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Article

Water governance in two urban African contexts: agency and action through participatory video

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Abstract

This paper describes and critically examines the process and outcomes of a community-based participatory video (PV) research project on issues related to water governance with residents of underserved and informal settlements in Khayelitsha, South Africa and Accra, Ghana. Co-produced videos were used to facilitate communication and to open a dialogue between the participating communities and their respective local governments, with the aims of improving awareness of the issues, enhancing agency and enabling participation in the political and social debates about water governance. Analysing the approach, our research draws on two key principles of participatory governance – *recognition* and *response* – to evaluate the application of PV as a potential engagement tool for participatory water governance. We critically discuss the reality and tensions of PV in shifting deep-rooted inequities of power in decision making through two case studies, both of which involved residents and representatives from local governments in the research process.

Keywords participatory video; water governance; community-based research; community engagement; urban Africa

Key messages

- Participatory video enables representation of key issues to decision makers, but alone it has limited impact for meaningful change. Understanding recognition and responsiveness as the conditions for people being able to claim influence over their lives is critical to disrupt power dynamics necessary for real change to occur.
- Participatory video processes, when done in collaboration with local decision makers, can elicit positive and long-term impacts, including the development of, and capacity for, community monitoring programmes that engage citizens with topics of relevance and concern, such as access to water and sanitation.
- While our work demonstrates evidence of positive relationship building (for example, trust and empathy), without the conditions for government to be able to both recognise and respond to community needs, efforts might be futile or even damaging. Participatory video interventions therefore require long-term monitoring and continued support to be impactful.

Introduction

Clean, accessible water and sanitation for all citizens is essential, and a high global priority, as outlined in the 2015 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and a suite of other policy forums. According to a WHO/UNICEF (2019) Joint Monitoring Programme report, there are an estimated 2.2 billion people around the world that do not have access to safely managed drinking water services, 4.2 billion people that do not have safely managed sanitation services, and 3 billion lacking basic handwashing facilities. It is increasingly recognised that many water-related challenges are, in large part, attributable to the way access to, and control over, water resources and their associated benefits are governed (Krievins et al., 2015; Harris and Morinville, 2013). As such, many people have focused on the ways that policies relating to water use and access should be developed based on consultations with local residents, including direct engagement with relatively impoverished populations on their water priorities and needs (Ahmad, 2003; Goldin, 2013). Indeed, discussions related to the human right to water and its implementation have also increasingly highlighted participatory engagement in governance as a key facet of its realisation (Linton, 2012; Nowlan and Bakker, 2010). Participatory processes are being widely promoted based on the understanding that direct engagement of citizens in decision making around water uses and condition is essential to enliven democracy, to improve or conserve water resources, and to make better use of scarce public resources (Santos, 2005; Goldin, 2013).

Lutz and Linder (2004) describe good governance as a set of institutions, mechanisms and processes through which citizens and their groups can articulate their interests and needs, mediate their differences, and exercise their rights and obligations. To this end, Gaventa (2001) calls for the construction of new relationships between people and the institutions – especially those of government – that affect their lives. This is especially true for impoverished and underserved communities where there is a history of marginalisation and exclusion (Mahlanza et al., 2016; Rodina and Harris, 2016). This necessitates empowering local governments and civil society organisations (CSO) with authority and resources, and building their capacity to function as participatory institutions that are responsive and accountable to the concerns and needs of all citizens. At the same time, the approach is concerned with strengthening of grass-roots democracy and empowering citizens, communities and their CSOs to participate in local governance and local development processes. Fostering engagement and participation also necessarily requires addressing past marginalisation and injustice, and working towards developing levels of comfort, confidence and support for citizens to raise their voice and make their needs known (Morales and Harris, 2014). This aspect of participation requires that people feel valued and heard, and have broader social-institutional support for their participation beyond just involving them – they also need to feel capable

and proud of their knowledge to be able to participate, raise their concerns, and feel that their input matters (Morales and Harris, 2014; Agrawal, 2001).

