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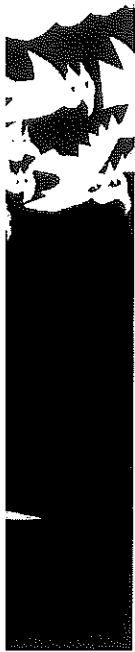
Participatory film-making for social change: Dilemmas in balancing participatory and artistic qualities

ABSTRACT

This study contributes to the field of films for social change by exploring the production process of participatory film-making for social change, whereby explicit claims of community empowerment, participation and social change are the very justification of the production. To do so, it investigates the definitions and production processes of community art, participatory video and mediated participation. Using 'practice as research' as a key method of enquiry, we examine three film practices to explore aspects of professionalism. The objective of this examination is to elucidate the process of community member participation in collaboration with film-makers, facilitators and action researchers. People participate in film production processes by contributing to the script, acting, location scouting or any other activity at any stage of the film production. In examining this collaborative process, we focus on dilemmas encountered in relation to integrating participatory qualities and artistic qualities in a work of overall interdisciplinary and professional quality. The material used for the enquiry consists of participatory observations, scripts, films, course materials, audience observations, evaluation forms and in-depth interviews collected over the years in different projects. The analysis of the material indicates that the film-makers deal with dilemmas regarding the balance of the film's participatory

KEYWORDS

participatory films
 social change
 artistic qualities
 participatory qualities
 community art
 participatory video
 mediated participation



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and artistic qualities and the production process. The expectations of the film-making community regarding the process, the resulting film and the related audience influence the balance between the participatory quality of the process and the artistic quality of the film. Finding a balance between participatory quality and artistic quality is a challenge, and in practice the stakeholders involved experience tensions in a continuous process of negotiation. This article demonstrates the tensions and illustrates the continuous process of negotiation between the (roles of) film-makers, facilitators, action researchers and community members.

INTRODUCTION

The current interest in, and practice of, using film in processes of social change has not yet attracted much attention from sociologists and other students of society and culture, as stated by Knoblauch et al. (2009). Authors like Lie and Mandler (2009: 1) and Aguayo (2005: viii) also indicate the limited number of publications on the practice and theory of film-making for social change. Witteveen (2009: 168) questions the legitimization of processes using film for social change where the underlying procedures are not made explicit and not evaluated thoroughly.

To elucidate the practice of participatory film-making for social change, this research examines the various roles involved in this type of film-making. We start by clarifying these roles before giving an outline of the study.

Proponents of participatory film-making for social change must work in different roles, which are embedded in different disciplinary fields and professions:

- As film-makers, they produce films in processes of social change with the participation of the people involved. As film-makers, they value artistic quality as well as the technical quality of films and film-making.
- As facilitators, they facilitate participatory processes of social change in which films are produced and used. As facilitators of social change, they value the quality of facilitation and participation.
- As researchers, they study these processes and share the results in academic as well as in professional circles. As action researchers, they value the quality of the research results on the one hand, and the quality of the interventions for impact and achieving social change on the other hand. As action researchers, they work in a reflective way and seek practical embedding of their work.

This article addresses some of the challenges encountered in combining the above-mentioned roles. The framing of the challenges varies according to the role. A film-maker can perceive a situation differently from a facilitator or an action researcher and thus defines the situation in a different way.

The framing of the challenges experienced is influenced by the qualities of the processes in which these roles are combined. By focusing on the qualities, we can discuss how the views on these qualities differ according to the different role perspectives. The following two qualities are discussed: artistic quality and the quality of participation. We argue that, to achieve an overall high quality, the focus must be on interdisciplinary professionalism. Interdisciplinary professionalism combines different disciplinary-based professions and aims to find a good balance between the different roles and qualities distinguished above.

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We first discuss some film practices articulating the roles of film-maker, facilitator and other stakeholders to establish a working definition of participatory film-making for social change. These practices are community art, participatory video and mediated participation. Having explored some of the qualities at a theoretical level, we turn to practice and share our experiences in relation to three projects in which two of the authors worked in the above-listed roles in a combined way. These three projects can be seen as participatory film-making for social change and are briefly described. The cases are then analysed by reviewing the presence of the different qualities and the dilemmas encountered. The cases each demonstrate experiences and views on balancing the different qualities.

The objective of this article is to elucidate the process of community members' participation in collaborations with film-makers, facilitators and action researchers. The focus is on the contribution of the artistic qualities of the process and the resulting film. Furthermore, we address the different roles of the stakeholders involved and the envisioned results of the production.

PARTICIPATORY FILM-MAKING FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

Several stakeholders are involved in film projects for social change. Overlap between them is common, meaning that one and the same person can for instance be the film-maker and the researcher. Sometimes, the commissioner and the funder can be the same person in different roles. This may lead to complications. Holden (2004 cited in Lally 2009: 41) states that 'public sector managers have sought to camouflage the allocation of scarce resources and resolving conflicting claims because it is essentially political'. He suggests that funders and civil servants 'should explicitly articulate the values that they in fact promote'. As we focus on the roles of film-makers, facilitators and researchers in the remainder of this article, we acknowledge that we limitedly address aspects of funding and resource allocation.

