tool to examine the characteristics of video-supported communication processes in the Fisherfolks’ Project.

- **Comprehensibility:** The speakers must use linguistic expressions that are comprehensible and intelligible to the listener.

  By ‘linguistic expressions’ many different aspects of communication are addressed, not just the choice of words. A basic condition of comprehensibility is language. The fisherfolks spoke a language that the policy makers understood (and vice versa). For the few who had no knowledge of kiSwahili, Johansson attached English subtitles to the videos. Digital video allowed decentralised and rapid subtitling, no external translators were involved.

  A second, and perhaps the most interesting aspect with regards to comprehensibility, is literacy. To understand the implications of participatory video, it has to be kept in mind that large sections of the rural population in Tanzania have never learned to read and write21; ‘linguistic expressions’ on paper are largely incomprehensible to them. When rural citizens intend to communicate their views to policy makers, they frequently confront a

20 It might well be the case, however, that other stakeholders have regarded Johansson as a stakeholder (‘the guy stirring up the fisherfolks’). This underscores the importance of joint stakeholder assessment as recommended in theory (e.g. Ramirez 1998).

21 In 1995, the adult illiteracy rate for Tanzania (not for rural Tanzania!) was 43% for women and 21% for men (World Development Report 1996: 200).
communication dilemma. As a norm, bureaucratic institutions (government, authorities, donor agency) accept only written communication. They have very limited capacity to handle orally expressed claims (electioneering and communication by telephone may be an exception). Since most of those institutions are located centrally, they are commonly inaccessible for rural people living on the periphery. Thus the voice of rural citizens, unless transformed into written text, remains unheard.

Johansson (pers. com.) argues that participatory video can help to overcome this communication dilemma. Rural people do not read and write but they are as good as politicians, administrators, and development workers in oral expression (ibid). Giving rural people the possibility to communicate via speech increases the chance that their messages reach policy makers and that these policy makers regard the messages as ‘comprehensible and intelligible’. With video it becomes possible to produce representations of speech that can be distributed. Audio-visual representation (of speech) has the advantage of being much closer to the original speech act than written representation. Johansson (pers. com.) accentuates video’s capacity to capture "the performative and participative qualities of spoken word", a significant aspect of oral expression. These qualities are largely lost when speech is transformed into written text.

Referring to the kavogo video, Johansson (ibid), points out that video is appropriate for describing phenomena which necessitate rich and colourful (re)presentations in order to be understood. "You have to see and feel it if you want to understand" (ibid). In the kavogo video the fishermen describe the many facets of their, as they see it, ‘sophisticated’ fishing technique. They show, for example, how deep one has to dive in order to catch certain kinds of fish. Arguably, the policy makers watching the video received a much richer idea of what the fishing technique was all about, given the density of the audio-visual representation. A written description of ‘how deep one has to dive’ would have been less convincing.

In conclusion, it can be argued that video helped to produce (representations of) linguistic expressions that were comprehensible and intelligible to a large number of stakeholders involved in the dialogue over dynamite fishing. This was a significant advantage over ‘paper communication’.

- **Truth**: The speakers must say things about the world as they know it.

It is, of course, problematic trying to identify the ‘truth content’ of the statements made on video, especially when arguing from a constructivist standpoint. In practical analysis it is additionally difficult to keep apart the second condition, truth, from the third condition, truthfulness (is a statement questioned because of its content or the lacking trustworthiness of the speaker?). For that reason, the examples here could probably be stated under ‘truthfulness’, too.

It seems reasonable to assume that the villagers, frequently for the first time having a chance to effectively communicate with policy makers, used the opportunity to ‘say things about the world as they know it’. Johansson (nd) observed that video gave rural people’s statements unprecedented authority and credibility. The principle ‘seeing is believing’ proverbially helped to ensure that rural voices were taken seriously by the stakeholders involved. Thanks to their rhetorical skills, the villagers, as Johansson (nd) put it, were becoming "champions of the video medium". They convincingly presented their views to the outside world.

Rural people just as policy makers knew that recorded statements were used as ‘evidence’. This might have made people more wary of what they said. In one of the videos about the evaluation of the pilot projects, a local officer, surrounded by angry villagers and focussed by a camera, got so deeply into a struggle of nervousness and self-contradiction that he finally admitted ‘the truth’ behind certain financial irregularities. Thus it can be argued that
the potentially big audience that officials anticipated when speaking in front of a camera, pressured them to lay bare their ‘real’ plans and intentions.

Video messages, however, were not always accepted as true. The villagers’ videos were turned down by certain stakeholders, because they regarded them as biased, one-sided and too ‘emotional’ (Johansson nd). But that was probably rather a sign of general mistrust, which brings us to the next of Habermas’ conditions, truthfulness.