Complex challenges, such as water governance, thus require transdisciplinary inquiries and the co-production of knowledge across multiple stakeholders, in ways that include marginalised populations who might be among those most affected. Many scholars, including Indigenous (such as Margaret Kovach, Bagele Chilisa, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Shawn Wilson), feminist (Shiv Visvanathan, Miranda Fricker, bell hooks) and other thought leaders (Rajesh Tandon, Budd Hall, John Gaventa, Boaventura de Sousa Santos), are calling for a radical shift in our understanding of whose knowledge counts and how knowledge is used, focusing on concepts such as knowledge democracy, cognitive justice and decolonisation mobilised for the benefit of all. The emerging discourse of cognitive justice promotes the existence and value of multiple epistemic systems, and plural epistemologies and ontologies that are seen as vital to a more sustainable, equitable and democratic world. Ostrom (1990), Agrawal (1995), Briggs (2006) and others also reinforce the value and inclusion of local knowledge for improving development outcomes and democratic governance. These theories, and those linked to participatory development, also relate to Paulo Freire's body of work, which has at its core the realisation of one's own oppression, and the inherent right and means to transform oppressive structures. Freire (1972) argued that for one to overcome their oppression, there must be the opportunity to individually, collectively and proactively claim the rights to one's own words. Broader epistemological and ontological questions are central to such rights claims. Knowledge democracy is a critical epistemological standing, if we are to move towards what Gaventa (2001) and others (for example, Hall et al., 2013) are calling for, opening possibilities for a radical transformation in social action. Speaking to these broad engagements, we are interested in issues of building agency and opportunities for engagement as core to overcoming water and sanitation challenges (Bulled, 2015; Harris et al., 2018).

For the purposes of this intervention, we explore whether, and how, participatory video (PV) gives life and meaning to the lived experiences and possibilities for meaningful engagement of relatively impoverished and marginalised communities whose voices are often not included in public policy. What are the opportunities and challenges of building governance receptivity and responsiveness through PV processes and video-mediated dialogue? Drawing on theories of participatory governance and knowledge democracy, this paper demonstrates how arts-based participatory approaches, and PV in particular, can serve to solicit meaningful engagement in policy processes under the right conditions. We draw primarily on several key principles of participation, highlighting key issues of recognition and response, to unpack the conditions and tensions of using PV to promote agency in water governance in two distinct urban African contexts.

Conceptual framing

Enhancing participatory governance requires the representation of people who are typically outside the political sphere, to be valued, politically engaged and able to effectively challenge the injustices they face (Cornwall et al., 2011). In this pursuit, people must have political voice, effective representation and agency so that they can socially and politically act using their own knowledge, capabilities and power (Hulme et al., 2010). Abers and Keck (2009) argue that conventional representative institutions and technocratic bureaucracies often reinforce elite privilege, whereby excluded groups thus need direct or semi-direct participatory mechanisms to amplify their voices within the state and other formal institutions. The literature on PV and video interventions in policy spheres reinforces these claims, and calls for the 'full engagement of participants in how their films are conceptualized, expressed, visualized and distributed; as well as the dialogue that ensues' (Abers and Keck, 2009: 6) as a means to enhance citizen voice in democratic and equitable decision-making processes (Plush, 2016). Here, Plush (2016) argues that concerted efforts are required to ensure that PV can consider, challenge and overcome cultural, relational and power dynamics. Shaw (2015) echoes this point through promoting PV as a means to unify

citizen voices for greater representative influence, but argues that this alone is not enough. In her article on PV and accountability, Shaw (2015: 628) makes the point that it is 'not only how well video enables representation to powerful decision makers, or whether they are really listening – the key question is what happens next?'. Recognition and responsiveness are highlighted as key conditions that enable people to claim influence. We explore this potential below, after a brief discussion to further consideration of the role of PV in such debates, all the while cognisant of the critiques that highlight the inherent tensions, and even impossibility, of enabling voice among those most marginalised (for example, Spivak, 1988).

Participatory video

Participatory video is a method in participatory action research that has been used with the goal of enhancing and stimulating new and inclusive forms of communication and knowledge co-creation. This approach recognises the value of linking community-based knowledge with academic, scientific knowledge in the creation and pursuit of knowledge democracy (Gaventa and McGee, 2013; Hall et al., 2013). This means, among other things, recognising and valuing communities as a source of knowledge about complex issues, particularly drawing on their own knowledge and life experience. The literature on PV as a meaningful form of collaborative scholarship has been promoted as an anti-oppressive, anti-hierarchical and anti-colonial research approach that has the potential to shift power relations away from authoritative experts (Brennan, 2018; Wiebe, 2015; Plush, 2015; Gutberlet, 2014; Tremblay and Harris, 2018; Shaw, 2017a, 2017b; Mistry and Shaw, 2021).