As the roles of the various stakeholders involved in the process of making and using films for social change vary, we distinguish between the roles of film-makers, facilitators and researchers on the one hand, and problem owners and community members on the other hand. In line with Nolas (2007: 59), we start from the notion that this diversity of stakeholders is at the core of the change process: 'Change practices [...] are not the domain of the practitioner or the marginalised or the academic alone. Instead, change is the meeting of the practitioner and the academic and the marginalised in the production of a "rhizome"'.¹

The nature of the problem owners' participation in the production of the film is just as relevant as the extent of community members' participation. To illustrate this point, it might be more interesting to have people participating in the scriptwriting than holding the camera. Greene (2003: x) states in relation to teaching youth media: 'Techniques are not enough, however. Students are also asked to make choices among topics and themes important in their lives'. The question is how to make their knowledge constructs or framing of the issue count and/or become accepted by others as 'relevant', 'opportune' and/or 'credible' (Leeuwis 2004: 370).

Participatory film-making for social change considers that a film requires an audience to be complete. The audience is included as a stakeholder in processes of participatory film-making for social change in order to highlight the envisioned impact of participatory film-making for social change.

This strategic focus coincides with that of Lie and Mandler, who differentiated four social interventions using video, among which 'Video for awareness raising and advocacy' and 'Video for stakeholder engagement'. Whereas 'Video for awareness raising and advocacy' is part of a vertical communication process (communication between stakeholders at different hierarchical levels, bottom-up or top-down), 'Video for stakeholder engagement and action' is part of a horizontal communication process (communication within networks and via stakeholder platforms) (2009: 14). In contrast to this strategic typology, Bill Nichols in his typology of documentaries identifies 'six modes of representation [...]': poetic, expository, participatory, observational, reflexive, performative' (2001: 99). Whereas Nichols' typology reflects the artistic approach and Lie and Mandler's typology the strategic objectives, in this article we search for a more holistic typology of films for social change reflecting the combination of artistic and strategic characteristics.

Here, we frame the resulting outcome of participatory film-making for social change as a 'space for change'; constructed by a specific process of collaborating stakeholders. In doing so, we follow Leeuwis and Aarts who state that the role of change agents is primarily to '*change the potential for change*, rather than to achieve a desired system change' (2011, original emphasis). They refer to network building, supporting social learning and dealing with dynamics of power and conflict as contributory processes to create such a space for change (2011: 29–30).

The balance between participatory and artistic qualities in different types of film for social change has an impact on the resulting spaces for change. However, dilemmas in balancing the participatory and artistic qualities in the film production process are an under-represented area of critical and academic attention. To further elucidate the qualities in relation to the created space for change, we need a definition of participatory film-making for social change. To come up with a definition, in the following section we explore three types of film for social change: community art, participatory video and mediated participation.

COMMUNITY ART

Reith (2012: 57) describes community art as an artistic answer to a societal question which, through a synergy of professional artists and active citizens, results in a new perspective on reality and in new social connections.

This definition indicates a potential to create space for change by social learning, network building and dealing with dynamics of power and conflict. The community arts advisory panel of the Greater London Arts Association described community arts as an approach that: 'involves people on a collective basis, encourages the use of a collective statement but does not neglect individual development or the need for individual expression' (Kelly 1984: 2 cited in Matarasso 2011: 219). Community art, contrary to more general creative participatory approaches, is explicit about two participating groups. The principal group is people such as farmers, activists, students or workers who are defined as community and considered as 'problem owner' regarding the issue at stake. The other group is made up of artists, whereby art is considered to contribute specific qualities to the process of critical reflections and action. See for example Jan Cohen-Cruz (2002), François Matarasso (2013) and Eugène van Erven (2013). Here we agree that community art and film-making is by default a co-creation where the artists are film-makers and facilitators to

ensure a meaningful film for the community. Community members participate in the filming by contributing to the script, they may engage in acting, singing, location scouting or any other activity at any stage of the film production. Thus, the film is distinguished from a docudrama or docusoap, whereby real narratives are dramatized but the community at stake is not necessarily involved in the scriptwriting and/or production.

PARTICIPATORY VIDEO

Insight Share, a community development organization, describes participatory video as

a set of techniques to involve a group or community in shaping and creating their own film. The idea behind this is that making a video is easy and accessible, and is a great way of bringing people together to explore issues, voice concerns or simply to be creative and tell stories.

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Their definition already indicates a limited artistic ambition. Facilitators are generally people familiar with participatory approaches and not necessarily professional film-makers, in contrast to the participants in community art. Commissioners and funders of participatory video are often development organizations, and, although the participants in their role of problem owners are in charge of (all) the technicalities, one can reflect on who actually determines the agenda on who and what needs to be filmed. It is thereby distinguished from video activism, whereby people are in charge of all the technicalities, but are also the owners of their own learning process and the decision-makers about what and how to film. Lie and Mandler (2009: 35) state that 'participatory video is a very effective means of advocating social processes and can help coordinate community action'. The space for change is co-created in the process and in the screenings to other community members. Quality and outreach with this video approach are of minor interest and scaling up is therefore not a priority.

MEDIATED PARTICIPATION

Using media to facilitate stakeholder participation in policy processes is also referred to as 'mediated participation' (Witteveen 2009: 124). The International Association for Impact Assessment (André et al. 2006) promotes creative ways to involve people in order to enhance the outcomes of public participation and has adopted mediated participation as one of these creative ways.