- **Truthfulness**: The speakers must sincerely mean what they say, so listeners are able to trust them.

On the horizontal dimension, video increased mutual trust among the village communities. Johansson describes how video “engendered community mobilisation on a massive scale, bridging regional and ethnic divisions between villagers” (IDS 1998: 157). The video experience decreased rivalries between different village groups, they viewed one another as having increased trustworthiness.

On the vertical dimension, mistrust was more prevalent. Regularly, policy makers asked the question ‘Who is behind these videos?’ They suspected ‘dark forces wiggling up the coastal population’. They questioned the motives behind the recording of rural people’s complaints. The villagers, in turn, did not always trust the policy makers’ feedback messages. They saw some of them as empty rhetorical statements, just made for calming them down. In some incidences, the legitimacy of the speakers was questioned. The villagers thought that certain speakers were not ‘the right ones’ to issue an answer.

- **Rightness according to norms**: The speakers must choose language and behavioural expressions that are normatively and morally acceptable to the listener.

Regarding this condition, there is little reason to assume that it was not fulfilled. Johansson only stated, that the complaints raised about authorities, frequently were rather bitter and direct. It seemed that the villagers were not afraid of sanctions from authorities (Johansson and de Waal 1997). Some policy makers probably found the ‘language and behavioural expressions’ in these complaints as unacceptable.

### Strategic or communicative rationality?

The above analysis indicates the extent to which the conditions for rational interaction and consensus were met. (Habermas described the *ideal* speech situation, so it is not surprising that the Fisherfolks’ Project has failed to meet the theoretical conditions in some aspects.) The question is now, which kind of rationality the villagers and the policy makers applied to reach agreement. Habermas distinguishes between strategic and communicative rationality (and instrumental rationality, which is not relevant here). Strategic rationality is oriented towards success and (consciously or unconsciously) makes use of manipulation, deception, threats and rewards as people manoeuvre to achieve their own ‘project’ through others. It is actually labelled as a ‘pseudorational force’. ‘Truly rational’ communicative action, by contrast, is oriented towards agreement. It builds ”on the central experience of the unconstrained, unifying, consensus-bringing force of argumentative speech” (Habermas 1984: 10). Communicative action necessitates that participants overcome their merely subjective views by reaching common situation definitions, which emerge from negotiation. On the basis of these situation definitions the participants try to harmonise their plans of action.

The requirements for communicative action seem unrealistically high when thinking of development settings. In the Fisherfolks’ Project the communication process was started by people telling ‘stories’: about the past, about the dynamiters, about their own fishing practices (Johansson pers. com.). The stories had no particular ‘strategic’ purpose - they were not
oriented towards influencing someone. But they helped people, first within a single village, to formulate a common definition of the situation.

This situation definition was extended when several villages were involved through video screenings. Through iterative refinement of the video material gradually a rich and widely shared situation definition emerged. Eventually the Shirikisho was created on that basis, as an action platform to address the problems faced by the coastal population. Undoubtedly, the Shirikisho has potential to provide a platform for consensus-oriented ‘communicative action’ in the sense of Habermas. It can thus be argued that on the horizontal level participatory video has successfully supported the emergence of a basis for rational action.

On the vertical level, the picture is different. The more policy makers were involved in the video-facilitated debate, the more the real dimensions of the dynamite fishing conflict became clear. According to Johansson and de Waal (1997), participatory video revealed conflict as no other medium would have done. The reason for this was found in participatory video’s great capacity to contrast local perceptions with ‘official truth’. In the dynamite fishing debate this official truth was aggressively challenged by the villagers. They brought up accusations and blames, releasing their anger against those who, in their perception, stood behind the dynamite fishing youth. Policy makers listened at the same time as they defended ‘their territory’. Some of them used the opportunity of being video-recorded to brush up their image and popularity among the local population.

On the vertical level, hence, the debate seemed more like a strategic ping-pong game. The policy makers have never met altogether, around one big table, for the purpose of bringing forward a jointly formulated and supported action plan. It rather seemed that the various stakeholders were primarily interested in getting their points through - they were oriented towards individual success and not towards consensus. The potential for communicative action to make a ‘break-through’, however, increases, the more the Shirikisho gains credibility and weight as an interest organisation. The Shirikisho may even succeed in ‘lifting’ the use and acceptance of video as a communication tool into higher decision levels, while still staying in contact with its grassroots base. This would be a remarkable achievement.