There has been growing interest in how PV can enable agency, active citizenship and responsive governance (Askanius, 2014; Tremblay and Jayme, 2015; Boni et al., 2020; Mitchell and De Lang, 2020). One key reason for this enthusiasm relates to the opportunity for communities to represent and communicate their own concerns, and the possibility for creative and emotional engagement, as well as inclusion of diverse images, perspectives and knowledge. Visual methods have long been used in various academic disciplines and contexts as ways to facilitate the expression of emotion and enriched understanding. An article by Castleden et al. (2008) describes the ways in which this methodology has been suitable for Indigenous participatory research, through participant-driven photography to have richer engagement in the discussion of their culture. The literature indicates that visual tools may provide more effective ways of tapping into the emotional aspects of a topic than verbal communication alone (Pain, 2011; Gauntlett, 2007; Ronzi et al., 2016; Tremblay and Harris, 2018). The use of visual images can evoke emotions and help facilitate expression of feelings or attitudes about certain topics or situations. Prosser and Loxley (2007) describe the different processing of language and visual information in the brain, lending evidence to the view that visual methods can open up different ways of knowing and telling. This can be particularly useful in contexts where language-based communication may not fully express the situation or lived experience of individuals. Of course, there is the need for caution, given visual ableism and the attendant exclusions that this might involve for those with impaired and limited vision.

Alongside the powerful and emotive capacity of visual methods are the stories that accompany them. Narratives are an important way to express the subjective and symbolic meaning of one's lived experience and connection to others, and also to one's surroundings (Harris, 2021a). Goldstein et al. (2015), within the context of resilience theory, suggest that narratives can enhance our ability to engage multiple voices and enable self-organising processes, in this case to decide what should be made resilient and for whose benefit. Communities engaged in resource governance can also benefit from engaging with the subjective and experiential processes of storytelling. In all of these ways, there is the potential to document and represent people, places and issues in ways that can disrupt traditional notions of expertise, and with it the power dynamics that often perpetuate exclusion.

Many have argued that community-driven research can foster agency by encouraging people whose voices have been marginalised to produce counter-discourses (Shaw, 2017a; Tremblay, 2013). Of course, these projects always need to be attentive to the ways that any form of engagement also has

the potential to further particular silences (Spivak, 1988). Nonetheless, the ability of communities to 'tell their own stories' is viewed as a particularly promising avenue to avoid some of the common pitfalls of representation, authorship and voice. Even with increasing acknowledgement of this potential, of course, critical challenges remain (Spivak, 1988; Mohanty, 1991).

There has been progress made in the last decade on theorising participatory video, particularly within the context of its use as a tool for communication, empowerment, agency and relationship building. More recently, there has been a wave of scholars thinking more critically about PV as it relates to power (Singh et al., 2018; Mistry and Shaw, 2021), ethics (Yang, 2016; Shaw, 2014) and liberalism (Walsh, 2014). Mistry and Shaw (2021: 197), for example, caution to be more cognisant and critical of PV practice, arguing for a 're-grounding' of PV as a long-term relational process towards community emergence: 'Time must be invested in building trust, capacities, collaborative relationships and deeper insight within and between communities', which 'are unlikely to be inclusive unless they also shift the unequal power dynamics that are at the root of marginalization.'

Among this growing body of critical voices, Walsh (2014) looks at ways in which systemic power relations often continue to be overlooked in participatory video projects. She argues that this is caused by a combination of factors emphasising personal empowerment over broader social and political forces, and raises some critical considerations when approaching political change. PV, then, as well as other participatory forms of engagement, needs to reach beyond simply voicing injustices to those in power, towards creating and reflecting other ways of knowing and being in the world. Engaging broader theoretical and critical perspectives is also sorely needed.

Our contribution seeks precisely to delve into some of these questions through critical analysis of our own research practice in engaging with two communities in the contexts of Accra, Ghana and Cape Town, South Africa. Our central inquiry and contributions are in identifying the opportunities and challenges of building governance receptivity and responsiveness through PV processes and video-mediated dialogue. We engage these ideas through which to evaluate the impact of our own PV work focused on water and sanitation in relatively impoverished and underserved communities.

The research was conducted in partnership with community partner organisations Iliso Care Society in Khayelitsha, South Africa (<http://ilisocaresocietyproject.org.za/>), and the Integrated Social Development Centre (ISODEC) in Accra, Ghana (<https://isodec.org/>). The Environmental Monitoring Group (EMG) located in Cape Town, South Africa also played a supportive role, particularly in helping to coordinate the focus groups and to follow up with government agents. Ethics approval for all stages of the work was granted by the University of British Columbia Research Ethics Board, Number H14-01230. The data presented in this article are from the post-project interviews that were conducted with all of the individuals who had participated directly in the PV training, as well as from interviews and focus groups with local CSOs and governments working in water and sanitation. In brief, we worked collaboratively with community members to produce participatory videos on issues related to water and sanitation, then used these videos to engage in dialogue with governments and decision makers, as well as with other activists working on water and sanitation, to ascertain their potential role in bringing community voices more centrally to the table. The analysis that follows draws from these linked research approaches at various stages.