André et al. note that, even if information is actually generally available, it might need some improvement to be adapted to laypersons, more focused and relevant to the decision-making process (2006). The term participation in this context does not necessarily refer to the involvement of the public in the production of media, but rather to public engagement via media or to making different, distant voices amongst the public heard at policy level via media. The focus is on public participation, and media are used to facilitate this process. This allows people to ventilate their opinions in the 'safe place' of the film recording as distinct from expressing their views in public community meetings. The 'Fogo process' is recognized as the first recorded use of film to facilitate processes of reflection and learning in communities. After the positive experiences of showing the filmed interviews during community meetings, the films were shown

to government representatives, thereby enabling 'fishermen to talk to cabinet ministers' (Don Snowden Program for Development Communication 1994 cited in Witteveen 2009: 127-28). This shows that mediated participation can be a way to deal with dynamics of power and conflict. Simultaneously, it may enhance social learning within the community and at policy level, and network building amongst the stakeholders involved. The space for change is within the process of making the film but more prominent in the process of viewing.

Merging the above descriptions creates a definition of participatory film-making for social change as making films that engage various involved stakeholders in a process of (simultaneous) network building, social learning or dealing with dynamics of power and conflict, whereby the community members are the problem owners and participate in diverse roles in the film production process. The people involved take up roles as film-makers, process facilitators and action researchers in diverse configurations. The resulting space for change is in the process of film-making and in the effect of viewing the resulting film defined by the target audience.

EXPLORING PARTICIPATORY AND ARTISTIC QUALITIES

As indicated above, we aim to elucidate the balance between participatory and artistic qualities in relation to the space for change created. To articulate these qualities and frame their contribution to social innovations and other social change practices, the various capacities of the stakeholders involved, such as community members and professional film-makers, need to be unveiled and analysed. Understanding such balancing facilitates an interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary approach in public participation to joint problem-solving (Gibbons and Nowotny 2001). In this section, we further explore participatory and artistic qualities in the practice of participatory film-making for social change.

A community's participatory qualities derive from its characteristics. According to Wood and Judikis (2002), community members have a sense of common purpose(s) and/or interest(s) for which they assume mutual responsibility, members who acknowledge their interconnectedness, who respect one another's individual differences, and who commit themselves to one another's well-being and to the integrity and well-being of the group. In some participatory films for social change, the community members are part of the target audience, and this means that they have knowledge about the audience in terms of common purpose(s) and/or interest(s). The community's interconnectedness can ensure a safe space for different opinions to come to a collective statement. In particular, the community members' framing is a unique contribution from the community. They are the owners or inheritors of relevant authentic stories. All the qualities of the community reflect the diversity within the community, such as the thematic knowledge, expertise and skills that community members possess. Also, the extent to which community members have artistic qualities varies. This diversity is a main reason why artists are involved in participatory film projects for social change. They contribute artistic qualities, and they are able to draw out artistic qualities in the community for use in the process. We now elaborate in more detail on the contribution of professional artistic qualities to community processes.

The need for the involvement of professional artists is elaborated by van Erven (2013: 139) when he states: 'What is needed at local and national authority level is people who understand that the true art is the ability to repeatedly

come up with new approaches that are most appropriate to a specific artist and a specific situation'. Eisner (1995: 5) describes several artistic qualities – among which the ability to provide a sense of wholeness, a coherence, a kind of organic unity that makes both aesthetic experience and credibility possible (Eisner 1995; Bordwell and Thompson 1986). Another artistic quality is the ability to make issues seem 'alive', described by Eisner (1995: 5) as the ability 'to make the obscure vivid and make empathy possible'. Directing attention to individuality, locating in the particular what is general or universal and the imagination of new perspectives, discourses, representations and storylines are indicated as important by authors such as Eisner (1995: 3–6), Wood (2007: 103) and Ihlein (2009: 49).

Eisner also indicates that artists need skills. Regardless of whether film-ing, dancing or painting is involved, it is not merely about acquiring technical skills but rather the ability of the body to create, express through certain movements. Once a professional dancer or cameraman stops, he can no longer execute his job at the same level. Therefore, another artistic quality to consider besides those indicated is 'embodied craftsmanship' such as kinaesthetics, also referred to by Jennings and Grant (2011: 72), and the ability to question, refine and innovate on techniques as elaborated by Beddow (2011: 100). Bordwell and Thompson (1986) mention also complexity as a criterion to judge the artistic quality of films. According to Bordwell and Thompson (1986: 34), complex films can 'engage perception on many levels, create a multiplicity of relations among many separate formal elements, and tend to create interesting formal patterns'. Therefore, a sense of coherence is inevitable. Such descriptions show that the different artistic qualities stand on their own and function in coherence, creating synergy. Audiences often refer to a film as if they have been at the place of recording themselves. Witteveen (2009) indicates this specific artistic quality of film, explaining the choice of the film medium as a carrier of a simulation as it provides an opportunity for an intense experiential learning experience that is difficult to achieve with traditional written and/or printed means. Bordwell and Thompson (1986: 34) refer to this as 'intensity of effect'. Jennings and Grant (2011: 82) contend that the emotional power of certain community art productions provokes audiences to reflect on their own experiences and assumptions.

