

Participatory Video Production in Tanzania: An Ideal or Wishful?

Mhando, Martin Richard.

Introduction

In 2003 participatory video productions were undertaken in Tanzania to support the work of the World Bank under the aegis of the Economic and Social Research Foundation in Tanzania (ESRF). These videos were intended to record and support the participatory research initiative that had been earlier undertaken in Tanzania (2001-2002) and therefore enhance the work of assessing poverty reduction in developing countries and Tanzania in particular. This paper and accompanied video (12 minutes) attempts to describe in some detail the issues involved in undertaking not only participatory research activities but participatory media production as well.

It is in order to clarify this knowledge base, involving people in the process of analysing their problems that novel and uncommon methods such as the participatory videos are initiated. These videos intended to describe, involve and capture the environment and mood of the people as they describe their understanding of their vulnerability. The videos can also be viewed as advocacy tools for involving the wider community to pressurize and advocate for change. The videos aim to influence policy making, target action in support of specific issues faced by the communities, and finally transform power relations between the poor and their governing bodies. (Okahashi, 2000).

This paper proposes to discuss the theoretical foundations and methodological approaches to the video production processes taking hold in African under the so-called participatory video production methods and question their conceptualisation, efficacy and ethics.

INTRODUCTION

Poverty has been acknowledged as one of the principal obstacles to development efforts. However, people define poverty in different ways, from “lack of means to satisfy basic material and social needs, to insufficiency in food, education provision, lack of land or cattle as assets, poor housing or even absence of good roads and the like. But more important, policy makers often perceive knowledges about issues affecting communities as if they are outcomes of an elitist research. This concern needs to be linked directly to individual and group anxieties at conceptualising the self, the social as well as the political.

In its role and in response to related questions about the relationship between political processes and the media, documentary production has increasingly been seen as a valuable tool to communication. Documentaries continue to function as recorders of perceived reality and truth as well as allow for the interrogation of the relationship between representation and reality.

But often documentaries also exist as forms of archiving of material belonging to another time suggesting a sense of history. This reality has more to do with the accurate representation of the location, social relations and views of the participants and not necessarily the “realities” of filmmaking. Interactions between filmmakers and their subjects continue to be interrogated in documentary theory¹. Indeed it is necessary that the production crew be aware of the possible dis-empowering conditions that the asymmetrical knowledge, skills and experience conditions could present in a community production environment. (Nichols: 1994) This is the basic premise of participatory or collaborative video production processes.

¹ Many theorists examine this mode of communication and the particular problems it poses. (Bill Nichols’ book, *Ideology and the Image: Social Representation in the Cinema and Other Media*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1981, began this ongoing search lasting three decades now.)

Under such methods, the subject communities are seen to have a certain level of control in the film production process and are able to have some input into the production such that they are able to influence some representations in the documentary. (Tomaselli, 1996).

Our understanding of video as a truly participatory and empowering process is a result of study, research and production activities over the last three decades. Notions of Communication Development Theory that emerged in the late 70s was an effort at finding best practice formats and concepts that would collapse the gap between modernisation and dependency. These experiments also involved theatre arts and other community arts. In video communication it was translated into a strategy for mediation between national development plans and local communities. (Tomaselli, K.G. & Prinsloo, J. , 1990).

Videos that command a top/down approach, that brook no enquiry from the intended public are seen to have little understanding of how the recipients as well as the producing organs make sense and benefit from them. These types of video makers have used the authoritative voice of documentary only to legitimize modernist solutions. Within many developing communities the rejection of suggested messages becomes a fait accompli.

Indeed the productions need not be mere descriptions of culture but become part of a culture, and able to negotiate how the community makes sense and copes with development conflicts. The production process and product need to humanize the subject through sensitiveness to participants, as well as attention to ethical issues in a production setting. In a production of this nature a number of aspects need to be clearly defined. Aspects to be defined

include aesthetics, interplay between fact and fiction, visual and thematic problem solving and questions of narrative structure.

It has been argued that the process of participatory video itself is enriching, because participants may feel that they have control over what is reported about them as well as have some form of power to influence and harness the benefits of media. (Tomaselli: 1996)

It is therefore important that we describe these processes and encourage others to reveal the processes by which they get to make documentaries so that the exchange of ideas and experiences might lead to the creation of new knowledge.

PATRICIPATORY RESEARCH AND VIDEO PRODUCTION

Premises of the nature of action research govern the central concept of participatory video. Charles Ehrhart, Technical Advisor, Tanzania PPA argues that Participatory [Action] Research differs from conventional research since,

“... conventional research generates and assembles data in professional texts linguistically and spatially inaccessible to the people whose lives they claim to represent. In contrast, participatory research creates knowledge that is useful to, understood and ‘owned’ by the people from whom it is derived. While this information, in itself, may assist people to further their individual and aggregate agendas, the principle aim of Participatory Action Research is to impart technical, analytical and socio-organisational skills enabling non-professionals to determine and meet their own research needs.” (Ehrhart:2002)

This participatory approach supports the view that theories about poverty must reflect the researcher’s understanding of a community’s cultural, social and economic realities. Indeed one argument for virtues of the video report goes that while no one (including policy makers) will read the 200-

page research report, but most people will watch a 30-minute documentary that would then impinge them to reading even parts of the written report.²

