

## **CHAPTER 15 – BEYOND EMPOWERMENT INSPIRATION: Interrogating the gap between participatory video’s motivational ideals and practice reality**

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Participatory video has generally been framed idealistically, resulting in a discourse of possibility and potential as presented in methodological guides (e.g. Shaw and Robertson 1997, Lunch and Lunch 2006) and motivational literature (e.g. White 2003).

In this chapter, I open the gap between these participatory video ideals, and actual practice manifestation in the complex social reality of project application. To do this I explore the participatory video process used by Real Time Video (<http://www.real-time.org.uk/>). Real Time is a UK based, professional media organisation that specialises in using video to catalyse social benefit in community contexts. Real Time works with a wide variety of marginalised groups, such as those with physical or learning disabilities, refugees, homeless and unemployed people, elderly people and those with mental health issues, and other disadvantaged women, young and black and minority ethnic people. My standpoint is that participatory video processes such as Real Time’s are not magic bullets despite the many positive claims. There are often tensions between different social agendas in real-life project settings. The following vignette illustrates the issues:

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## Conflicting agendas, tokenistic processes and compromised facilitators

*Canley Green is a UK council estate with typical inner city problems, such as unemployment, inadequate facilities and minimal social infrastructure. In 2004, the local council ran a series of public meetings to initiate consultation on area regeneration. As these only attracted already active sectors of the community, Real Time was commissioned to involve young people using video.*

*Real Time attracted a core group by running video sessions both at the youth club and out on the streets. The group were then supported in making a video to input their views. It is clear that this typical use of participatory video is participation led by a top-down agenda.*

*The broad aim agreed was for young people to communicate their needs. However, the council officer responsible for project financing disliked the resulting video. Participants expressed opinions that did not match departmental priorities. He had, it transpired, expected a promotional video providing evidence of community support for existing plans.*

Shaw 2007:188

Of course, if the council truly wants to involve young people, what is said cannot be controlled. However, this example illustrates that different project actors (those with active roles in the project process) can have conflicting agendas due to their positioning (that is their perspective on the project purpose). In this example, council officers' positioning resulted in participation being applied *top-down*. This can clearly lead to tokenistic processes (whether in conscious manipulation or naive self-deception) that merely support decision-makers' agendas (Braden and Mayo 1999). This example also illustrates one of the problems of working *in-between* positions. Real Time accepted council funding to enable participants *bottom-up* expression. However, the funding context placed practitioners impossibly. They were asked to change the video to fulfil departmental priorities. If they re-edited they would be complicit in a shallow façade of participatory ideals. If they stood by participant' views, they risked losing needed income. Practitioners inspired by ideals are thus easily compromised.

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Finally, what did this project offer participants? Initially proud of their production, the youth group ended up feeling that they had failed in some unspecified way. Their views were not seriously considered. However, even if they had been, the opportunity to voice opinion is not the same as participating in social improvement as a result of voicing that opinion. In this case, none of the group's desired changes were forthcoming, yet the council could still tick boxes and say that young people were consulted. This kind of lip-service involvement is at best patronising, and at worst, destructive, with participants easily becoming puppets in social propaganda.

The rhetoric of including the excluded and of providing a voice for the voiceless inspires many donors, support staff, practitioners, researchers and activists who want to challenge social injustice. However, the social world is complex and contradictory. As this example makes clear, there can be many difficulties in applied participatory video that are not anticipated by idealistic notions of *perceived* potential (e.g. Shaw 2012), with decision-makers far less likely to give up control than participatory rhetoric implies..

As the field of participatory video matures, I believe that it is necessary to critically interrogate theory about practice to construct a more helpful and realistic praxis. This needs to encompass both possibility and limitation. By possibility, I mean what the participatory video process *may* lead to for the participants it intends to help (which I also refer to as its potential or promise). By limitation (or constraint), I refer to the counter influences and opposing tensions of actual practice as it is situated in reality. In this chapter, I draw on my thesis research (Shaw 2012) into Real Time's approach. Through exploring project actors' lived experiences (de Certeau 1984), I define staged

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participatory video *process possibilities* and fundamentally *linked limitations* that reflect the contradictions, nuances and ambiguities of contextualised practice. I thus build a framework for future critical investigation of actuality that incorporates both universal potential and particular constraint in constant dynamic motion during the participatory video journey.