In locating ourselves, we are both White North American academics located at Canadian universities. At the time of the research, the first author was conducting postdoctoral research in collaboration with a larger multi-year research programme on water governance led by the second author. We are both community-engaged scholars, with extensive experience working with marginalised and informal communities in diverse geographical, social and political contexts. Our approach is participatory and driven by a strong orientation towards cognitive justice and knowledge democracy. This means that we deeply value people's lived experiences and the ways in which they seek to realise their aspirations and shape their own future.

The case sites were selected based on established partnerships of researchers involved with the Program on Water Governance (<https://watergovernance.ca>) and the Environment & Development:

Gender, Equity, and Sustainability (EDGES, <https://edges.sites.olt.ubc.ca>) research collaborative at the University of British Columbia, specifically a multi-year programme led by the second author with several partners from civil society and educational institutions in South Africa and Ghana. The project partners in each site participated in the design and facilitation of the participatory video process and subsequent workshops as part of their broader efforts to engage the local governments on water-related issues. The same participatory methodology was applied in each site by the authors, and subsequent visits allowed for further follow-up. The authors of this study are still engaged with these communities in their efforts towards greater participation and accountability in water governance, and have worked on similar and related issues with these communities over the course of the past decade.

Case studies: water governance in urban Africa

The following provides succinct details about the two sites – Khayelitsha, near Cape Town, and Teshie in Accra – highlighting key contextual issues relating to legislative frameworks for participation, specific challenges in water governance, and the nature of colonial influence on citizen engagement. We realise that we are just skimming the surface in setting the political context for each site, and we appreciate the vast diversity and complex histories in each locale. The focus here, therefore, is to provide some indication of the circumstances, opportunities and challenges that the participating communities are facing in participating in water governance decision making in their respective locations, as it relates to our intervention.

Context: Khayelitsha (Site C), South Africa

Khayelitsha is a rapidly growing Black township on the outskirts of Cape Town. Official statistics state that approximately four hundred thousand residents live in the expansive settlement, with researchers and CSOs citing numbers as high as a million (Cole, 2013). It is estimated that in Khayelitsha, 45 per cent of households live in formal dwellings, with 62 per cent of households having access to piped water in their dwelling or in their yard (Rodina, 2016). In Site C of Khayelitsha, where this case study was conducted, the numbers are estimated at 35 per cent of households living in formal dwellings, with 50 per cent of households with access to water in their dwelling or yard. There have been several service delivery protests in Khayelitsha over the last decade, primarily around the lack of appropriate sanitation services (Masiya et al., 2019), as well as the highly contentious process of water meter installations, which includes high water bills and the installation of flow-limiting devices (Enqvist and Ziervogel, 2019).

South Africa has a complex water governance landscape, which has seen considerable challenges in achieving sustainable, equitable and inclusive water access and governance (Beck et al., 2016; SAWC, 2017). Water supply and access in South Africa were historically created to serve White populations during colonial and apartheid rule. This resulted in little water-related infrastructure and investment in townships and informal settlements, such as Khayelitsha, resulting in lower quality of water services and highly unequal and undemocratic participatory engagement based on race and income.

In 1996, under the new democratic constitution, water governance was reformed, establishing new mandates and provisions for water services and governance processes, stating that ‘everyone has the right to ... access sufficient food and water’ (South African Government, 2015: Section 27b). In 2001, South Africa further adopted the Free Basic Water (FBW) policy, requiring municipalities to provide a minimum of 25 litres of water per person per day, or 6,000 litres per household of eight per month, free of charge, and within 200 metres of their home (Rodina, 2016; Yates and Harris, 2018).

In regard to participatory governance, the National Water Act of 1998 mandates the creation of catchment management areas and the promotion of ‘community participation in the protection, use, development, conservation, management and control of the water resources in its water management area’ (Republic of South Africa, 1998: Section 80e). This framework mandates that water service plans must

include participatory processes that are inclusive of all stakeholders, and requirements and expectations related to the adequate inclusion of Black and impoverished women (Schreiner et al., 2004).

In Cape Town, which experienced a serious multi-year drought beginning in 2016, measures have been adopted including the Water Conservation and Demand Management strategy and the Integrated Water Leaks Project. These efforts have been successful at reducing water demand, but they have been heavily criticised for technical flaws and social justice concerns, especially in regard to the installation and management of 'smart' water meters disproportionately impacting impoverished households (for example, Yates and Harris, 2018).