To further explore the position of the artist in participatory film-making for social change, we have to look at the relations in participatory film processes. Barbash and Taylor (1997) demystify the romanticism of collaboration, as viewpoints do not always coalesce into a unitary aggregate. Expectations can be alleviated by emphasizing at the start that the process of collaboration is, as Barbash and Taylor note, 'not as a project by some imaginary univocal cooperative, but as a hybrid effort at poly-vocal authorship in which distinctions between the participants may be visibly (or aurally) retained in the finished film' (1997: 89). Shaw (2012: 134), in her study of a series of participatory video projects, refers to 'practice tensions as an intrinsic aspect of managing the balance of multiple internal processes such as the path towards greater public expression'. Some of the contributory factors indicated by Shaw (2012: 135) that assist practice in its intended direction are relevant not only for participatory video but also for other participatory film projects, such as finding a balance between individual/group process needs and participant choice or between appropriate building of participant expression and speed of/time for process (Shaw 2012: 137). Marcuse (2006: 4) writes about 'partnerships between communities and artists – never forgetting that artists are members

of communities – which are delicate’. Other authors elaborate on tensions in the film-making process, ‘as the potential for damage due to conflicts is great’, as Marcuse (2006: 4) notes. She formulates a need for artists ‘to be, at the least, informed, ethical, critical, and reflective’. According to Marcuse (2006: 4), ‘formal training opportunities in the domain of arts and social change are scarce but increasing gradually, particularly in the United States with the recent creation of new academic degree granting programs in community arts’.

The above literature review identifies participatory and artistic qualities. Making them explicit within participatory film-making for social change allows the stakeholders involved to gain a concise view of the process. The final film results from the participatory and artistic qualities of the process. The participatory quality of the final film is also reflected in how the issues are framed in the film, how the different voices stand out and form a dialogue. We dare to assume that these aspects are directly influenced by the artistic qualities in the process. Balancing between these different participatory and artistic aspects of the final film also depends on its planned use. A film produced to be valued by an audience outside the film-making process will require a different balance than a film that is meant for no other audience than the involved participants. To explore how film-makers deal with this balancing, we have analysed the practice of participatory film-making for social change.

PRACTICE AS RESEARCH: CASE STUDIES OF PARTICIPATORY FILM-MAKING FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

The empirical part of this research follows Nelson’s (2013) ‘practice as research’ framework as the key method of enquiry. The authors’ participation in the film productions allowed access to the community and professional film-makers, researchers’ and facilitators’ experiences before, during and after production. The authors realize that this is an asset but also potentially leads to bias. The materials collected and produced in the three projects consist of participatory observations, process notes and reports, scripts, footage, films, audience feedback, newspaper cuttings, evaluations and participant interviews. They all form part of the enquiry through practice. Interviews were held with random spectators of the finished films. These audience data were used as input for interviews with participants. Although the available documentation was not all deliberately produced for research, it allowed detailed reconstruction of events.

Experiences obtained with two film productions that fit within the scope of participatory films for social change are analysed. Two other film productions that formed part of a Media Design for Social Change training course are also analysed. Although they were produced in the training context, they comply with the basic characteristics of participatory film-making for social change and are included to widen the scope of the research. The film productions are: *Kleine gebaren, grote effecten/Small gestures, big effects*, filmed by Margriet Goris and Pauline van Tuyll (2005) with students in Groningen in the Netherlands; *Fuente de Amor/Fountain of Love*, filmed by Loes Witteveen (1993) and Dialoog Produkties with inhabitants of Juigalpa in Nicaragua (Witteveen 1993); and *Student Memoires* (Witteveen and Goris, 2013) and *A Zambian Journalist in the Netherlands Reporting on Tropical Timber*, filmed by Margriet Goris, Loes Witteveen and Pauline van Tuyll with students in Wageningen in the Netherlands as part of the Media Design for Social Change training course (Witteveen and Goris 2014). In the following, these case studies are described, after which the principal findings are presented.

Case study 1: Kleine gebaren, grote effecten/Small gestures, big effects

Title	Kleine gebaren, grote effecten/Small gestures, big effects
Commissioner	University of Groningen, The Netherlands
Funder	Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science
Problem owner	University of Groningen, The Netherlands
Audience	Students and university staff
Facilitators/Film-makers	VOF Tuyll-Goris Producties

In 2003, the law on equal treatment of people with a disability or chronic disease was passed by the Dutch parliament. To promote that policy and to transform the negative image of studying with a physical challenge, the University of Groningen (RUG) contracted film-makers to produce a film with a subsidy from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. The facilitators persuaded and supported physically challenged students to document their own life for a week with a video camera. The resulting footage and the reactions of the participating students watching their own video material provided (visual) ideas for the script. After the scriptwriting, in which the students participated, the film-makers continued with the production, and students were asked to act as the main characters in the film and comment on initial edits. This process resulted in the film *Small gestures, big effects*, a film about seven physically challenged university students. Their health specifics oblige them to deal with large and small, concrete and metaphorical study barriers. The film shows the creativity, the resilience and endurance of these students and the adjustments that are necessary, and also portrays the role of fellow students and staff. At the start of the university year 2005–2006, most study advisors showed the film during the induction days at their department. In a RUG evaluation in 2013 on the implementation of the policy on studying with a disability or chronic disease, eight of the 23 study advisors indicated that they screened the film at the beginning of the university year 2012–2013. In December 2013, 22 students with and without a physical challenge were asked to react to the film. Students were chosen at random at two university buildings, one of social sciences and one of natural sciences. Ten students reacted and elaborated on how the film shows what matters to students who are physically challenged. Even though the film is considered outdated in terms of information on student services or for example clothing fashions, the basic content is still considered relevant and inspiring. During the film process, staff and artists monitored the involved students. This material and comments by the audience in 2013 were used as input for interviews. Three involved students and two staff members were interviewed to reflect upon the process, film and impact.