I begin by suggesting that the disjunction between espoused theories of practice (Schon 1983) and practice actuality has arisen from the predominant tendency to frame participatory video within the generalised empowerment narrative associated with community and international development.

## **BEYOND MOTIVATIONAL DISCOURSE – THE PROBLEM OF THE EMPOWERMENT NARRATIVE**

Participatory video, as one of the family of participatory methodologies (e.g. Kindon 2003, Protz 2004, Ramella and Olmos 2005), engages participants in active use of video towards social improvement. It is used worldwide by practitioners (or facilitators) in support of an empowerment-orientated community development agenda (e.g. Braden and Mayo 1999, Gomez 2003; Nair and White 2003 and Shaw 2007).

Power, as fundamental process, is *the relational capacity that enables a social actor to influence asymmetrically the decisions of other social actor(s)* (Castells 2009:10). I thus view empowerment-orientated participatory video as an interactive practice that intends to build participants' social power – that is it aims to increase group

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agency (capacity to act) and social influence (through actual action). One way to effect social power is through constructing narratives that provide social meaning to frame and steer future action (Melkote 2004:44), as an alternative to dominant and damaging social discourses (Castells 2009). The assumption is that participatory video is a good tool because it has the *potential* to empower participants and transform usual social dynamics (White 2003) through the production of collaborative-authored videos that tell and show participants' own stories (Jones and Humphreys 2006). The problem is that framing participatory video within the empowerment narrative, has resulted in a focus on possibility to the neglect of limitation.

The empowerment narrative or metaphor reflects the emancipatory values that motivate much participatory practice. This worldview is concerned with the liberation of people from constraints that affect their opportunities, and development of greater control over their lives (Giddens 1991). In community social psychology, empowerment is identified as a key social construct (Campbell and Jovchelovitch 2000) bounding participatory interventions with marginalised groups that work towards social change. Marginalisation is due to inequalities of power. The social psychological concern is with the effects of marginalisation on people, and whether participatory practice leads to improvement. Social interaction is thought to stimulate reflection and develop people's capacity to act, thus creating the possibility of social action (Cohen and Mullender 2006).

However, many writers (e.g. Rowlands 1997) have pointed to the uncritical use of the term empowerment, which is often joined to participation as a buzzword to indicate positive intention (Brock and Cornwall 2005). In this way, participatory literature has

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presented lists of generalised practitioner perceived benefits that *may* result (e.g. Stuart 1989, Frost and Jones 1998, 2002, Guidi 2003, Bery 2003). Most existing research on community media then attempts to measure generalised factors such as confidence or group cohesion that are assumed benefits. Such research is suggestive of high levels of participant satisfaction, and self-perceived benefit such as increased confidence, and new friendships for *particular* individuals (e.g. Foster-Fishman et al 2005). Becoming experts in their own lives through media self-advocacy is experienced as empowering by *some* (Braden and Mayo 1999, Foster-Fishman et al 2005). Case studies also indicate that arts and media projects *can* encourage team work, develop cross-cultural understanding and build social networks (e.g. South 2004, Castledon et al 2008). However, although this points to potential individual and group benefits from video projects, this is not necessarily the case. Further evidence of this sort does not increase understanding of the processual links in the empowerment process.

Recent social psychological writing has also considered the use of visual media, such as photography (e.g. Lykes, Blanche et al., 2003, Wang, Morrell-Samuels et al 2004) and digital video (Ramella and De La Cruz 2000, Humphreys and Brezillon 2002, Nolas 2007) as empowerment processes. Video is often suggested as a good tool for because it has the potential to create the link between social positions. It can stimulate group dialogue about individual perspectives (e.g. Shaw and Robertson 1997), provide a bridge between the group and the wider social world (e.g. Purcell 2007), and combine telling (through recorded speech) with showing (Humphreys and Lorac 2002). However, there is a gap in current literature about the contextual factors (when, for whom and in

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what circumstances) that lead to positive or negative social consequences, and how and why this is so.