Colonisation in South Africa has a long history – from the Dutch occupation in the 1600s, to the British in the late 1700s and institutionalised apartheid in 1948 – all with important social, institutional and infrastructural legacies (Magubane, 1996; Rodina, 2016). The impacts of colonisation and apartheid have played a major role in, and have current influence upon, citizen engagement in the country, particularly for those who have been systemically marginalised (Goldin, 2010).

Context: Teshie, Ghana

In Accra, similar to many cities in sub-Saharan Africa, urban growth outpaces infrastructural development, and therefore limits government's ability to provide adequate services (Owusu and Afutu-Kotey, 2010). Access to potable water remains one of the key sustainability challenges in Ghana's urban and peri-urban settlements. While the country as a whole met the Millennium Development Goal of reducing by half the proportion of its citizens without access to potable water and sanitation services (Harris, 2021b), there remain ongoing disparities in access (Alba et al., 2020). Despite an increase of water access in urban areas, many households remain unconnected to potable water from the national mains, which has created distinct hierarchies of consumers (Oteng-Ababio et al., 2017).

The bulk of citizens in urban Accra meet their water needs through an unregulated network of retail/vendor services or other personal arrangements, and they have found creative and adaptive strategies in navigating these daily uncertainties (Dapaah and Harris, 2017; Peloso and Morinville, 2014; Morinville and Harris, 2014; Harris, 2021b). This includes gaining access to water from tankers, standpipes and packaged water (sachets). The current precarity and variegated water access throughout Accra can again be traced to colonial legacies of uneven infrastructural development, and a long-standing water rationing schedule that was implemented until very recently (Peloso et al., 2018). Teshie, where this case study was conducted, is a coastal town in the Ledzokuku-Krowor Municipal District, a district in the Greater Accra Region of south-eastern Ghana with a population of roughly 172,000 people. Some of the issues regarding lack of access to water were partially mediated with the recent onboarding of a desalination facility serving the area, but there have also been challenges and concerns regarding this new source of drinking water – issues that came up as part of our PV work in this context.

Methods: the participatory video process

The same methodology was applied to the PV training workshops and subsequent interviews with participants, community screenings and focus groups with elected representatives in each site. We describe this process in more detail below, and provide more context as to how the participants were selected, who they represent and our own positionality and relationships to the participants.

We begin in Khayelitsha, where a partnership between the authors and the Environmental Monitoring Group (EMG) had already been established with the Program on Water Governance and EDGES researchers from the University of British Columbia. The EMG, a not-for-profit organisation based in Cape Town, works to promote and facilitate inclusive and equitable participation in water governance, among several other initiatives. During the time of this research, the EMG played a key role in introducing the authors to members of the community in Khayelitsha who had been actively involved in community activism and engagement. We had ongoing interactions with community members at the

Iliso Care Society, a not-for-profit organisation in Khayelitsha focused on youth and child development and livelihoods, but also in delivering several community programmes in the area of Site C, where it is located. The Iliso Care Society partnered on this project, and the director recruited the twenty youth that participated in the PV project. Many of the youth were involved with a youth choir programme, with participants ranging from 18 to 24 years old. Some of the youth had previously engaged with a related project by other Program on Water Governance and EDGES researchers on water and sanitation issues as research assistants/community liaisons.

In Teshie, a coastal town in the district of Accra, the recruitment of participants was organised through the Integrated Social Development Centre (ISODEC), who had established relationships with the authors from previous and ongoing research. ISODEC, a not-for-profit organisation, focuses on social and economic justice and essential services, including water. Our partner at ISODEC coordinated the recruitment of participants, including residents of Teshie, other local water activist organisations and members of the local Assembly. There had been no prior relationship between the authors and most of those who directly participated in the PV project. In both sites, a similar PV workshop was facilitated during a two-week period, with follow-up meetings, a community screening of the completed video, and interviews with participants and relevant government officials.

The PV process involved three phases in an iterative sequence of reflection and action. The *pre-production phase* included a variety of arts-based methods, such as drawing, storyboard development and scriptwriting, which curated individual and collective storytelling around the themes that were most important to the participants. The workshops also provided technical and communication training on how to use the video equipment and conduct interviews. In Teshie, some of the major themes that emerged through this process, as well as from the community interviews, included access to clean water and adequate sanitation, water quality, price of water, health and safety, infrastructure, pollution and flooding. In Khayelitsha, some of the themes that came out of the training workshop related to hygiene, dignity and safety around the use of communal taps and public toilets, pollution and impacts on water quality, and other social concerns including teen pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse, and how music and education are key pathways to finding solutions.