As Erhart argues,

Some of the advantages to Participatory Policy Research are obvious. First, data analysis does not depend on speculation by urban elites about the conditions poor people face. Instead, it is the result of poor people – the “everyday experts on poverty” – reflecting on, theorising about, debating and explaining the world in which they live. Second, Participatory Policy Research contributes to social democratisation by engaging poor people in policymaking processes. (Ehrhart:2002)

Such an approach is envisioned to contribute towards the formation of historical and collective subjects who participate fully in the definition and fulfilment of their needs and longings, as equals in the global society (Selener 1997:19). Within the conventional documentary the filmmaker is often required to be socially uninvolved with the subject and the action that’s taking place so that subjects can be observed acting as if they were not being watched.

The cinema verite enthusiasts of the Rouch and Morin type of course contradicted this. They saw filmmakers as active agents of change in the environments they work in. In this role, they are catalysts, not directors, of films. Indeed participatory video projects tend to focus on social action or community development. (Rouch J.: 1995)

The ESRF has argued that there are many methods of researching into social policy, change and development, both quantitative and qualitative. The participatory mode is action oriented and essentially these investigative endeavours focus on practice-as-inquiry. These methods explore and engage

² In one case in Australia, during the launch of a Report on the treatment of Aboriginal people in housing prominence was given to the video accompanying the Report, and it was the video that was more discussed on national television than the actual report.

in critical reflection at individual and social levels. In this instance, when practitioners identify a problem they begin to search for possible causes and solutions within their practices, and this becomes the enquiry, which is then validated by observations to the tried solutions. It is only then that the results are disseminated and only as a new practice to be further studied and questioned within the practice. This is different from conventional research methods.

Conventional research methodologies, it is argued, require some distanced systematic investigation, done primarily as an end in itself. (North:1987) Stephen North is the quintessential quantitative researcher and to him no inquiry is possible without following empirical methods. On the other hand Donald Schon (1983, 1987), acknowledges practice as research if the practitioner reflects on both what they are doing as they do it and is conscious of the changes that are happening.

Okahashi therefore argues that, "Participatory video is the use of video within groups for change, whether it is individual or societal. Like participatory action research, the degree of involvement that participants have in designing the goals and process varies from project to project."

What this paper will attempt to show is how to use video as a tool to mobilize communities and influence policy change. (Okahashi, 2000) However the paper also goes on to identify some of the pitfalls reflected and question the experiences discussed while attempting to situate the practice within a best-practice value.

EMPIRICAL EXAMPLES

There have been many experiments and therefore examples of this video process research in the developing world. In the Philippines, elders used participatory video to archive indigenous knowledge as they got

increasingly worried about cultural loss as the youth become more and more westernised. (Killough & Abbass, 1996).

In Vietnam, participatory video was used within a village context used to mediate between teachers and parents at a local school. Video was used to allow each side to tell its story without interruption. (Huber, 1998)

In Tanzania video technology seemed to be an interesting alternative and an addition to radio, the principle means of community-government communication in that country. In this context video was viewed as a tool through which a face is linked to a policy and a statistic to a human being. Also it is also argued that video allows for a competency that leads to higher self-esteem, being an alternative to the written word, which often eludes the illiterate.

In countries where all policies are government or party related, to have a face that actually links the influence of a policy to one's life was very critical. This was a crucial result of the research undertaken in Southern Tanzania by Maneno Mengi between 1994-1997. The process allowed for:

- a) Negotiating partnerships and mechanisms for local natural resource management.
- b) Linking participatory research with national policy debate; and
- c) Participatory learning to improve social service provision.
- d) Provision of data and evidence of the impact of communication in development projects and programs;³

These examples have been used to argue for the case where video use becomes an opportunity for narrating local issues and problem solving. ... Through sharing these stories video therefore also helps increase self-esteem and community connectivity. However while this connectivity seems to enable gaining specific outcomes, it is rather the process by which these products

³. Huber, 2007, <http://www.comminit.com/strategicthinking/pdsmakingwaves/sld-1897.html>

are produced and conducted that makes all the difference. It is the process of the video production that accomplishes so much.

However it is the two strategies of *media for claims making* and *media for mediation*, that have been successful in the search for solutions. Three study cases will be used to describe the processes by which videos are produced and thereafter used to create empirical change within the participating communities. These cases also reveal the many pitfalls that abound while undertaking such activities. The 2 cases are:

- The Mtwara Fisheries project
- The Ikombe and Maliwa poverty projects

CASE STUDY 1: MTWARA PROJECT

The role played by video in the project is well described by Bernhard Huber *Communicative Aspects of Participatory Video Projects: An exploratory study*. He writes,

The fisherfolks Association for the Protection of the Marine Environment in Mtwara and Lindi Regions, also known as Shirikisho, requested the support from *Maneno Mengi* to follow-up on the fish market, which had continuously failed to deliver revenue. Initially, it was decided that 5 percent of the turnover of the market should be collected and shared between the village (20 percent), the district (30 percent) and the Marine Environment Fund (50 percent) in order to finance local development activities. It didn't happen until through the process of participatory video the problem was analysed by all stakeholders. (Huber, 1998)