Woolly terms like empowerment and participation do bring stakeholders together to address injustice (Mosse 2006). Motivational narratives/metaphors thus function to inspire practitioners and bind them with donors in common purpose, and this should be acknowledged as part of their value<sup>1</sup>. However, intentional discourse does not prepare practitioners or project supporters for the reality of project intervention. This either leads to uncritical and optimistic project evaluation where anecdotal evidence is collected that fits idealistic notions, whilst contradictory experiences remain unnoticed or unacknowledged. Or, it can lead to narratives of failure (Campbell 2003, Campbell and Murray 2004) when projects fall short of impossible dreams. The assumption that empowerment-orientated interventions are non-problematic is clearly flawed. The field of participatory video sets itself up to fail by forecasting unachievable goals. Participatory video motivational rhetoric rouses and energises action (High 2005). However, there it is necessary to go beyond the empowerment narrative to develop nuanced practice understanding. This begin with more specificity about how participatory video can empower or indeed disempower.

## **STUDYING CONTEXTUALISED EMPOWERMENT PRACTICE –TOWARDS A MORE NUANCED UNDERSTANDING**

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<sup>1</sup> Highlighted by Sara Kindon in communication 2011

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Empowerment practice can aim to psychologically develop the confidence to act, and the belief that action will be successful (symbolic change), or to observably obtain the capacities or resources needed (material change). My interest in empowerment practice is both in its intention to develop participants' agency (Giddens 1979) or capacity to act, as well as whether participants exercise that agency (action) to influence what happens. I am also concerned with what it leads to for participants. In any case, both the possibilities *and* the limitations of participatory video in support of an empowerment agenda need to be critically unpacked.

Most existing literature focuses on video as a means for participant-authored representation. For instance, a participatory video project with women in Jamaica created new knowledge between differently positioned agendas (Protz 2004). A project with people with disabilities concluded that it enabled them to become being active knowledge creators rather than passive objects of research (Krogh 2001). The key question, is what is the point of this new knowledge? Braden (2004) pertinently asks whether decision-makers are listening to the new knowledge created through participatory video processes. I would go further and ask: even if those with social influence listen to videos made by marginalised groups, what happens then?

Making room for the expression of a range of viewpoints is an example of repressive tolerance (Marcusse 1964). In allowing alternative expressions and practices, liberal democracies absorb dissent and divert radical energy into activities that are no threat to the status quo. Framing participatory video as community consultation or development can thus be viewed as a retreat from the action or activism it purports to

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foster. This is because it gives legitimacy to producing outputs (the video end-products) without anything necessarily having to change as a result of their production. The challenge of creating a link between critical reflection to decide what is needed, participants constructing their own videos and the implementation of social improvement of benefit to participants is a core challenge for participatory video.

There are also generally unacknowledged but fundamental problems with using video as a social tool. The nature of video leads to unavoidable expectations about the product, even when participant empowerment is the main purpose. Donors and project managers alike, and often video practitioners and participants as well, often have strongly pre-determined ideas about what will be produced. These amplify the tensions arising from the different agendas in project settings (Shaw 2007). Firstly, the topic is frequently pre-determined, which limits participant control. There are often unrealistic expectations about what is possible, with practitioners under considerable pressure to produce a product of technical quality and content interest to justify their involvement. This points to the central paradox (Nolas 2007) of much participatory practice in relationship to its empowerment purpose. In reality, it is often a contradictory mix of both control and lack of control for both contracted practitioners and participants.

The contexts in which participatory video is applied are generally by intentional implication those of a power imbalance between participants and decision-makers. The empowerment narrative rests on the assumption that the balance of social power can change. By implication Foucault's (1980) view of how power manifests through dynamic social relationships informs thinking on how it might change. If power results from

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complex social relationships, empowerment practice is a process of changing relational dynamics, as it is constituted in the interactions between project actors. At the communication interface, practitioners (such as Real Time's) use participatory video collaboratively to open up spaces *in-between* top-down and bottom-up where participants' social influence can emerge if conditions are favourable.