Experiences with pluralism

The facilitators followed a deliberately subjective, open, pluralist approach (Johansson pers. com.). They supported a process in which villagers as well as policy makers could express their subjective viewpoints without being matched to some externally defined ‘objective view’. This lack of external objectification was exactly the reason why the project was criticised. Johansson (nd) states that to a certain extent the critique was a "predictable reaction from a challenged establishment". Some of the critical questions that came up, however, deserve attention. For example, what if ‘the experts’ figured, even after having been ‘tuned’ to a pluralist approach, that their own suggestions were by far superior and that the villagers just acted out of narrow self-interest? Who could successfully challenge the villagers in such a situation? Another question concerned transparency: Who determined which causes were to be supported and why? Both of these questions indicate that there probably was a conflict between a pluralist project design and a project support infrastructure (RIPS) that could not handle this plurality. Since even the facilitators were pluralist-minded, it was impossible to impose objective criteria over actually subjective choices. Choosing to make a video with certain groups, like the kavogo fishermen, was primarily a result of subjective prioritisation. Editing, to state another example, involved many subjective choices by Johansson, even though he tried to be as representative as possible. All this suggests that pluralism makes many decisions more difficult, because they cannot be based on objective, ‘scientifically waterproof’ arguments. Protagonists of
participatory video need to develop strategies to respond to such critiques of pluralist approaches\textsuperscript{22}. 

\section*{Conclusion}

Comparing the PRODERITH case with the Fisherfolks’ Project, the significance of participation becomes evident. In the latter case, the use of participatory video had much wider implications than in the former. The following list contains the additional functions and implications of the Fisherfolks’ Project. By and large, the list with functions and implications from the PRODERITH project (see Table 6) is also valid for this case. (The variables are not repeated here in order to save space.)

\textsuperscript{22} Just another difficult set of questions is related to the issue of \textit{accountability} (Jiggins pers. com.). To whom are the facilitators accountable? Who is accountable if the government or the dynamiters turn against the fisherfolks? How could accountability be in enforced?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functions of video</th>
<th>Implications of video</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>for capacity building</td>
<td>people get organised around an issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for action research</td>
<td>development of platforms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for advocacy (kavogo)</td>
<td>overcoming ethnical or regional boundaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>collecting and bundling arguments</td>
<td>producing new knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bringing forward ‘rich pictures’</td>
<td>putting stakeholders on same literacy level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>revealing conflict</td>
<td>demystifying stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>challenging power structures (within community)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>skills in video-making and editing</td>
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</table>

(Huber, this thesis)
Case 3 – The Vietnam Project

This third case study further elaborates some of the conclusions from the first and second case studies. Only a few additional aspects are addressed. The subject of this case is a relatively short project that took place in July 1995. Funded by Oxfam, the project aimed at exploring the potential of participatory video with villagers in a commune in the North-Central region of Vietnam. A special feature of the project was its lack of a concrete subject. The project designers decided to leave this decision to the villagers; the subjects were to emerge from within the video-facilitated communication process.

Case description

The setting

Ky Nam was chosen as the main project location, a coastal commune in the district of Ky Anh, Ha Tinh Province. Ky Nam is one of the poorest communes in Ky Anh; only recently, in 1992, people suffered from severe food shortages, which were partly mitigated by Oxfam trucking rice into the area. People in Ky Nam have no electricity, consequently no television and there is no secondary school. The literacy level, however, is high which is rather typical for Vietnam.

Because of Vietnam’s brutal history, culminating in the American War (1955-75), the spirit of revolution is still prevalent among people. They have maintained their tradition of resistance, which is noticeable in village poetry and songs, underground radio and other ‘alternative’ media. People are proud of their intellectual and cultural institutions. Political participation is widespread and traditionally happens within the Communist Party, which generally enjoys strong support in the country. The Vietnam-based Oxfam staff suggested, therefore, that the project "should and must include the participation of the government" (Braden and Huong 1998: 17).

The project team and the project

Thanks to Oxfam’s good relations with the district authorities in Ky Anh and the Vietnam Communist Party, the proposed video project with villagers in Ky Nam was permitted. The project team consisted of three Vietnamese staff from the Hanoi office of Oxfam, a group of communication workers and women’s organisers from Laos, a representative from World Neighbours in Indonesia, and a Canadian film editor. Braden and Huong, the authors of ‘Video for development’, also participated in the project. Braden functioned as a trainer in the use of participatory video. She built on previous experience as a consultant for participatory video and as the Director of the MA Course in Television and Video for Development at Reading University. Huong, Oxfam’s Programme Officer for Advocacy and Communication in Vietnam, took part as a trainee. In July 1995, the whole team spent three days together for project preparation and to practise video skills in Hanoi. They developed a strategy for the project and formed three interdisciplinary working groups in which people’s various skills were sensibly distributed. Right after the preparatory workshop they travelled to Ky Nam where they worked with villagers for ten days.