Case study 2: Fuente de Amor/Fountain of Love

In December 1992, the Dutch foundation Stichting Invulling Stedenband Den Haag – Juigalpa (SIS) contracted a film team to write a script for a documentary regarding water shortage. Although a water sanitation project funded by the municipality of The Hague had increased the water supply in Juigalpa, consumers with a private water tap primarily used this water surplus. Juigalpa

Title	Fuente de Amor/Fountain of Love
Commissioner	Foundation SIS, The Netherlands
Funder	Municipality of The Hague, The Netherlands
Problem owner	Municipality of Juigalpa, Nicaragua
Audience	Inhabitants of Juigalpa and the wider region
Facilitators/film-makers	Loes Witteveen and DIALOGO produkties

inhabitants who used communal taps still had to face water shortage. The film team rejected the idea of the documentary because they did not want to portray the most affected segment of the inhabitants as victims without agency, as was initially proposed by the commissioner. Instead, the team proposed an edutainment style and organized a contest in Juigalpa whereby scriptwriters and the community at large were asked to come up with a script for a campaign dealing with water shortage and issues of water distribution.

The resulting texts and drawings allowed the crew to travel to Nicaragua with a rough script and spread the news of the production through local media, especially radio. On the production site, one person was in charge of processing anyone who came to propose any contribution. Therefore, the project was literally accessible, and diverse contributions were proposed and incorporated during filming. A local poet wrote the opening song performed by the church choir, the mayor offered his house and the dentist offered a car to be used in the filming. All community members who were willing to act took part voluntarily in screen tests for the main characters, with the screen tests focusing on a pleasant appearance and the capacity to be part of a large film production process with a professional crew. The footage was edited in the Netherlands and returned to Nicaragua for the viewing in outdoor screenings

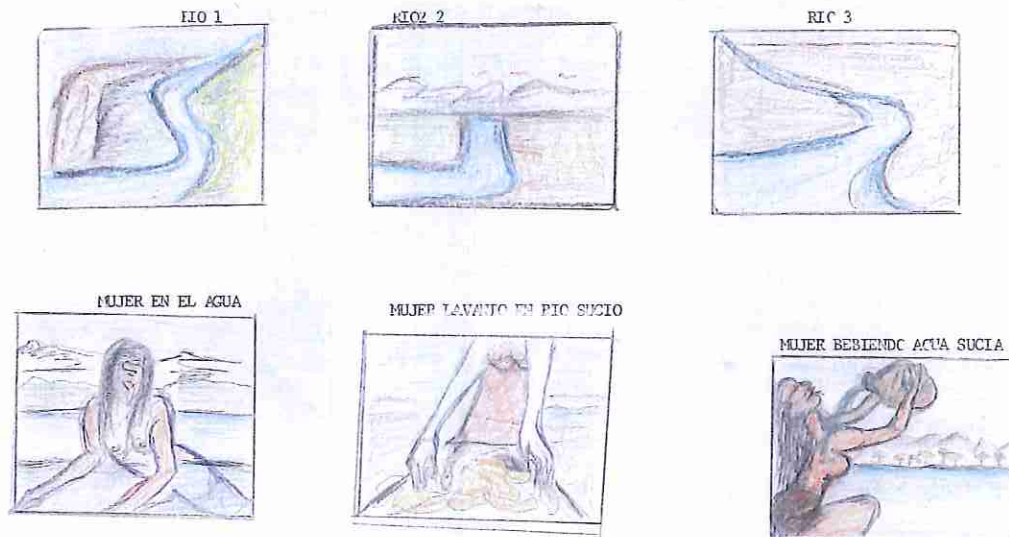


Figure 1: Drawings of a local script proposal by Julio Madrigal focussing on the river and its relevance for women. Translation: river 1, river 2, river 3, woman in water, woman washing in dirty river, woman drinking dirty water.

at neighbourhood level. A local television station, TV 9, broadcast the film. By 1994, 30 screenings had already taken place. The film is still being screened on regional TV to the present day. During filming, the crew kept a diary. After the film was screened, an audience review was carried out amongst 694 persons by the local radio station in cooperation with the water authority. Respondent groups were the people who participated in the script contest, main actors and involved institutions. These materials were used to reflect upon the process with two members of the film crew.

Case Study 3: Student Memoires and A Zambian Journalist in the Netherlands Reporting on Tropical Timber

Title	Student Memoires
Commissioner	Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Science, The Netherlands
Funder	Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science
Problem owner	International Office
Audience	International Students
Facilitators/film-makers	Loes Witteveen and Margriet Goris

In 2013, Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Sciences (VHL) and the Centre for Development and Innovation of Wageningen UR (CDI) organized the training course, Media Design for Social Change. For two weeks, a group of 21 international participants from CDI and VHL explored key concepts like narratives, representations, semiotics, discourses and audiences (Witteveen 2013: 6), and elaborated a multimedia package to explore and learn from the dynamics of multimedia productions. Rather than focusing on designing a campaign and supervising a professional crew, the students insisted in



*Figure 2: The students insisted in acquiring hands-on experience with filming.
Photo: Margriet Goris.*

acquiring hands-on experience with filming and editing under the supervision of professional film-makers.