Digital multi-media are often perceived as offering enabling contexts as new spaces in which people can together explore understanding (e.g. Jones and Humphreys 2006), and by resourcing decision-making between alternative future pathways (Humphreys and Brezillion 2002). They contribute by re-configuring social spaces, and thus mediate social relationships so that they can be re-shaped more equitably (e.g. High 2005). It may be the new relationships that are established in these in-between spaces (the *interactions*), rather than the knowledge produced, that are of most significance in creating the conditions for positive change. I thus suggest that building participant influence involves more than access to a means of representation.

Part of the problem is that empowerment interventions in contexts of disadvantage are often treated as solutions to be injected from outside (Rifkin 1996). This has resulted in a one-size fits all conceptualisation of practice that is blind to real world complexity. It has led to the enormous simplification in viewing planned interventions as progressing in linear fashion from policy needs, through practice implementation to the evaluation of planned outcomes (Long and Van de Ploeg 1989, (which also leads to the previously mentioned focus on measuring isolated social indicators). By comparison, I

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conceive participatory project interventions as emergent dynamic practices that form and evolve through the negotiation between different agendas.

Empowerment through participatory video is thus highly context-specific. It is clearly unreasonable to imagine that a person is definitively empowered after attending a video project. Empowerment-orientated participatory video practice, like education, may be more productively viewed as an open ended and emergent process of social learning (e.g. Rifkin 1996, High 2005). That is it is better conceived as an ongoing process of iterative development dependent on particular circumstances. What counts as success therefore depends on the particular project purpose, the starting point of participants and the actual situation. This is why I propose that contextual factors are fundamental in supporting or constraining the possibilities of agency and action through participatory video. To begin developing concrete knowledge about how to create the conditions in which empowerment can occur, I now turn to the particular context of Real Time's approach.

## **TOWARD CONTEXTUALISED UNDERSTANDING OF EMPOWERMENT PRACTICE: REAL TIME'S STAGED PROCESS OF INTERACTION**

Participatory video is not a singular phenomenon and there is obviously not one right method. Moreover, there is a danger in encapsulating definitions in emergent practice, where diversity and fluidity are important (Dagron 2001:5-35). Nevertheless, to contextualise practice it is important to be more specific.

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I suggest the potential of participatory video as a relational process thus lies in its application to develop four aspects of social power. Firstly, it involves using video to open an environment for social dialogue. Secondly, it provides the framework in which participants think about their lives to increase awareness, unpick limiting constructs, and negotiate their own social norms, agendas and actions. Thirdly, using video provides the means to exercise agency through collaboratively authored production. Finally, showing videos in wider social forums creates the possibility for groups to influence the social agenda. The potential of video in creating a link between internal reflection and external improvement, thus revolves around its application to progress both group agency and communication action. I now use Real Time's approach to exemplify empowerment through participatory video as a staged process.

### **Real Time's staged process of interaction**

I drew on 10 semi-structured interviews with key personnel to identify three stages involving key building blocks within Real Time's process presented in table 3.1. These are informed by various conceptual frames associated with communication, awareness-raising and what function is performed in the wider world through participants video action..

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**Table 3.1 – Empowerment as staged process of interaction**