The project was devised “to test the value of using video for the retrieval and representation of information by local farmers in Vietnam, in ways which would enable them to speak and represent directly (before their words were transformed into, for example, a written report)”
As mentioned, the project proposal left open the content/focus of the project as it was to be determined by the participating villagers. "There was no requirement to justify the participatory experience in terms of a project cycle and investment, by translating information into outputs and task-oriented statements" (ibid: 22).

In Ky Nam, video was used in a similar iterative fashion as in the Fisherfolks’ Project: Video recording during the day, decentralised editing, screenings in the evening, new recording the next day, etc. But in contrast to the other two cases analysed, there was a considerable time pressure, since the project team stayed only for ten days. Apart from all the filming, editing, facilitating, the project team members were under additional pressure, as they wanted to make sure that there was a basis for the emerging initiatives to continue after their departure. Only limited funding for follow-up visits was available. Huong visited the project area after the ten intensive days in July 1995, once together with two other project team members in September 1995, and once for an official evaluation in September 1996. None of the other project team members were able to visit Ky Nam after July 1995.

The video meetings

Four videotapes were produced within the project period in Ky Nam. The first of the interdisciplinary groups, the ‘education group’, recorded with villagers a discussion about corruption at the only primary school in the area. Parents claimed that teachers forced children to work for them and that they collected illegal fees from those children who would not work. The tape was shown to the headmaster of the school, who responded in a constructive way. His answers were recorded on another tape.

The second group, (the ‘sea dyke group’), analysed with villagers the problem of seawater flooding. The villagers showed a model depicting their suggested solutions. They described how salination had affected their rice fields and suggested that aquaculture and fishing could solve their economic problems. The participatory research process resulted in a scientific, informative video, but it was also ‘poetic’, as it began and ended with the poems of an old farmer.

The video of the third group, (the ‘earth and water group’), reported on the problems of irrigation, water-storage and income-generation. It contained, for example, a woman with five children describing her way of living and her hopes for the future.

On one of the last days of the project, all four videos (two from the education group, one each by the other two groups) were presented at a final village screening. More than one hundred people were present. After the screening a lively discussion developed about local, national and international uses of the tapes. The village wanted to show the tapes to the District authorities. Villagers also hoped that they could show the Sea Dyke tape and the Earth and Water tape to international funders. The videos had certainly raised expectations for external support.

The next day the project team ran a workshop for the staff of the local Ky Anh TV broadcasting station. The participants were intrigued by the idea of using video for addressing community problems and by the technical quality of the project videos itself. The workshop also contributed to the maintenance of good relations with the government-run mass media, which was considered important by the project team. In the evening of that day representatives from the Ky Nam villages showed the tapes to the Commune People’s Committee. The villagers were obviously nervous about that big meeting and about how the Committee would react to their explicit critique and suggestions. In the filmed discussions after the screening a consensus emerged that some of the problems concerning water could be tackled by the villagers themselves while for other aspects, some external help was necessary. Concerning the school issue, the meeting decided that both the headmaster and parents had right on their side and that a series of misunderstandings had led to the crisis. On the morning after the Committee
screening, an even higher bureaucratic level was involved in the discussion: the District Chairman. He allegedly endorsed the communication process and suggested follow-up activities.

The following day the project team left Ky Nam with some ambivalent feelings concerning the probably too hasty last screenings. They feared that the communication process would turn in a negative direction. A big meeting with teachers, parents and the Education Authority was in fact called for the 20th of September of that year - long after the project teams’ departure.

The evaluation

Huong’s evaluation visits in September 1995 and September 1996 revealed that people were generally happy with progress at the school. "The conflict was resolved in a tactful way which enabled people to express their opinions” (ibid: 75). The school had become more transparent, an open accounting system was introduced and children were no longer pressured to work for teachers in order to complete their degree.

Regarding the development after the other two tapes, the sea dyke video and the earth and water video, people were less satisfied. Interviewed villagers were unhappy because "they wanted a sea dyke and a reservoir, and they got a film” (ibid: 76). The need for a sea dyke was known long before the video project; the problem had always been the lack of funding. The video project raised high expectations, especially when villagers were asked their opinions for concrete technical solutions. They had worked hard with the video team without any tangible reward. However, chances to get funding have arguably increased with the videos. The villagers were not fully aware at the time that the videos were in fact used for fundraising activities. Miseror, a German NGO, and more recently Oxfam Vietnam showed the videos to donors who might support the Ky Nam sea dyke.