During this process, lecturers alternated with their professional film-maker role. When the students pitched their ideas, the lecturers assumed their film-maker role, and scripts were revised with their comments. After this intervention by the professional film-makers, the students continued with the production and delivered two films, neither of which was fully satisfactory for further screening. The final film *Student Memoires* is a compilation of the footage of both films, edited by the professional film-makers after wrapping up the course. The probability of that procedure for final editing, in order to meet a basic quality standard and to ensure an audience for the film, had been discussed beforehand with the film-making students. The film gives an impression of international students experiencing different learning styles and living circumstances compared to their home country. A premiere was organized at the graduation ceremony of some of the involved students. The film was shown and well received by an audience of about the 150 people (Witteveen and Goris 2013). Between its posting on YouTube on 22 October 2013 and 9 January 2015 there were 648 views. After the course, seven students wrote a reflection, and the entire group was asked to fill in anonymously a standard CDI evaluation form; this was filled in by seventeen of 21 participants. These student reflections on, and reactions to, the screening of *Student Memoires* were used as input for interviews. Three students were interviewed to reflect upon the process, film and impact.

In 2014, VHL and the CDI again organized the Media Design for Social Change training course. On the basis of the evaluation of the previous course, the outline of the course had been modified. Students were asked to fulfil a commissioned assignment. The terms of reference of the Dutch Tropical Forest Association (VTB) stated:

The starting point of the film is the European Union Policy (European Timber Regulation, EUTR, established on March 3, 2013) on the stimulation of use and trade of legal tropical timber, to counter the trade of illegal timber. However, legal timber is not the same as sustainable timber. [...] The film should provide inspiration for a debate on how developments in tropical forest management are regarded by the general public.

(van Berlo and Geesteranus 2014: 1)

To meet the commissioner's requirements, roles were divided straightforwardly among the (international) students and professional artists. The film shows

Title	A Zambian Journalist in the Netherlands Reporting on Tropical Timber
Commissioner	Tropical Forest Association (VTB), The Netherlands
Funder	Tropical Forest Association (VTB)
Problem owner	Tropical Forest Association (VTB)
Audience	Expert network on 'tropical forest and sustainability' and VTB website visitors
Facilitators/film-makers	Loes Witteveen, Margriet Goris, Pauline van Tuyl

a Zambian journalist investigating how European consumers perceive issues on legal and sustainable timber (Witteveen and Goris 2014). By interviewing people on the street, she finds out that people are not aware of the difference between legal and sustainable timber or, even worse, do not care about it at all. A first edit was shown on 6 June 2014 to the commissioner, and the film provoked a discussion. A male participant from Ghana remembered how he was laughing because the VTB staff directly started discussing the issue and not the film. The debate was triggered by the international students' ability to translate their perspective to the Zambian journalist with a personal affinity for the issue. The premiere of the film was on 31 October 2014. Immediately after the course, a questionnaire was filled in by the fourteen VHL participants. Based on their answers, in-depth interviews were held with three students.

The next sections present our findings in relation to participatory and artistic qualities and dilemmas in balancing participatory and artistic qualities.

PARTICIPATORY QUALITIES

A specific aspect of participatory film projects for social change is the involvement of the community in contributing to the films as experts on the issue. 'Community scripts' ensure that characters are close to the perceived reality of the participating people. For example, Maaiké's (*Small gestures, big effects*) own recording of her difficulties opening certain doors in the university buildings and the recorded experience of another student negotiating the stairs with his wheelchair led to the inclusion of similar scenes in the film (Goris and van Tuyl 2005: 6:40, 12:30). These visual script proposals provided valuable visual



Figure 3: Filming the script of *Fuente de Amor*, inspired by local proposals, at the riverside, 1,5 years later. Photo: Dialogo Produkties.

contributions to the final script, independent of the quality of recording, as they provided the film-makers with an inside view on a complex reality framed by the people directly involved. Nothing of the footage originally recorded by the students is edited into *Small gestures, big effects*. All the footage was re-captured by professional film-makers. What is remarkable is that actors and policy staff involved in writing the script for the film cannot recall whether the students' footage was used in the final film. This does not seem important to either group, as exemplified by Alexander, an actor who states: 'When I watch the movie, it's my story, an authentic story not a commercial story'. Contributors to *Fuente de Amor* make similar statements. After watching the film, they recognize the images and ideas from their scripts in the final film.

In a daily journal, the film-maker states: 'For people in Juigalpa it is their movie' (Bouck 1994). The experiences in the scriptwriting stage are linked to the participation in the process that follows. This is exemplified by Maaïke, who stated that involvement in the scriptwriting process made her confident and relaxed when later on she was an actor in the film.

Scriptwriting is not always a deliberate act of participation for the community involved. It also occurs spontaneously in the course of events. This is exemplified in the diary of the *Fuente de Amor* film-makers when they recalled how the actor playing José's father added to the dialogues by elaborating them with expressions typical for the area (Witteveen 1993: 23:14).

The role of participation as problem owner is articulated in the evaluations. A male participant from Ghana involved in the scriptwriting of *A Zambian Journalist in the Netherlands Reporting on Tropical Timber* elaborates on his experience in timber and agricultural extension stating: 'We know the importance and practice'. Another participant from Zambia says: 'We are committed. Back home we are confronted with these issues'. A male participant from Tanzania recalls the scene of activists in front of the building: 'Most of us are working with communities. We have an idea how a community reacts to policies and could act as activists'. To the *Fuente de Amor* film-makers, the participation of the inhabitants of Juigalpa was indispensable to ensure that the film fitted within that specific context: 'The people had pronounced ideas whether the issue was about water shortage or about water division: Through their involvement it was possible to come close to their experiences'.