<b>STAGES OF REAL TIME'S PROCESS</b>	<b>BUILDING BLOCKS</b>	<b>CONCEPTUAL FRAME</b>
<b>STAGE A – OPENING IN-BETWEEN COMMUNICATION SPACES</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Engaging participants</li> <li>2. Increasing individual confidence, capacity, and sense of 'can-do'</li> <li>3. Establishing inclusive and collaborative group dynamics</li> </ol>	<p><b>PUBLIC SPHERES AND COMMUNICATIVE ACTION</b></p> <p>(e.g. Habermas 1984, 1989, Fraser 1990, Jovchelovitch 2007)</p>
<b>STAGE B – FROM EXPRESSION TO GROUP RE-FRAMING AND AGENCY</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Motivating social dialogue - focussed on participants' lives and concerns</li> <li>5. Developing criticality - group reflection and re-framing</li> <li>6. Building collective agency - group identity, purpose and capacity to exercise control</li> </ol>	<p><b>CRITICAL PEDAGOGY AND CONSCIENTISATION</b></p> <p>(e.g. Freire 1970, 1974, Jovchelovitch 2007)</p>
<b>STAGE C – BEYOND EXERCISING AGENCY - PERFORMING AND BECOMING</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Group communication action through video production</li> <li>8. Social influence - showing video in wider forums</li> <li>9. Outcome and impact – The kinds of social improvement constitute success</li> </ol>	<p><b>PERFORMATIVITY AND BECOMING</b></p> <p>(e.g Butler 1990, Jagger 2008, Deleuze and Guattari 2004)</p>

Progress through each stage of Real Time's process as outlined in Table 3.1 is not linear. Some projects cycle round the complete process several times, whereas others concentrate on one building block during a project iteration. Nevertheless, a linear approximation assists as a (necessarily flawed) analytical device to map out interconnected elements.

However, this initial synthesis is merely a starting point. The problem as Fiske (1992) points out is that in studying practice, it is necessary to turn it into discourse,

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which then by definition is no longer practice. Discourse is always abstracted and therefore by implication too rarefied and general. Thus distilling activity structures from the contexts of application to produce methodological handbooks produces a sense of coherence and order that does not encompass the tensions of real-life practice, or the way that project actors adapt the basic model in situ to respond to the everyday, the uncertain or the difficult (Moon 1999). To aide further understanding, it is necessary to move beyond the empowerment narrative to explore the actual territory of practice (Deleuze and Guattari 2004). In the next section, I exemplify my initial approach in using the particular of contextualised practice to problematise Real Time's praxis.

## **DISRUPTING THE EMPOWERMENT NARRATIVE: CRITICAL REFLECTION AT THE THEORY-PRACTICE DISJUNCTION**

Practice knowledge is itself socially constructed. Practitioners' reality evolves from their perceptions and is maintained by the actions that result from these beliefs (Berger and Luckman 1966: 20-21). Practitioners inevitably have blind spots arising from immersion in their paradigm, so although participatory interventions can move knowledge beyond good intentions it can simply entrench prejudice if it focuses on corroborative evidence.

Reflective practice or explicit reflection-on-practice (Schon 1983) involves practitioners learning from their field experiences by concentrating on the reality of practice. The purpose is to problematise occurrences that do not fit current models, in order to extend and develop praxis. Noticing and making sense of everyday events

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(Moon 1999) where there is disjunction between what is supposed to happen and what actually happens (critical incidents) are good places to initiate transformative learning. Gallop (2002) uses anecdotal theorising as a way of transcending the realist/confessional dichotomy that exists in much writing about practice (Nolas 2007). Anecdotal practice stories or narratives can be applied as pointers to disrupt current viewpoints in the spaces between the universal and the particular. Each disjunction grounds practice as it is actually manifested, rather than how it should be, and thus can offer insight. I now illustrate this process through one example in relationship the first main stage of Real Time's process.

### **Problematising the opening of new in-between social spaces for communication action**

Fraser's (1990) idea of alternative public spheres (counter publics) in which marginalised groups engage in deliberation or communicative action (Habermas 1989) are useful in framing the purpose of participatory video. Real Time's process aims to open two types of culturally-embedded social spaces. During Stages A and B (Table 3.1) participants, interact alongside practitioners in Type 1 counter publics, where they negotiate and construct new perspectives. In Stage C, wider Type 2 public spheres are opened between the group and the outside world where their social representations (Jovchelovitch 2007) are propagated (see table 3.1).