Huong also interviewed villagers about their memories and experiences related to the actual video-making. She was surprised to find out that many of the people participating actually had been assigned by their heads of villages. The participants were people who had more time, were better off and more knowledgeable about the reservoir work. They were not just a ‘random sample’ as the project team conceived of it. One woman said, "Had we not been assigned, we would not have participated, because it was so time-consuming, it was so hot, and we lost several days of work” (ibid: 77). Other women said that they initially had expected payment for their participation and that everybody had hoped that Oxfam would provide funding for village projects. In the District Authority’s view the sea dyke and earth and water videos were a positive proof that people were active, creative and concerned about their land.

Achievements

Many of the achievements made in the project were similar to the ones in the already analysed cases: People reflected over their self- and group identity, new knowledge was constructed (e.g. the sea dyke models), important issues were put on the public agenda, etc. They are not all repeated here. Among the more ‘tangible’ achievements were the following two:

The conflict between parents and teachers was more or less solved - the school became transparent in making requests for contributions. Miscommunication and misunderstandings between parents and teachers were tactfully clarified. Participatory video enabled more constructive negotiation processes at school-related meetings and between various stakeholders, for instance between parents and headmaster. Video made people accountable for what they
said at the meetings. It also made them less shy to speak out, because they knew that they talked about facts. On the question why video encouraged them to speak out, one woman simply stated, "(…) we are not afraid, because it is the truth" (ibid: 75).

With the sea dyke and the earth and water video, two valuable lobbying resources were produced. The videos have been used by various NGOs to convince potential donors to provide funding for the sea dyke. Awareness for people’s main problem in Ky Nam is now arguably more widespread than before the project. However, according to Braden and Huong (1998), the fund-raisers have not yet been successful.

Lastly, the project goal of testing participatory video as a development tool was achieved. The project team has found positive evidence for its initial propositions, namely that "the participatory uses of video offer opportunities for representation and dialogue through which excluded people can be heard in the public and semi-public spheres from which they have been marginalised" (ibid: 99).

Problems

In their publication Braden and Huong (1998) repeatedly stress that the lack of transparency of the project’s purpose was a shortcoming. "The villagers involved in the representations about the sea dyke had recorded their hopes for international finance. It should have been obvious that they (the villagers) were making assumptions about the power of the outsiders as representatives of foreign funders. In this respect the identity of the visiting team had not been made clear" (ibid: 84-85). ‘Oxfam’ meant money for the villagers. Transparency would have required a clear statement that the project team was not in any way connected with the allocation of funds. Villagers thought (or hoped) during the video workshops that they were participating in actual project planning, and not in preparing audio-visual means for fundraising. They also thought that they would directly, perhaps even automatically address stakeholders beyond their own contexts. The disappointment at ‘only having a video’ could have been prevented by more initial transparency. It would have been different, of course, if they had been involved in the fundraising activities; if they had attended the screenings for funders arranged by Oxfam, Miseror, etc. This would have increased their understanding of how difficult it generally is to convince funders and how much competition one usually faces. As it was, the villagers had the feeling that their participation in the production of the two fundraising tapes was good for nothing. In their view, they had sent a message without receiving an answer (ibid).

The very short project period was also problematic in some aspects. One example may illustrate this. The villagers "made it clear that they valued the opportunity to make a retrievable record of their own debates and meetings" (ibid: 84). But only when Oxfam’s team was present in July ’95, did they have access to video equipment. In that short time not many villagers had a chance to express themselves on video. Those who ‘came too late’ clearly had a communicative disadvantage in the on-going debates elicited by the video workshops. The team left the tapes, but not any recording and editing facilities.

Other observations
Braden and Huong (1998) mention that there are some particularities about using participatory approaches in the political context of Vietnam. For example, the exploration of individual differences, a central feature of PRA (wealth ranking, gender analysis), may prove difficult in a cultural setting where individual difference is regarded as counter-productive. Also the distinction between private and public sphere in Vietnam is unlike that in many other cultural settings. The Vietnamese regard the family as part of the public; family and government are seen as structurally united. Hence ‘going public’ means something else to a Vietnamese than to a European. All this raises difficult questions about how participatory approaches as described in probably ‘Western-biased’ development handbooks should be applied in countries like Vietnam.

Categorisation

The application of video in the Vietnam project is best categorised as an empowerment-type video. As the sea dyke and earth and water videos were used for fund-raising, it had also some features of an activism-type video.

Some lessons learned

Video use in the Fisherfolks’ Project and the Vietnam Project were rather similar, therefore the functions and implications are not repeated here. Instead some of the practical difficulties involved with participatory processes and PRA are further elaborated in this section.