Through the storyboarding technique, the groups prepared the sequence of clips for their video. The *field production phase* lasted ten days in each location, and included interviews with community members, government officials, water vendors, business owners, students, and residents of formal and informal dwellings, each sharing their concerns, challenges and lived experiences on issues related to water and sanitation. Members of the PV workshop in each locale carried out the interviews.

The *post-production phase* included viewing and co-editing the footage – building the clips into a story. Viewing the footage is an important aspect of the PV process, where participants can review what they and others have filmed, and in that process develop a new sense of issues that are taken into further consideration.

The co-editing process differed in each site. In Khayelitsha, a smaller group of six to ten youth (which later became three or four core participants) decided to take on the final editing and then work with the larger group at various times of the post-production process to help make decisions. This group worked over the course of five months until they had collectively completed the video. In Teshie, the group decided to work on the edited videos over a two-week period, with some narration work following.

Once the videos were finalised, focus groups were facilitated in each site by the researchers (the authors). In Cape Town, this included representatives from the municipal government (representatives from the Water and Sanitation Department; the Medical Officer of Health; and the Communication Officer for water and sanitation). The second focus group was with local activist and community members in Makhaza, a neighbouring township to Khayelitsha. In Teshie, a focus group was conducted with members of the local Assembly working in water and sanitation, and a second one with representatives from other Accra-based CSOs working on water- and sanitation-related issues.

The goal of this was to share the participatory videos, and also to use the videos as tools to elicit feedback and promote dialogue from those directly engaged in the policy realm related to water and sanitation. An aim was to share community perspectives communicated through the videos with appropriate policy audiences. We also aimed to explore the ways in which policymakers' senses of these issues might shift through engagement with the community videos, in order to address what barriers and challenges they face in terms of policy implementation, community engagement and so forth. In addition, we held screenings of the final videos in each community. The complete participatory videos are available online: Program on Water Governance (2016).

In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted with each of the project participants. Our interest was to gain an understanding of their experience, the impact of the process on their own sense of self (for example, to assess empowerment, or other senses of individual transformation), and to critically assess the role of PV in community engagement and policy change. (Other aspects of participants' experiences are discussed in Tremblay and Harris, 2018.)

Results: towards participatory water governance

The following illustrates some of the ways in which the PV process might serve as a tool for fostering agency for those involved, and points to some of the opportunities and challenges of building governance receptivity and responsiveness needed for power shifts and subsequent action. We provide some evidence from our study that speaks to these aspects of *recognition* and *response*.

Recognition

The concept of recognition has been conceptualised in different ways. Most notable is Fraser's (1998) model of recognition, underpinned by a questioning of the political arrangements and structures that prevent some members of society from participating equally with others. Her work is founded on the principle of participation parity, according to which justice requires social arrangements that permit all to participate as equal peers in social life. From her perspective, recognition, redistribution and representation are the three necessary conditions of participatory parity. Others, such as Honneth (2010), have a more general sense of the concept as meaning the acknowledgement of the value of others. He argues that the justice or well-being of a society is proportionate to its ability to secure conditions of mutual recognition under which personal identity formation, and hence individual self-realisation, can proceed adequately.

Recognition, as described by Plush (2015: 8), suggests PV processes that 'can increase respect for participants' voice, as well as its value for influencing the concerning issues'. In this way, PV has the capacity to affirm and legitimise citizens' lived experiences and knowledge. To such ends, Plush (2015: 8) argues for PV processes that 'consider and confront the unjust conditions that presently devalue, exclude or erase participants' voice'. In respect to such arguments, the principle of recognition focuses its efforts on the receptivity for under-represented voices in decision making (Couldry, 2006). This means the degree to which those with power and decision-making authority acknowledge and recognise the legitimacy of claims, knowledge claims and ability to be engaged. From an environmental justice perspective, Schlosberg (2007) articulates this idea as being more than simply securing a fair distribution of goods (to territory, water sources and so on), but that it also involves recognising individuals' membership in the moral and political community, promoting the capabilities needed for their functioning and flourishing, and ensuring their inclusion in political decision making. He argues that recognition, in addition to distribution, capabilities and participation, are interrelated and interdependent – and that one cannot pursue one dimension of justice in isolation. Regarding water, this can be elaborated further to also include one's daily practices and needs being acknowledged and/or recognised, as well as one's voice and understanding of the issues being validated.