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The Type 1 forums in particular are actually semi-public as they are not open to all. This is crucial in providing an environment in which marginalised groups, can develop communication confidence. Real Time's process involves organising video activities to encourage inclusive dynamics (Building Block 3). Each participant takes turns on the microphone, to create space for all to speak (Shaw and Robertson 1997). However, this can confront usual group dynamics as highlighted in a Real Time project example with long-term unemployed people:

*A major part of the difficulty the participants had faced was the loss of self-esteem that came from the repeated set backs in failing to gain employment. They made a tape about the hurdles they face in looking for work, including skills, age and disability discrimination and the benefit trap.*

*One man in the project was extremely overbearing, and was obviously used to taking all the decisions for the group. Practitioners acted overtly, and repeatedly to create space for other participants to speak. This involved using their own authority assertively and unequally to prevent this man from talking for and over other participants.*

#### **JS- practitioner-researcher diary 2006**

I do not think facilitation should be passive and agree that the illusion of neutrality (Kemmis and McTaggart 2005) is a major misunderstanding within development practice. It is my opinion that video projects do need to be structured to prevent take over

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by dominant members. However, is this intervention justified given that this man had low self-worth after many employment rejections.

The reality of empowerment practice often involves complex and contradictory power dynamics that position project actors awkwardly in relation to each other. Foucault (Foucault and Faubian 2000) envisaged power as manifesting in complex dynamic relations. Power is part of an emergent set of social relationships, rather than a fixed part of social structure. Participants are not passive victims, and can consent, subvert and refuse participation. Increasing knowledge on how 'power-with' relationships impact, involves facing up to the contradictions of facilitated empowerment and embracing the ambiguities and tensions that exist.

Anecdotal theorising in relationship to each main stage of Real Time's process highlighted significant gaps in current knowledge about how participants experience participatory video interventions. I view Real Time's staged process as re-constituted afresh in each new project setting through the relationships between project actors. I thus followed Humphreys and Brézillon (2002) and Nolas (2007) in taking an actor's perspective in my study. I went on to gather data about how participants and other project actors actually experienced participatory video as a dynamic processes.

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## **PARTICIPATORY VIDEO: BETWEEN POSSIBILITY AND LIMITATION**

In this chapter, I have questioned the assumed link between taking part in creative video-making and participant empowerment. I have defined my focus on empowerment through participatory video, as a facilitated process of interaction that aims to build participants' social power. I also suggest that as empowerment practice is essentially context-specific, developing practice knowledge of the factors that help, or hinder the achievement of process possibilities must be in context.

I next defined Real Time's participatory video approach as a 'staged process of interaction' to initiate contextualised exploration. I then demonstrated through example how my research used anecdotal theorising (Gallop 2002) as a way of disrupting narratives of potential to engage more critically with practice reality. Participatory video projects and their facilitating practitioners intervene between *top-down* and *bottom-up* spheres to open up spaces for new social possibilities to emerge. I therefore assert that tensions and contradictions are part of functioning in the real world.

Practice towards unspecified and unknown future possibilities, does not mean it is unstructured or unplanned. The future is not linearly produced by past events, yet, it is inevitably bounded by the influences that shape it (Chia 1999:280), including practitioners actions.

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*Practice does not come after terms and their relations have been established, but actively participates in the tracing of lines, confronts the same dangers as and variations as them*








**Deleuze 2004 in Nunes 2010:124**

Although participatory video is emergent and formed afresh in each new setting, what is needed is better understanding of the practice territory. Through exploring project actors actual experiences, I synthesised participatory video process possibilities and intrinsically linked practice tensions for each stage, as detailed in table 3.2.

Although practice tensions are situated within the table in relationship to binary dichotomies, such as between openness and silence. However, these are not dualisms of actual existent states. Rather they are dualisms of orientation or dyads (Nunes 2010:117-20) that define the territory or field of influences, connections and relations that practice takes place within. A dyad (Nunes 2010:117) bounds a continuum of possibility in which actual practice multiplicity is played out. However, the two extremes are virtual. For instance, in the openness/silence example above, complete communication silence/exclusion or speaking up in all public circumstances are virtual concepts that are not thought to be real states but bound the terrain.