Braden and Huong (1998: 91) point out that ensuring “equality of representation” is an important issue in participatory video workshops. In the project considerable efforts were made to make sure that different groups of people get a chance to speak out on video. Still, as Huong found out in her evaluation, the participants were selected by the heads of villages. This naturally introduced a certain bias. On the other hand, it would have been problematic, if the project team ‘picked’ people themselves without asking the village authorities. Undoubtedly this would have set a negative climate from the start.

Development projects always raise expectations. In the given case, people expected funding for their sea dyke and also money for their participation in the video workshops. Transparency concerning the scope of the project can certainly lower people’s expectations (and may, of course, also decrease their interest in the project). Related to this issue are the costs of participation. The villagers lost considerable time in the video workshops. For them, the value of their participation must be clearly visible after a project. Thus it seems necessary that video facilitators prepare arguments why people might find it worthwhile to participate in their workshops before entering development settings. Also the scope and implications of participation must be clearly communicated.

Another tricky issue is the distinction between the private and the public. As mentioned, the Vietnamese distinction between the private and the public is different from the ‘Western’ one. For development workers it is crucial to understand these cultural differences, particularly when engaging in participatory approaches. Since video potentially transforms privately made statements into public ones, it is important that people who appear on a video can decide themselves who is going to see their video. As Braden and Huong (1998) point out, the villagers who made the sea dyke video should have been involved in the fundraising activities.
Conclusion

Only few additional functions and implications have been identified in this case study. But those mentioned in the first two case studies are largely valid for this case, too.

Table 8: Functions and implications of video in the Vietnam case

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functions of video</th>
<th>Implications of video</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>for fundraising</td>
<td>increasing accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for conflict resolution</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(Huber, this thesis)
Some final reflections

Reviewing the results, the main research question (see the section ‘The question for this study’) is basically answered, also subquestion one and three. Subquestion two appears to need further more focussed research. Some elements of such a study are indicated in the next two sections.

This chapter’s main purpose is to address some more general issues that are partly beyond the present study’s research focus but nevertheless interesting.

Projects, platforms and Habermas

In the Fisherfolks’ Project participatory video proved its potential to facilitate communicative action in the sense of Habermas (1984). It also became evident that video communication easily falls back into the strategic mode of communication, depending on the mix of people, project structure, kind of conflict, etc. Johansson (pers. com.) admits that it is often the facilitator who ‘pulls it’ into a strategic direction. Project consultants are usually goal-oriented; their performance is evaluated according to the achievement or non-achievement of predefined success criteria, the development goals. Johansson (ibid) notes that at the beginning of the Fisherfolks’ Project people just told stories. The stories had no specific purpose but provided a basis for joint situation appreciation as described by Habermas. Only when the project came in, it tended towards a strategic goal-oriented mode.

Taking this as an example, one could argue that consultants introduce what is called a ‘project bias’. Projects have a defined beginning and end; they have defined goals and methods to achieve these goals – they introduce certain structures which, after a while, are no longer negotiated. If certain stakeholders, for instance the villagers in collaboration with the project consultants, strictly adhere to these structures without involving other stakeholders, there is no longer a basis for rational communication.

Johansson (ibid) also questions if platforms, which build on the idea of communicative rationality, can ever emerge from projects. He believes that “making a project precludes the platform idea”. Platforms are procedural institutions where the goals and means to achieve the goals can always be renegotiated. This independence of ‘blackboxed’ structures is the basis for the emergence of innovative ‘third’ solutions. In projects, by contrast, the goals are usually protected. Since they are hardly ever re-negotiated after the project’s inception, they invariably remain the same. For a change of goals would be regarded as a project failure. In other words, there is always a temptation for strategic action, which means an orientation towards reaching (individually defined) goals instead of reaching understanding.

Research or activism

The boundaries between academic research and the ‘third sector’ (non-profitmaking, activism, lobbying) have become increasingly blurred. “Where once researchers distinguished between knowledge from action and were accountable only to their traditional peer reference group, many are now re-examining and defining their role in relation to new bodies, notably within the third sector and ‘the community’, often in the face of academic hostility to the principles
underlying such a process” (IDS Workshop 1998: 152). The video facilitator is a typical example of this ‘role confusion’, on the one hand taking part in action, together with people, on the other hand doing research, also together with people. Jiggins (pers. com.) points out that guidelines for the researcher’s ‘positionality’ have been established in the action research tradition. Still, the fact that the video facilitator plays an active role in the change process has repeatedly been criticised (Johansson pers. com.). Johansson wonders why ‘doing politics’ is still a taboo in the project world. ‘Doing politics’ probably goes further than ‘playing an active role in the change process’, but expecting projects to be devoid of politics is largely inconsistent with today’s development agenda, most notably with the idea of empowerment. If a project is geared to empower, it often (not necessarily) challenges existing power structures. This may inevitably lead into a political process in which the video facilitator has a stake. He or she may turn into a political activist, probably standing in conflict with certain project goals or with the principles of action research. Thus video facilitators can be both researchers and activists, but it involves problems if they are so at the same time. In how far research and activism are combinable in the context of participatory video projects appears to be a difficult question.