The film *Student Memoires* was edited by a professional film-maker with footage recorded by students. Although the first edit of the footage as done by the students was not used, the involved students reacted positively to the final film edited by the editor. They recognized their stories, as expressed by a female student from Ghana in an interview: 'We bring in the future experiences of students'. A student from Vietnam recounted in a Skype interview: 'I enjoyed the final film. It was a better production. When you have all the footage of the students you are able to show a more complex message. Our production was missing a lot'. This student is indicating that he recognizes the contribution of the professional film-makers involved.

ARTISTIC QUALITIES

Alexander, a main character in *Small gestures, big effects*, takes into account the expectations of the target audience in relation to participation:

When you're considering studying with a physical challenge and you see a professional film on this issue made by the university, it provides

a sense of safety. You see that the university has put effort, time and financial resources into publicity, and this gives me a feeling that they take the issue seriously. If the film was entirely made by students, it would have given me an impression that the university had to do something quickly on diversity.

Statements by the other two actors interviewed confirm Alexander's view that a professional product articulates the seriousness of the case. This argument seems to make sense to the direct actors involved; neither policy staff, film-makers nor student audience mention such an argument. Maaïke, another actor in *Small gestures, big effects*, states in addition: 'If you don't do it professionally, there are another five persons who want to share something ... and you will have the effect of YouTube, something figured out one moment and it is directly shared with the world'. She indicates that with a professional film you can shift from an individual story to a collective issue. One of the *Fuente de Amor* film-makers states in line with this focus on an envisaged generic story that it is more respectful to people when their ideas are filmed professionally.

The discourse is that with participatory video people should have the camera in their own hands but even, or even more, you can have a film coming from their hands without their hands being on the camera. It would have been a waste of their valuable ideas if they had filmed themselves. Their scripts mostly consisted of total images but when you



Figure 4: A professional film crew filming *Fuente de Amor*. Photo: Dialogo Produkties.

want the audience to identify with the characters you need close-up face acting, otherwise you miss the emotion.

Participants in *Student Memoirs* also recognize the value of artistic qualities. A male participant from Ethiopia states in his reflection:

This implies that film-making needs a great attention, devotion, time and financial resources as well as skillful participants. [...] Now, I can propose, design and use different options of media in rural areas in my organization. Besides, I can work jointly with other sectors (like communication sector) in order to get additional space for applying the new skills and knowledge.

A female participant from Ghana formulates it as follows:

We need people who have development at heart, like artists who have other ways to address change. Something different, it is about courage, it is a challenge. It is about finding an entry point an interest of people. Stories and films relate to people, they may address the real issues.

Participants in all three case studies recognize the artists and their well-developed, professionalized artistic qualities. In the interviews with participants in *A Zambian Journalist in the Netherlands Reporting on Tropical Timber*, clarifications were asked on what makes an artist professional, or rather to make explicit what artistic qualities are. Participants identified several artistic qualities such as the ability to create coherency, the quality to make issues seem alive and artists' capacity to link individual cases to collective issues. The imagination of new perspectives, discourses, representations and storylines were also indicated by the participants. A female participant from India who participated in the timber film states: 'It is new to me that we can make something that addresses a problem without indicating the solution'. She recognizes the need for reflexivity. In the interviews, the participants in *A Zambian Journalist in the Netherlands Reporting on Tropical Timber* mention the ability to envision the final art product as an artistic quality. A male participant from Ghana states: 'You have to differentiate between the different scenes. Why some scenes work and others not, therefore you have to have a notion how it will contribute to the final film'. A female participant from Zambia notes: 'Artists see more. They envision the final product. The film process may have looked stupid to some participants. If you don't have patience to go through the process, you lose it'. After the recordings, a male participant states in *The Making Of A Zambian Journalist in the Netherlands Reporting on Tropical Timber* (a film made about the making of the earlier film): 'From the beginning it was not clear but now I am seeing what we are doing' (Witteveen and Goris 2015: 10:30). The literature review did not identify this artistic quality of envisioning the final film as mentioned by the participants.

DILEMMAS IN BALANCING PARTICIP'ATORY AND ARTISTIC QUALITIES

Finding a balance between participatory and artistic qualities is a challenge, and in practice community members and professional film-makers experience tensions. A female participant from Sri Lanka on the Media Design for Social

Change course writes in her reflection: 'Our production team was QL-studio and it had not only technical constraints, but also various kinds of contradictions caused discussions and arguments to success our product'. She quotes Branston and Stafford (2010) in her reflection on this issue as they acknowledge that these discussions essentially have a focus on problem-solving, and working within constraints produces the most interesting work.

A male participant from Vietnam states: 'There is a lot passion, creation, expression and beauty. Just like van Gogh we get lost, frustrated, emotional, and our reasoning does not guide us. But the persistence of perfection, to do something good, each of us creating something beautiful and lasting' (Witteveen 2013: 15). The participant from Vietnam and his team members experienced frustration due to unexpected interventions and discussions. Participatory qualities and artistic qualities did not always match. Yet, the same student wrote some months later on Facebook about the film: 'Remember making this? Cool how it turned out and that they actually used our material'.

Actors in *Small gestures, big effects* experienced similar emotions, 'hurt feelings', but of a very different nature because they felt the spotlight on their disability. One actor stated: 'I don't want to be associated with the label ADHD. I feel a poseur between a blind student and a student in a wheelchair'. Another character explains how she does her best to appear 'normal' and

then in the movie you see how spastic I am. This was a confrontation but on the other hand this is what people daily see of me. [...] When you get a chance to contribute to social change on a silver platter you have to take it in spite of these feelings.