The ensuing process is also aptly described here:

The process started by analysing the situation: 28 species of fish had been decreasing, several fishermen lost their hands by accidental explosions, coral reefs were damaged, [and] corruption of authorities prevented them from finding solutions. The video segments included "formulating the claim, linking communities, participatory appraisal, participatory evaluation and mediation". Villagers reviewed rough edits of footage, which were instrumental in revealing the issues when meeting with the ministers, donors and policy makers. The outcome of this process included the intervention of the [Tanzanian] Navy to stop dynamite fishing, a savings and loan programme, construction of fishmarkets,

strengthening the community organisation (Shirikisho) and a national debate. Dynamite fishing eventually disappeared by 1997.⁴

I have decided to present the cases above in the forthright manner as these ventures are often presented- useful exercises that derive tangible outcomes for the all participants but in this case the participants seem to only be the villagers. This for me is mostly where some of the vices of the process rear their ugly heads. The ubiquitous patronising stance often held by the video researcher/producers (also participant) could be a greater problem since it can compound the original development problem. For me it is in the expectations under-laid with benefaction that ethical issues arise.

Indeed attention over the ethicality of the methods has often been drawn. Renuka Bery in "Media Ethics: No magic Answers" foregrounds many of the subjective expectations and their problems. (Bery, Renuka <http://www.c4c.org/ethics.html>).

In the paper she foregrounds issues of access and control, choice of medium, length of productions, long-term publications, resource allocation, sustainability, Ownership, technology support as well as consent and many others.

While I acknowledge that these and many incidents of process and of representational nature provide ample ground for reflection on the ethicality of the process I would argue that the whole process is fraught with incremental problems that one can never properly assuage. It is the afterthought, the posteriori, that both the participant-facilitator and the recipient-participant can begin to see the innumerable pitfalls of the action. It is for that reason that I have opted to simply describe the processes of the action and hope that the reader would be able to form the many questions from the unapologetic experience- to which I was party.

⁴ <http://www.comminit.com/strategicthinking/pdsmakingwaves/sld-1897.html>

Therefore in describing the actions in the 3 case studies in a self reflexive voice without attempting to define or ascribe ethical problems readers might be able to view even more clearly the pitfalls within.

CASE STUDY 2: THE IKOMBE PROJECT

Participatory Research Methods and the Video

To do service to this paper and its intended aims I shall proceed to describing at some length the process by which the one of the three examples discussed in the paper was undertaken. Since all three projects were undertaken with Ms Nyamachumbe's participation she is the essential key facilitator to the process described in this paper.

Ms Farida Nyamachumbe had earlier been involved in the video productions utilising the participatory video production methods while working in Mtwara, Southern Tanzania and Zanzibar Island between 1996 and 2000. When the opportunity arose we happily agreed for the two of us to work together in a project to develop our knowledge and experience in producing videos with communities. This would be the first time we would be working together. The opportunity came about with the winning of the bid for the production of a 4 part series of videos by the national broadcaster Televisheni ya Taifa (TVT) in Dar es Salaam. We were both to be engaged by the TV station to produce 2 out of the 4 projects to be produced based on the TZPPA project (Tanzania Participatory Poverty Assessment Project) that was being managed by the Economic and Social Research Foundation (ESRF).

The nature of the work was premised on the earlier research methodology employed by the Foundation and this current project entailed producing these videos both as Report as well as Process. The project required us to travel to 2 villages that had been identified as possibly amongst the poorest in the country and use the participatory video production method to produce videos that would reveal the importance of the participatory research methodology as well as show how it works in practice.

Our group was asked to produce two 28-minute videos based on our experience of participatory video production in the villages of Ikombe (Kyela District) and Maliwa (Makete District) in South-Western Tanzania. To do that we brought with us the following equipment:

One Camera – Canon XM1 with a unidirectional mike

Two Editing consoles- Casablanca and a G3 Laptop- with Final Cut Pro 1 (as standby)

We were accompanied by a producer (Dickson Kaombwe from the TVT the Tanzania national broadcaster) and an ESRF Researcher for each of the villages- (Mr. E. Tweve for Ikombe Village and Mr. P. Ngowi for Maliwa Village). The two ESRF researchers had already spent 2 months in the previous year researching at each village. They were researching on the same subject using participatory methods and would therefore be known to the village and would liaise between the production team and the villagers. Utilising the researchers, we were able to quickly establish rapport with the village leadership and other villagers and were able to undertake the production within the required period.

THE PROCESS

After discussions with the ESRF researchers we agreed on a procedure that would be followed for the production of the 2 videos. 12 *Participatory Production Steps* were identified:

1. Make choice of subjects to be covered. (This was made at a focus group meeting of about 20 villagers who had earlier taken part in the TzPPA research.)
2. Team of 2 filmmakers record images of the first village meeting
3. Project all material to all villagers in the evening about what was said at the earlier village meeting.
4. Get feedback from villagers but not record.
5. Record feedback, next morning, from focus group members and their choice of the next issues to be covered.
6. Edit with a few Focus group members and show the rough cut to the whole

focus group the next day

7. Shoot some more and re-edit in the afternoon so we can get a rough cut to show to villagers
8. Same process would follow until the final night when the village's voice cut would be shown to the whole village
9. The Cut would be taken to the policy makers at the District level
10. Comments from the District in response to the villager's views would be recorded
11. Editors would select and insert salient points would from Policy-makers comments.
12. A final cut would be edited for presentation to national, regional, district and village levels.