The political context

The implications of different political contexts for participatory video projects have hardly been touched in this study. The projects analysed in this study were apparently not severely limited by authoritative political interventions. It should, however, not be forgotten that in many countries participatory video would be much more troublesome - due to censorship, limited freedom of speech, police harassment, and other reasons. People would not dare to speak out since they would fear being oppressed or being prosecuted. Participatory video projects would perhaps not even get formal approval by the government. Thus space for freedom of speech and democratic structures appear to be an important precondition for participatory video projects to ‘function’.

This, however, does not mean that participatory video is impossible under authoritarian regimes. In any society one can find small spaces in which participatory video projects might be helpful.
Recommendations for further research

Participatory video is indeed a complex multi-faceted phenomenon. In the research process of this study, many different aspects were addressed, but probably even more were neglected because they were beyond the scope of this thesis. Interesting subjects for further research were however identified by the author and are presented in the following, without particular order.

- Braden and Huong (1998: 92) pinpoint the ability of participatory video to “record and reflect preferred languages and literacies (which might include dance, drama, songs and poems)”. In relation to this, video has a clear advantage over other media. Johansson (pers. com.), however, regards these ‘layers of representation’ or ‘double representation’ as problematic. In his experience, video functions best if people speak directly in front of the camera. Participatory community theatre, in a similar way, fulfils its purpose best if the audience is physically present, not observing through the ‘filter’ of the video camera. The question arises if these layers of representation really limit communication and understanding in ways, which affect the development of communicative rationality. An examination of this question would necessarily involve the rapidly growing literature body about participatory communication; in recent years many publications have appeared that deal with development theatre, songs, dances and other local communication forms.

- A similar question concerns script development. In many participatory video projects (e.g. White and Patel 1994), people have been invited to play roles according to jointly formulated scripts. In the three video cases of this study, script writing was largely avoided. Johansson (pers. com.) notes three disadvantages of script-writing: Writing scripts is, again, double representation, it limits the process (it becomes goal-oriented) and it is less participatory because the roles get fixed. But since many participatory video projects have had positive experiences with script writing two questions arise: Are scripts really ‘problematic’ as Johansson claims, and what are the significant differences between script and non-script video?

- Participatory video has been used in connection with PRA in all of the three analysed cases. Video is arguably better than written summaries for the documentation of PRA work: It is understood by both people and researcher (which may not be the case with a written document), and better captures visual PRA outputs. Video also captures process better than still photos and/or voice cassettes. Apart from these obvious arguments it is unclear to what extent PRA and participatory video harmonise, and if participatory video can be regarded as a PRA tool or if these two methods are better used separately.

- The video facilitator’s role in the communication process is an interesting field of study. Undoubtedly and unavoidably, the facilitator influences communication, for example when introducing narrative forms (like ‘the interview’), giving advice on content, selecting and editing video footage, etc. The question is, in how far this influence has detrimental effects on the communication process and if it is realistic to try to avoid it. Generally, a better understanding of the principles guiding the facilitator’s role is required.

- Johansson sees a major advantage of participatory video in the fact that communication can be kept within the ‘oral domain’. There are, however, some problematic points with this claim. Recording oral speech on video is arguably a process of ‘materialising’ statements. Videos can be taken out of the context of origin and may be shown at any timepoint, at any place in the world. Videos are ‘catching and defeating’ time; they are not at all as context-bound and fugitive as the spoken word is. Oral speech, to put it bluntly, has no rewind and
play function. The question then is if participatory video really comes that close to ‘oral culture’ and ‘local forms’, or if it is just as ‘imposing’ as written communication, only in a different way.

- The Mtwar Media Centre in Tanzania has begun to offer participatory video workshops as a service (Johansson pers. com.). People can come with their concerns and ask if they could get help to make a video. The question arises, what are the advantages and disadvantages of ‘participatory video as a service’ when compared to ‘participatory video as a development project’. There are hardly any documented examples yet, but offering video as a service may be a way to overcome typical project-related problems as described above.

There is even a third possibility: Jiggins (pers. com.) notes that in countries where video is cheap and easily available (e. g. India, Nigeria) spontaneous community initiatives have emerged that use participatory video without the aid of either a ‘project’ or a ‘service’.

- As mentioned in the foregoing section, there are indications that projects do not lend themselves for communicative rationality and the development of platforms. Clarifying this issue would certainly be a very abstract and complicated but still interesting task.