Our research, informed by some of the principles discussed above, found the process of PV to have some impact on how decision makers might be swayed by evidence, as illustrated in the video. During

dialogue at one of the screenings, a local authority in Accra described the video 'as a true reflection of what is going on...it is video capturing the reality'. Another Assemblyman from Teshie shared that the video process offered new ways to communicate, and to challenge others in the government to participate in locally identified issues:

This project offers new opportunities on ways to communicate on issues affecting mankind in general. So, taking part has been very helpful to me. I was a technology phobic, but now I have a lot of confidence to challenge professionals, if not people within my ranks.

A participant in Teshie working for a local civil society organisation explains the value of using video to bring evidence of conditions and realities in the community to the local government and to set the stage for engagement with local authorities:

There's an issue that one has to bring to the floor, you need evidence. And that evidence is the use of the camera. To go to the sites, take video shots. And that's a real source of engaging the government in providing the right kind of services that they need to provide to communities. A specific example can be a lack of drains, in the worst communities [they] are not there. And to see that somebody is in charge and that this person can be held responsible for not providing. So I think it's an avenue, it can set the tone for engagement... This video has ignited a conversation so it's sweeping along. So now we've gotten to this level.

This illustration connects to arguments around recognition and the ways in which these issues play out in the process of citizen engagement. Shaw (2015: 629) further elaborates on the ways that PV, as a longer-term development process, can foster 'relationships between communities and responsive exchange with influential makers back and forth over time'. She argues that to shift inequities is a matter of shifting relational dynamics. Work in South Africa by Bivens et al. (2017: 6) defines participatory accountability as both 'episodic forms of engagement (e.g. community policing forums, elections, ward committees, policy dialogues, participatory budgeting meetings, citizen-based monitoring of services), as well as everyday forms of engagement (e.g. everyday interaction with police and government officials)'. Recognition cannot be achieved without acknowledging the social and political context, particularly as it relates to South Africa's colonial and oppressive apartheid legacy.

In the development context, Gaventa and McGee (2013) and O'Neil et al. (2007) argue that strengthening citizen agency is foundational for holding the state responsible and accountable to its political obligations. The voices that have been typically unheard must be centred in discursive spaces for inequitable structural transformation to change. In relation to processes of participation, attention needs to be focused on ensuring that decision makers are open to recognising marginalised voices for influence to occur. There are several reasons that certain voices are not recognised – such as power, colonial legacies, stigma, religious or gender norms, and lack of access to those in positions of power. The process of PV aims to shift that power so that those voices can be recognised, and those in power can be made accountable and more responsive.

Our empirics reinforce the significance of the PV process for community participants in recognising the validity and value of their lived experience, as described above. In both cases, the videos clearly helped to bring the narratives of the people affected by water and sanitation challenges to life, providing visible evidence of day-to-day challenges and narratives. This has several positive impacts, in relation to fostering agency, including a sense of recognising one's own knowledge as valid and pertinent, and enlivening an internal drive to pursue action in decision-making processes.

It is less clear, however, in which ways community voice and knowledge experience a change of value, and a subsequent response by the authorities, as described below. This work draws attention to the ways in which PV processes need to be attentive to the conditions and tensions inherent in these spaces, and to be thoughtful to not only raising voice, but also creating the conditions for voice to be heard.

Response

PV can only disrupt entrenched social inequities if people's concerns are valued in decision-making spaces. The concept of response, as used in this study, suggests PV 'processes that can rebalance inequitable decision-making spaces through deliberative, dialogical encounters, increasing responsiveness potential' (Plush, 2016: 37). Plush (2015: 9) also points to PV processes that 'spark potential for more empathic connections from listeners to PV participants' concerns through deliberative, dialogical encounters'. Here, we need to look for 'more equitable social, cultural, political or structural conditions for voice' (Plush, 2015: 9). In other words, response is a key element in taking action – responding to community voice. This, Plush (2016) argues, can advance equitable decision making and considered responsiveness to citizen needs. Tremblay and Harris (2018) also speak to the power of PV as a relationship-building tool, and in particular in its ability to foster empathy between and among participants, which can lead to actionable outcomes.

Dutta (2011) and Shaw (2014: 3) have demonstrated the effectiveness of PV in providing excluded groups communicative capacity and agency to 'disrupt, challenge and transform dominant discourses of power that foster inequality and inequity'. What remains a challenge, if one's goal is political and social change, is the practical and meaningful response of political institutions – especially those that are not prepared or receptive for inclusive and participatory decision making. Dutta (2012), Shaw (2015) and Bivens et al. (2017) argue that this can only be accomplished if PV aims to transform the political, economic and social configurations that have excluded individuals or communities. A PV process could elicit an array of positive outcomes for individual and collective transformation, knowledge mobility and grass-roots movements, but if the political systems in place are unresponsive or unwilling to act, the process itself can be harmful, and can even reinforce power hierarchies.