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**Table 3.2 Participatory Video process possibilities and linked practice tensions**

REAL TIME STAGE	PARTICIPATORY VIDEO PROCESS POSSIBILITIES	PRACTICE SITUATED BETWEEN BOUNDARIES	LINKED PRACTICE TENSION/ DICHOTOMIES
<b>STAGE A – OPENING IN-BETWEEN COMMUNICATION SPACES</b>  Video as catalyst for engaging participants in group process	1 - INCREASING SELF-EFFICACY From individual challenge through increased confidence and capacity to individual agency (self-drive)	Discomfort of facing challenge  Successful accomplishment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeling of can't-do versus feeling of can do</li> </ul>
	2 - GROUP BONDING AND BUILDING From individual needs/outcomes to inclusive, collaborative group dynamics	Individual needs  Group needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual needs versus group needs</li> <li>• Practitioner management of dynamic versus participant choice</li> </ul>
<b>STAGE B – FROM EXPRESSION TO GROUP REFRAMING AND AGENCY</b>  Video to promote internal discussion and reflection, and provide outlet for group creativity	3 – CRITICAL REFRAMING From social dialogue to group narratives	Diversity - Openness  Similarity - Silence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Genuine open expression versus fear of exposure</li> </ul>
	4 - GROUP COMMUNICATION ACTION From finding common purpose to group video-making	Conflicting agendas  Participants control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time and capacity to develop new indigenous message versus external requirements</li> <li>• Balance of process versus product needs</li> </ul>
<b>STAGE C – BEYOND EXERCISING AGENCY - PERFORMING AND BECOMING</b>  Video communication action in wider social forums to create social positions and dynamics	5- DISRUPTING POSITIONAL DYNAMICS Becoming and being acknowledged as social actors	Barriers and boundaries  New roles and responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comfort of usual place/role versus transcending boundaries</li> <li>• Challenging social power leaving participants exposed/vulnerable versus disrupting status quo</li> </ul>
	6 – CARVING SPACE FOR SOCIAL INFLUENCE From showing videos to new positional relationships and bridge-building	Exclusion/ Marginalisation  New connections - public influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing conversation versus ossification</li> <li>• Despondency if nothing results versus opportunity to act to create new pathways for selves</li> <li>• Conflicting within community needs versus bridge-building</li> </ul>

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My research therefore identified that Real Time's video practice incorporates multiple parallel processes. These are sometimes in confluence and sometimes compete. Practitioners' role is thus intimately connected with managing the balance of internal project processes such as that between an individual's personal growth and group building, or between participants' control over content and practitioners' requirements to produce a particular video for an external client. In reality, there is no such thing as a global solution and theories of practice that remove doubt by failing to encompass the complexity of real world interventions become rarefied rhetoric. As a result of my synthesis, I view participatory video practice as the negotiated pathway between the tensions towards the possibilities. This chapter has clarified the boundaries of this territory in the Real Time context, as a framework in which to study actual practice manifestation and guide project choices. What is missing in current knowledge is enough detail about how participatory video practice is flexibly adapted into specific real life settings, including how project actors negotiate the contradictions of practice. The next stage of my research was to explore the contextual factors that help and hinder the achievement of emergent participatory video process possibilities, against the backdrop of fundamental tensions and competing influences.

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## **Thesis research - Contextualising empowerment practice (Shaw 2012)**

Data collection for the main body of my fieldwork had three main thrusts: to ensure a good range of informants, particularly different types of participants; to encourage project actors to take openly about particular critical incidents; and to explore a range of settings to enable context-specific insight on enabling and hindering factors. I studied 11 different projects over 3 research phases, selected purposively for the potential insight offered. Overall, there were 5 projects with young people and 6 with adults. Two were women-only and one men-only. There were 2 projects with people with learning disabilities, and 3 specifically set up for black participants (although other projects were not exclusively white). They ranged from short (4 sessions) to very long term (> 15 years). My research draws on a corpus of data collected through multiple methods including 36 interviews, 7 focus groups, 9 videoed evaluations and 52 diary entries with 41 participants, 9 Real Time personnel and 8 other project informants in these contexts.

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