- In addition to video, there are other communication technologies which are used creatively in the context of development initiatives. The Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, to mention one example, has begun to lend and sell cellular telephones to poor rural women. The phones give them an opportunity to generate income by charging others for making phone calls (there are hardly any telephone boxes in rural Bangladesh). They are used to keep themselves and others informed about market prices, arrival of trucks bringing fertilisers, etc. and to keep in contact with family members in other countries. International calls form a large percentage of all calls made. The idea comes to mind that there are possibilities to combine certain media for even further advancement of rural communication. Internet, email, teleconferencing, satellite television and several other technologies could be used to create platforms and networks that allow free communication among large numbers of people. The experiences with participatory video have shown that communication technology is generally not ‘too sophisticated’ for rural people in developing countries, which justifies the exploration of other communication technologies and combinations of them.

- Today’s development institutions with their “peaceful project cycles” (Johansson 1997) seem to have problems in handling participatory video. Critics say that participatory video is too controversial, too political and too unpredictable. Undoubtedly, all of these attributes (minus the ‘too’) fit participatory video. But there is a need for better theoretical arguments to defend participatory video, since on the practical ‘project’ level it is very easy to cast a negative light over (from a pluralist viewpoint) positive empowerment processes.

- Lastly, the question of copyright confuses video facilitators. The law over copyright varies from country to country; in many developing countries copyright is poorly established in law and hardly defensible. In some countries the law claims that the one who is filming should have the copyright, but in participatory video projects there are many people filming and usually nobody keeps track of who is doing what. Apart from legal issues there is also another consideration: in a genuinely participatory project the rights of ownership, control of the videos, revenue, etc. should be negotiated, not determined by the law and project designers.
Once more reflecting on ‘video pluralism’ as remarked by Habermas in the introduction, the prospects of widespread and innovative video use actually appear quite bright. On the technological side, television, parabola antennas, videorecorders and cameras become constantly cheaper and more accessible. More and more households are equipped with TV sets. The internet offers ever more astonishing audio-visual applications (e.g. ‘voice email’ is among the more recent ones the author has come across). All that makes video pluralism thinkable, of course only on condition that commercial mass media do not become all too dominant and monopolistic.

At this stage, however, all the established institutions in the ‘development circus’ appear to be the major obstacle for video pluralism. Their often inherent drive to exclusively keep operating in a written word culture is bound to hinder the application of many interesting audio-visual communication tools.
References

Literature


Video SEWA (no date). Video SEWA Media Expressions. Collection of various press clippings on Video SEWA.


World Wide Web


Personal communications

- Johansson, Lars (1998 pers. com.). Consultant. In Danmark, Uppsala, 29th of May 1998. (This personal communication refers to an interview with Johansson, which lasted for more than three hours. The interview was relatively unstructured with only a few prepared questions leading the dialogue. Written notes were taken. During the interview Verena Knippel was present. She had also been engaged in some of the discussed participatory video projects and thus could contribute with additional interesting comments.)

- Jiggins, Janice (1998 pers. com.). Professor in Human Ecology, Supervisor. In Uppsala, 23rd of August 1998. (This personal communication refers to her written comments of the first draft of the thesis.)


Videos

Note: Following videos, produced in a participatory way, have been used as support material in this thesis. They are copies of the video facilitators’ personal tapes. There is unclearness concerning the copyright; the videos have no index of participants; and some of the tapes consist only of unorganised footage material. For this reason the videos are not included as appendices.


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In June 1996, having completed the 20-credit course in Development Studies, the idea came to my mind to write my Master thesis in Sweden. I asked the facilitators of the course, Olle Gustafsson and Frank Sterner, if they saw any opportunity for me to write my thesis at IRDC. They reacted positively to my question but pointed out that I would have to wait until the IRDC would be transformed into a university department. This was scheduled for early 1997. They referred me to Janice Jiggins, one of the suggested professors for the planned Department of Rural Development Studies. At the time, however, Janice Jiggins was still in Holland and, as mentioned, the department did not yet physically exist. Understandably, my hopes were not too high…

But it all turned to the positive! After tiresome preparations (applying for scholarships, clearing bureaucratic matters, etc.) I returned to Uppsala in February 1998 in order to start some very intensive months of thinking, reading, and writing - all that in the rapidly changing environment of DRDS.

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Please feel free to contact the author! Any questions or comments are welcome.

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Appendix

Participatory video literature

Following list contains literature on participatory video that is relatively easy to obtain. It is not complete in any sense, but merely an attempt to give a first overview for anyone interested in the subject. The bold-printed sources are actual books (not magazines or articles) exclusively dealing with participatory video.