The whole process from beginning to end would take between 5 to 7 days.

The eventual structure of the final 28minute documentary would be:

12 minutes – describing a day in the life of a villager

12 minutes comments by villagers

4 minutes of comments from the district officials.

In order to tap the knowledge and creative potential of all participants, discussions took place in plenary as well as in small-groups.

With the assistance of Tweve (the TzPPA project Coordinator), we were able to communicate with the Ikombe village about our arrival. The information was relayed to the village through a Radio Call from the District Offices. In 2003 there were no telephone facilities between Kyela, the district headquarters, and Ikombe village. In that way we were certain of being met by the village authorities on arrival at Ikombe. (mobile-phone reception required one to be at Lake Malawi beach-head for some reception)

Ikombe village is about 120 kilometers from Kyela, the District headquarters. We had a 4 wheeler to take us through the tough and rough roads that took the best part of 3 hours to get there. We were accommodated at a missionary centre where we could sleep and get our

meals but we would have to commute by boat between the Mission, the market section of the village, and the larger village (Larger-Ikombe).

Larger-Ikombe village is actually cut off from mainland Tanzania by Lake Malawi. Efforts to build a road on the mainland had begun but had faltered and it was to be the major issue of contention when we started making the video. In the meantime to get to the village one has to take a dugout boat and paddle for 45 minutes or hire the mission boat for Sh. 6000 (\$US6) for the one-way trip. The boat trip takes about 15 minutes. This very problem defined our relationship with the village since we were quickly brought into the reality of transport and communication in this age of satellite telephones. We could still get Mobile phone reception at the Mission camp if we went near the lake but beyond that point Ikombe could be as far as China for all purposes!

The principal industry of the village is fishing. However over the years the catches were getting depleted for reasons that were later explained to us in the video. The other means of economic sustenance are agriculture as well as pottery.

Unfortunately the soils in the village are very poor and the pottery industry is dependent on transport, however, few trucks ply the Kyela-Ikombe route due to the terrible state of the road. This was the basis of the state of poverty enveloping the village and which put the villagers in a vulnerable state of poverty.

IDENTIFYING THE ISSUES:

Following Step 1 of the Participatory Production Steps we were able to get the support of the village and a focus group of about 12 people was chosen.

In our treatment and final project guidelines by the sponsor, ESRF, it had been agreed that we would follow the lives of character (s) in the village (as in the "a day in the life of " structure) and from those stories begin to capture issues that matter in the village.

The focus group suggested three names. These would be the people we would interview and show the material to the focus group and later to the whole village. The chosen characters had also been part of the group that had assisted Mr Tweve in the TzPPA research. That meant we were certain we were working with people who were aware of the processes as well as the issues that the TzPPA had unfolded.

THE PRODUCTION DIARY SUMMARY

1. DAY ONE: We had arrived on the village's market day and therefore we decided to shoot some images of the market and that evening while we were being introduced to the village we showed some of the images. The images were very well received and in that way we were able to gauge that the villagers were somewhat comfortable with our images (or imaging) of them. From a meeting of participants in the prior participatory research 3 people were selected from a focus group of 12 to be interviewed for the video. These 3 interviewees' ideas would then be put to the focus group and then to the whole village for discussion, adoption or recall.

2. DAY TWO: The next day we took the boat to the Larger-Ikombe village. We were able to meet with three identified village "characters" and after introductions we began interviews with all three with the help of Mr Tweve. The third person could only stay with us for a short time and therefore the village leadership asked us to concentrate on the first two – one woman and one man. That evening we came back with three members of the focus group who had time to work with us to cut the first draft of the documentary. Since we needed electricity to power our equipment we stayed at the Mission but we only had electricity until 9 pm. To continue working we had to use an inverter connected to our 4-wheeler, to charge the car batteries. This was to be the mode of editing for the entire period of the production. The inverter was one of the most essential tools to have on location when shooting films using this method. This is

because we needed it everyday as we showed the shot material to the focus groups and the villagers. We used the *Casablanca* edit console since it was the easiest and most down to earth method for editing. Though it was a slow system it was easy to show the villagers the editing processes since it had large pictures of each clip and we simply had to click on the image to get it onto the time-line, and in that way show how editing was done. The villagers soon got the hang of what editing is all about (“It is the lining up of images to make a story”, one villager concluded!!)

3. DAY THREE: The next morning, having not been able to show the rough cut to the village in the evening (we were wary of crossing the lake at night in a dinghy) we asked if we could show it during the daytime. We had to bring with us a car battery that we would use power the TV and the *Casablanca*. Crossing with all the equipment in a dugout boat (we could not get the motor boat) was indeed a scary event. We showed the rough cut and the villagers gave us their comments including what they thought could be further discussed by the two interviewees. We had put the two people in a spot since they had now become the spokespersons for the whole village. We shot some more material that day and only returned late in the evening crossing the lake in the dark this time by a motor boat which however did not have a light and so we still had to travel in the dark lake, although this time it was faster than in the morning! We continued editing that night without the help of the villagers because none could stay with us by the time we were ready to start editing.