The actor with ADHD stated that he would have been relieved to know the impact of the film and its success beforehand. 'If I had known the reactions of students and how it changed their image on studying with a physical challenge, it would have been less "painful" the fact that I was recognized by students who had seen the film on the induction days'. The student pleads for such film projects to be evaluated and for the success or failure to be shared



Figure 5: Students filming at the bus station under professional supervision.
Photo: Margriet Goris.

with participants. To a certain extent, issues were dealt with during the film-making. A female participant and actor on the second Media Design for Social Change course states in *The Making Of* (Witteveen and Goris 2015: 9:45) how she is not satisfied with the tone of her voice in the voice-over. For the final edit, a new voice-over was recorded. In this group, tensions were partly due to the fact that many students shared the ambition to be the acting presenter. One interview participant suggests trying more actors. 'Others who think they can do better started quarrelling. When you try more and then choose an actor with talent, others can appreciate'. A screen test was carried out for the main characters of *Fuente de Amor*, and it worked out well. Problems were encountered when people became involved without a screen test. It turned out that they did not realize beforehand the time it would take and that, once people engage in the role of a character, they have to stay involved until the end. In the diary on the production of *Fuente de Amor*, the film-makers recall that on the way they wanted to record some driving scenes, but the technician and electrician started complaining that this would take too long. Film-makers expect long shooting days as they know the practice. They know they cannot go back if they realize in the studio that they are missing some footage. However, most people who participate are not familiar with film practices and participate on a voluntarily base while their own work piles up. One of *Fuente de Amor's* facilitators stated the importance of working with people's emic energy as there are many different opportunities to be involved in film-making. The other film-maker notes: 'We only had to do expectation management'. He only remembers tensions amongst the film-makers.

The cameraman wanted perfect shots while the director wanted to ensure that all shots were there and wanted to move on. Yet heated discussions between the film-makers on the script did not necessarily lead to unworkable situations. It also brought something, and each day we were ready to work.

Students on the Media Design for Social Change course recognize the interplay between participatory and artistic qualities; this is obvious since the film practices were part of their learning process. Both participants and artists are aware of the benefit of the participants being part of the audience and therefore being able share insights on the audience with the artists, who are able to translate this information into a film well received by the audience. A female participant from Ghana relates to this as she states: 'I realized that we call it design when it considers the audience' (Witteveen 2013: 47). Another female student from Kenya wrote:

It is not for me to be congratulated with a production, but to achieve the intended purpose with the audience. I need to have the audience, the farmers in mind, and to negotiate with the client. The MoA, as they pay the bill and also with the experts as once I used a picture of the wrong maize for the dry region.

A participant from Zimbabwe recognizes the spectators' view in her reflection:

Upon reflection, I realized that as development workers, we tend to make assumptions. This is the chief reason we fail to make an impact on the communities we work because we 'dump' a lot of 'meaningless

messages' to our audiences without putting critical thought and consideration of audiences' point of view.

Students recall moments in the course, such as the pitching of their scripts on which the facilitators in their film-director role reflected. The format of the course provides a model for social learning according to Reed et al.'s (2010: 1) definition of social learning. This was articulated in the reflections of many students. They stated that they experienced: a change in understanding of the role that media play in processes of social change; a learning process through social interactions; and an intention to apply the acquired knowledge within their own work. Media design is a skill which needs to be developed, and it takes a lot of iteration to come up with a good product. In the context of participatory film-making for social change, the participating community is often part of the intended audience(s); this enables the film-makers to imagine the impact, as they know the community members' knowledge constructs or frames as they are part of the target audience.

CONCLUSION

Analysing the studied film practices shows that the participatory film-making projects for social change enabled the involved stakeholders to frame and visualize the issues, reflecting the perspectives of the community members. From the research it is concluded that the films created a space for change.

Participatory film-making for social change can be differentiated by the foreseen impact of the film on the audience. The expectations of the film-making community regarding the process, the resulting film and the related audience impact influence the balance between the participatory quality of the process and the film's artistic quality.

Articulation of the diverse roles of process facilitator and professional film-maker and the diverse roles of community member and participatory film-maker provides a model that participants experience in practice and by which the practice becomes explicit. Understanding these diverse roles seems to enhance the overall appreciation and outcomes of the production process. Clarifying issues of power and authorship and a clear explanation of functional roles throughout the entire process reduce tensions in practice, as the process will follow the expectations of the people involved.

The participants in the different film production practices acknowledge that, in order to produce a film that makes sense to another audience, it is crucial that the story visualizes collective issues in a coherent and appealing way. Community members recognize that professional film-making qualities can make a crucial contribution which adapts or alters their authentic script ideas to an accessible and attractive level for a wider audience. We have limitedly addressed the aspect of learning in the practices of film production; however, it is observed that participants learn about visualization and creativity and concur with the film-maker Dijkstra (2013: 3:15): 'It's not the equipment, but the creative minds that create a successful product'.

From this study it can be concluded that enhancing participation within the film-making process and engaging the audience with the final film in a process of social change require synergy in participatory and artistic qualities.

Identifying and articulating participatory and artistic qualities with all stakeholders involved in their roles as film-makers, facilitators and researchers within participatory film-making for social change help to elucidate further

the process and the potential for creating space for change with the final film. It may be time to abandon the assumption that having charge of the technicalities represents the highest level of participation, as this is just one of the many possible forms of participation.

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