4. DAY FOUR: The next morning we continued to film other images that the villagers had identified as part of the visuals for the two peoples’ stories. We also were preparing to show the latest cut to a focus group of women who could only watch the cut in the afternoon after coming back from work. A group of 12 women congregated and

watched the rough cut and then began to discuss it. We recorded the entire discussion, which we then proceeded to cut into the story with the help of some of the focus group members.

5. DAY FIVE: The following day we spent the morning editing with some members of the focus group so that we could show a cut in the afternoon to the whole focus group for their final input as a group. Later that afternoon we showed the 20-minute video to the group and proceeded to record their comments. There were many issues discussed here including the carpeting of the Road Engineer who was required to explain what people had considered the most problematic issue in with regard to their relations with the district policy makers- the TASAF Road Project. We showed the rough cut that evening in the market side of the village and recorded some of the comments from the villagers. This was an interesting meeting because we had about 200 people watching and we had to show the cut a number of times. We then proceeded to insert the comments into the timeline that evening. We did not go to sleep until the early hours of the morning.

6. At this stage we encountered an interesting social-political problem, which is typical of the participatory video production concept. During the interviews one of the comments by a prominent villager was on the minimal interest that the Member of Parliament for the area had shown in the village affairs. He had not visited the village since the last elections and had only been back a few weeks earlier after much complaining. This comment was viewed as too negative by the village leadership and they requested us not to include it in the final cut. As participatory filmmakers we had to listen to the Focus group. They, on the whole (after a huge fight) had agreed with the village leadership of the imprudence of engaging with the MP in public. However we (as filmmakers) also felt that what we are doing is

censoring the views of the people for political expediency. We came to an agreement with the leadership that we would show the final cut to the villagers the next day, uncut, and then we would edit out the comment regarding the MP when we showed it to the District Headquarters the next day. This was agreed to. But this is a major issue of contention that needs to be taken into account while producing participatory videos. For whose benefit is the video communication if the outcomes could impact negatively upon the participants after the video producers are gone. Again we spent that evening cutting in new comments that had come out of the evening show.

7. DAY SIX: The next morning we again had to carry all our equipment to the half of the village across the lake to show the final cut in the daytime. We again received a lot of input; these were such excellent comments that the focus group felt they really needed to be included in the video and which meant we had to edit the whole piece again. It took us the whole night to have the final draft ready. We went to bed at dawn!

8. DAY SEVEN: We left the village early in the morning and arrived at the District headquarters before noon where we proceeded showing the video to the District leadership. We had brought along with us 8 members of the village who would take part in the discussion after showing the video. The discussions were very heated. We recorded all the comments and endeavoured to include as much as we can within the 4 final minutes of a 28-minute video.

It had been decided that we would bring with us two members of the village to Dar es salaam to take part in the filming of the opening credits of the whole Television series and where they would meet other villagers from other parts of the country and in that way enhance the

communication between them. However since we were to proceed to another village before we went to Dar Es Salaam, the two villagers were asked to join us in Dar Es Salaam after 10 days.

This section of the production was the hardest since in actual fact we became the filmmakers per se. We had taken control of the production and the collaboratory concept was getting more and more lost in the production. We were now more interested in the final reception of the video on television rather than what the process had actually involved and the premised purpose of the participatory video production.

One can see the difficulty of separating the two but it is absolutely imperative for filmmakers to be aware of the contradictions and dynamics of the processes in order to be able to make the most of this very difficult but exciting production methodology.

CONCLUSIONS

As an epilogue to this project we want to highlight the necessity of recognising the nature of this method of production, which like Action Research, has serious conceptual and theoretical premises. Action research occurs at the level of discourse – the ways in which research is contemplated, inflected and represented. It takes into account cultural specificities, where we differentiate the dominant discourses from another's. It alerts us to the social influences active in establishing conventions of communication. However it also articulates understanding of the experience of industrial society.

In the context of Africa one needs to be especially careful of the ubiquitous hegemonic environment with relation to communication technologies. It behoves the filmmaker and other communication workers to "commit suicide" with regard to what they know as filmmakers. They need to be ready to accept terms and factors antithetical to their training, and to conditions that would require some negotiation before being accepted by the participating group. Anything less than that means

neither the participating filmmakers nor the sponsoring body actually understand the nature of this process. Participatory video production is simply a form of self-reflexive activity undertaken by the collaborating participants in social situations to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices.

CASE STUDY 2: THE BARAZA TELEVISION PROJECT

Ideas on conservation and cultural production with regard to World Heritage Sites derive from the UNESCO World Heritage Committee. Its strategic direction incorporates ideas drawn from the large body of local, regional and international knowledge, information and contacts it has been able to develop. The World Heritage List was established under terms of The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage adopted in November 1972 at the 17th General Conference of UNESCO. The Convention states that a World Heritage Committee "will establish, keep up-to-date and publish" a World Heritage List of cultural and natural properties, submitted by the States Parties and considered to be of outstanding universal value. (<http://www.travel-images.com/unesco-tanzania.html>)

The historical experience of Tanzania and its place in global anthropology and Swahili culture provides a suitable backdrop against which to engage with issues of global cultural significance. This provides opportunity to developing strategies concerning creating an environment and developing skills which enable media people and academics to enhance the goals of UNESCO.

At the core is the realisation that no transformation of society can take place without cultural transformation. Hence the importance of the arts and cultural products as expressions through which people give meaning to their

humanity. For this process to take place the role of media arts is at the forefront. Indeed the arts and cultural production invariably point to Africa's capacity as a producer of knowledge.

UTILISATION OF PARTICIPATORY VIDEO PRODUCTION PROCESSES IN BARAZA TELEVISION

This project provided an opportunity for active participation of the government, the people who live in the areas, as well as of the tourist, both the local and the international. The aim was to bring government closer to communities and to bring to communities a number of programmes and services, which they can use for their own development.

In Tanzania, between 1998 and 2006, we piloted the use of film and follow-up community discussion groups in order to enhance local development efforts in Stone Town, Zanzibar, the newest Tanzanian nomination into the UNESCO World Heritage Listing. The initiative that had been instigated by the Stone Town Conservation Authority and the Aga Khan Cultural Services both of Zanzibar through the Baraza TV Project. The project supported the consciousness raising activity through Television programs and the training of new video story-tellers who came from amongst the residents of the StoneTown. The aim here was to encourage a local view of what was happening to the location and the lives of the people. However emphasis was laid on developing and making programs in collaboration with the communities as well as making TV program of entertainment value as well.

The purpose and effects of this pilot project showed that local communities can be mobilised to help amongst other things to

- Facilitate active participation in conservation;
- Ensure individual and community access to information;
- Provide appropriate skills training for sustainable social development;
- Promote critical media literacy;
- Encourage entrepreneurship

The videos were a call to action through interaction; It was a social action that comes out of recognising that it is only when people who are

empowered through self-assertiveness that development is possible. It aimed at creating an environment of lively and purposeful debate on how people see their role in maintaining their environment for social benefit now and into the future. A wide range of issues were to be covered in the videos. However what was to be paramount was to show how people conceive their habitat and their role in maintaining the environment and how that reflects their desire to benefit from it as well. It is only if people see their environment in that way would they also create conditions for its appreciation and survival.

THE BARAZA PROJECT DISCUSSION

Since we took some deliberate space to describe the processes by which participatory video production is undertaken (in the Ikombe Project), it would be futile to again discuss the processes encountered in the Baraza TV project. We endeavoured to utilise participatory methods but adapted to the conditions of the research locale. I would therefore wish to rather discuss other factors of utility for participatory video producers and students in order to enhance our knowledge of the practice. I therefore will discuss the Baraza TV project under the following sub-topics:

- ◆ Demonstration of value-added Communication for Development
- ◆ How were the lessons learned?
- ◆ Who benefited from the productions and why?
- ◆ How to incorporate communication into development policy practice?
- ◆ How local people have embraced the project.

Demonstration of value-added Communication for Development

Reporting on the work of the first phase of Baraza TV Verena Knippel writes at length about the evaluation that was undertaken in 1999.

In February 2000, TV Zanzibar visited 50 randomly selected Stonetown households with a questionnaire on the Baraza TV series. Every one of the respondents had seen and liked the

programmes. The TV series was not only appreciated, but had also triggered real change:

- All respondents could adequately describe what the TV series was about (100%).
- The way in which residents were allowed to speak-for-themselves and discuss freely with authorities and house owners was greatly appreciated.
- Respondents said they had been informed and inspired. They had learned that it was possible to repair the buildings, but also gained technical knowledge on how to repair them (72%)
- A majority of the respondents had taken action to repair their homes as a direct result of the TV programmes. 56% had been carrying out repair work, 24% had written letters to the authorities regarding their housing situation, 18% had applied for permits to repair, 46% said they had saved money for repair, and 16% had been able to improve the contractual arrangements for their housing. (Knippel, 2000) ⁵

While the above report is centred around the social outcomes of the project, our concentration here is mostly to deal with the communication processes utilised to achieve the described outcomes. Among the lessons that we would like to share with other communicators from developing and developed countries include the following oversights:

- ◆ The experience has given the filmmakers opportunity and capability of evaluating ongoing media communication activities in a community
- ◆ We were also able to show the importance and need to establish video screening opportunities at every level of society
- ◆ We were able to see the potential for developing a video and other media distribution system in the given communities
- ◆ Within Baraza TV we were able to see potential to develop a marketing component to the distribution circuit and the organising of public viewing events
- ◆ The experience has revealed the potential to enable the facilitation of communication between communities and policy makers thus playing an advocacy role

⁵. Along with Ms Nyamachumbe, I was involved in the Third and Fourth phases of the Baraza TV project.

- ◆ Through the projects (especially Baraza TV) we were able to identify training opportunities through developing a community needs analysis.
- ◆ With Baraza TV we were able to show that communities can afford possibilities for partnerships in the community and with other groups including NGO's
- ◆ The projects were viable avenues to enable communities to apply for future funding with the aim of enhancing future productions.

B) How were the lessons learned?

The projects allowed confidence growth among members of communities enabling them to express their views, make sure their views are heard and are worked on. This was done through a consultative approach and by conferring decision-making powers on the community above the filmmaker. Through their participation in making the final decisions and being consulted on what would be the final product, the villagers became even more aware of their own power and capability to say no to someone's representation of them.

Indeed the devolving of power from the filmmaker to the participant also liberated the filmmaker from a power-position and fear of misrepresenting other peoples' views. They also increased the community inhabitant's awareness of the importance of conservation and knowledge of the different ways each person in the community perceives conservation. Becoming aware of the powerful influence of history, tradition and education became an incentive for change. For that reason the video became a tool for identifying and recording of individual and social anxieties that change generates. More important was the role that the videos performed for the communities: The videos produced advocacy positions, and indeed became rallying points for the desired change by the communities.

C) Who would benefit from the lessons learned from our work and why?

As a method of social inclusion the intended beneficiaries of the process were:

1. The communities themselves,
2. Producing filmmakers and other filmmakers

These two groups would greatly benefit from our experiences, through creatively adapting our model to their work environments. The model we provide can creatively be adapted to other conditions taking into account the necessity of continuously reducing the power of the filmmakers to control the final product. This would also help filmmakers realise how much power they actually levy on the represented communities and how much the reality of the documentary is often only a creative product of the filmmaker. In many ways, participating communities are therefore better placed to deliver more reliable data to be used for the media representation if they felt they were doing the representation themselves. This is beneficial to the filmmakers, the sponsoring organisation and the community as well, since they shall have a more representative product and voice.

The experience often makes the filmmaker become more aware of the fictionality of the processes of documentary production and therefore recognise that the creative input that a director has often influences the represented information. Filmmakers become aware of documentary, as an open question. This enhances the search for truth in communication and closer interrogation of sources of knowledge and information. Finally, communities would indeed benefit from a close encounter with a new medium of communication that is often only there to be received but never to be produced by them.

For the community filmmakers the experience would also impart specific skills through practice. These include:

1. *Interpersonal Skills* such as working as a team, teaching and learning from others, negotiation skills, leadership and recognition of different talents and abilities.

2. *Understanding systems* and learn how to monitor, adapt and improve systems and processes.

3. *Technical skills* that would help them to learn how to access information, select teams, monitor how teams work, application of appropriate technology to environment,

4. *Personal skills* including reasoning, making decisions, solving problems, individual responsibility, management of self integrity and working as members of a unit.

D) Consideration of how to incorporate communication into development policy and practice.

BASIC PREMISES

To enable applicable conditions for the successful implementation of this method of research a number of ground rules need to be made clear. Indeed research issues need to be understood by the target group at the earliest possible moment. When people at the grassroots understand why the research is being done and its methods, they move to make changes happen. In many ways the production explored how action research can influence policy change and how creative communication techniques can build awareness at various levels of society; And because the effort here is at building people's capacity to analyse and solve their problems and raising people's awareness of their rights and responsibilities, the result of their efforts must be fed back to policy makers and to the participants. The process has linkages involving all the three participating parties. It changes the policymaker's understanding of and attitudes towards poor people by involving government officials in the research process. It makes the researchers aware of the fact that they must focus on the process that can uncover the story behind the data.

E) How local community people have embraced the project.

During many of the showings and especially during the evaluation stages we were often told by the villagers and other people participating in the project how they wish they did not have to write a report but make a film. We would ask them why they thought they needed to make a film and not write a report. Their reasons they would give would range around the fact that they felt that with a film they were communicating directly to/with the absent stakeholders or intended recipient of the film, in their own voices. They felt that with a written report there is a domineering anonymity regarding who wrote the report and whoever might receive it. They felt that with film the rapport the film created with whoever watched it and responded to it in whatever way had some immediate effect and was reflected towards the way they would respond or identify with the subject and participants of the video. This is the power of the image that is so understated when documentary is used for intra community communication.

Of course the first limitation towards accepting video as a reporting medium always lies with two constraints: technology and cost. The expert knowledge and capabilities required to producing a visual report have always been seen as limiting. Needless to say the purchase as well the maintenance of the video technology is an obvious expense that we all accept as being a major constraint to the provision of and wider use of this medium. There are also issues of the lack of electricity, projection or monitoring facilities, training and the like. However this myth also needs to be questioned.

First, video technology is not rocket-science. It can be taught very fast, and easily made part of a community within a very short time. While one might take longer to explain why the camera should not be left in the rain or never to be dropped, it is not like villagers do not know that one should never put down a clay pot roughly or that sugar or flour should not be left in the rain!! It is surprising that we think simple factors of care can be so damn

difficult and that if people made mistakes it is because they are stupid. I have lived in villages where the wisest of old person forgot to take their maize flour from out of the rain and ended going to bed on an empty stomach! These are lessons we learn because humans are not perfect, and the lessons surrounding care of technology can also be learnt very fast. In actual fact we often found ourself being rougher with the way we treated the equipment than did our "trainees"!

Secondly, with the cost of digital technology coming down fast and the availability of very young populations in villages in Tanzania, we were never short of youth to learn and care for the equipment. Digital cameras now cost less than \$500, while a video-tape can be as cheap as \$3 for a 60 minute tape. (Do we dare go HD?)

Deployed judiciously many elements that could have constrained a project can now be solved: the tape can be utilised a number of times, the monitoring or projection facilities can not only be part of the communities shared facilities but also be carefully hired out to bring minimal income to support its maintenance. Finally, just as support for agricultural development is often given to individual farmers and not to the whole community as a whole, it is possible that the facilities could be outsourced as loans to individuals who will make a living out of it while giving a service to the community and paying off the loan. This service needs to be understood also as a business just like the provision of loans for a milling or a sawing machine. In doing that it will allow for the personalisation of a service, while also providing opportunity for the community's voice to be heard. Indeed we need also to see this process as the continuation of a long held tradition- that of narrativizing communities.

As many African communities reveal there has always been a role for the community's story-teller; one who communicates knowledge about the community in the narrative form especially in the oral traditions. Community and family histories have been sung, narrated, or held in trust by individuals in the community for a long time. The way these have been done has depended on the times. The fast speed of change in ways and means of

recording and keeping them does not mean that the different formats cannot co-exist and influence each other. We therefore see possibilities in developing specific technologies for use in communities such as the ones in Tanzania.

Quoting Maneno Mengi I would argue there is no reason why a village could not afford

“a solar-powered video production and screening studio on the back of a motorbike... The cost for such a mobile video studio, ... is in the same range as for the motorbike. The learning curve for the operator is no steeper than for any other media technology, including writing. To the contrary, grassroots people often find communicating with video easier than with writing.” (Maneno Mengi)

So what is holding back such developments? I believe development is often held back by the way we conceive the problem. As Albert Einstein put it, “We can not solve problems with the same thinking we used to create them”. We need to think outside the box. We cannot expect to create a new video industry around the one or two cameras just like we have not build new industries around the sewing machine and milling machines. These technologies need to be seen as merely socially supporting and not defining technologies for the communities. In that way development projects need not bring in a video facilitator each time there is a presentation to be made. One could make an effort at using the locally available resource that would also support the development aspects of the communities. What is stopping development is not the cost but the narrow and limited thinking around the use of technology in poorly “technologised” habitats. The discourse of development we are discussing here is not about technology but about facilitating community’s values and economy through communication.

CONCLUSIONS

What we hope to have achieved in this paper is to show how the projects have in many ways allowed the researchers to build upon past efforts being

undertaken in Tanzania. Indeed from the Mtwara experiences through to the Ikombe and Baraza TV experiences we have noted how faster and faster turn around in results were achieved. A secondary outcome of the processes of the projects has been the closer understanding of the technology that has supported the processes. It has become increasingly clear that video technology needs to be understood within the context of its unfolding values within each culture. For example, it was the face-to-face and word of mouth "distribution circuit" that delivered the more lasting effects in the project. The suffusion of video technology, its low cost and possible commercial usability also allowed the projects to deliver unexpected results. Finally one can see these processes being applied to other community awareness raising environments including those of HIV and AIDS education.

What is required in order to open up development discourses for community perspectives, are neither expensive nor sophisticated methodologies of participation. What are needed are cheap cameras and simple editing facilities, some time on community televisions, and a good pinch of confidence in the knowledge that still abounds within the poor.

Currently, digital video broadcasts are delivered mainly via satellite, but the use of digital video in terrestrial, cable and microwave broadcasts is expected to grow substantially over the next few years (for both standard definition and high definition television).

Some concrete aspects of underdeveloped telecommunications infrastructure need to be taken into account whenever we discuss these issues. These include the fact that the vast majority of people in homes and businesses do not have telephones, still suffer from poor transport availability, and communal telephony is not freely accessible to villagers, even with the growth of mobile telephony.

There are unusual challenges in providing inter-and intra community communication to "sparsely" populated rural communities separated by vast distances from nearest urban development. The difficulties here include political and economic issues, access to technologies to overcome the lack of existing telecommunications infrastructure, as well as the tyranny of distance.

Any solution has to be cheap, suited to the specific communication regulatory territory and geographic environment. The challenge therefore lies in devising cheap, robust and legal solutions.

In Africa, lack of democratic and consultative processes combined with rural authority politics and historical inequalities in access provision, present an especially difficult environment. The concentration on mass communication as the most practical and viable means of getting information to people, especially in Africa, needs to be re-assessed. Contemporary mass communication solutions would suggest obtaining telephony to enable wide access and dissemination of information. However, many of the problems that this process can solve and solve very well are better deployed through this face-to-face interaction, which allows for democratic representation and immediate response.

Even more important than choosing the most appropriate technology is the co-operation with and commitment from the community itself and policy makers. This involves both villagers as well as the policy makers at different levels of administration. The attraction of mass media models pales in insignificance when you realise how many of the issues demand proximity. This requires a change of the mindset where small is better since it makes the identified changes possible and assures contact and quick reaction to problem solving. Indeed the established relationship between the relevant development partners was largely subject to but not dictated by the technology chosen, its options and considerations.

Finally, I hope it is in being able to present the process of my reflection on the subject that the idealism of the process and its wishful thinking nature has been exposed.

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Martin Mhando

Assoc. Prof- Media Studies, Murdoch University, Perth, Australia.