Our empirics speak somewhat to how the local government in this case recognised the voices and responded to the community in Teshie, as demonstrated in the support for, and inclusion of, the participants in a citizen science programme following the project. The PV process provided a space for mutual understanding and relationship building between the local Assembly participants and citizens. A participant from a local CSO shared that this experience enabled a level of accountability and responsiveness, and ways to bring forth important evidence of what is important to the community:

It's part of governance, you know. We learnt it by going out, fetching the problems within the society, and then bringing the needs out and exposing them, it helps in a way to bring the relevant authorities in charge of that to do what they can do, to improve it.

The same participant also shared the importance of building agency and confidence through this process, an important shift in how to communicate in effective and meaningful ways:

I learnt that communities do not have the interaction, they have in terms of the other policies, programmes. And they also are quite timid when talking about issues of sanitation and, and development. Sometimes you require some kind of skill to be developed.

Other actions that indicate this included the local Assembly's leadership and support to bring the participants to the saltwater desalination plant that had been recently developed, to learn more about the process as this was a major challenge highlighted by the community in the project in regard to the taste and hardness of the water. This provides some evidence that the local Assembly participants were listening to, and were responsive to, the requests of the citizens.

A major insight from the case studies points to the significant difference in government response based on the levels of their involvement in the PV process. The Assembly in Teshie, for example, participated in the PV process from the beginning, by way of providing space, infrastructure for training and the in-kind support of two government staff to participate in the project. The government here saw this as an opportunity for enhancing the participatory communication skills of their staff, to broaden

mechanisms for community engagement on issues related to water and sanitation, and to collaborate with partnering civil society organisations on these issues. The results were favourable in terms of creating the space for relationship building and active listening among the participants. One of the immediate responses or outcomes from the project was the adoption of a citizen journalism programme for community engagement on public service issues, in collaboration with partner organisation ISODEC. The experience here illustrates how attention, time and resources were provided to ensure an appropriate and effective response. The local Assembly in Teshie was included in early meetings, which enabled a space to promote recognition of marginalised voices, and to create spaces for response to occur.

In Cape Town, by contrast, the local government did not participate in the participatory video process, but rather was invited to view the completed video in a focus group discussion with the authors. The response from the government was related more to that of defensiveness, in contrast with a sense of supportive recognition or response. We have no evidence to make claims as to why and in which ways the government responded as such; however, with the same methodology used for each site, there is some indication that greater participation in the project might have elicited a difference in the outcomes of the research. Also, it was clear from our engagement with government officials in Cape Town that they had heard similar things to the themes that came up in the videos – which stood in contrast to the response in Accra, where it seemed that this was more novel in terms of raising community voices. The focus group dialogue in Cape Town was audio recorded; however, analysis of the transcript was not included at the request of the participants. The lack of willingness to make the transcript available to us to report the research itself shows the limits of the effort, the ways that we encountered power structures, and concerns about the process of community engagement in Cape Town.

A key finding that emerged in the research that contributes to an understanding of response as a principle of whether citizen concerns are heard and taken seriously is the creation of spaces for building relationships and trust. Fostering relationships to cultivate more equitable exchange between citizens and decision makers through greater connectedness, empathy and mutual trust was found to be vital. The focus group in Makhaza, a neighbouring community to Khayelitsha where the video was also screened and discussed, expressed the capacity and value of the video to cultivate empathy among neighbouring communities. Indeed, our earlier analysis similarly found that fostering of empathy and connection between participants was a significant outcome of the PV process (Tremblay and Harris, 2018).

Assessing power relations is critical to understanding the extent to which new spaces for participatory governance can be used for transformative engagement, or whether they are more likely to be instruments for re-enforcing domination and control (Gaventa, 2001). In a study by Tremblay (2013) with recycling cooperatives in Brazil, there was evidence of the PV process facilitating a specific response from government. In that situation, the participating government experienced a changed perception of the recyclers, validating their work as environmental stewards, and recognising their unique and vital contribution to waste management efforts.

In Teshie, the community-produced video highlights serious challenges with sanitation and open defecation in public spaces. This was a key message from the community to bring to government. After watching the video, the local Assembly validated the community message and supported efforts to provide residents with inside toilets as one of the main solutions to the problem:

Ah, some of the issue too is that they do not have the facility. And once you don't have the facility, if you even talk about change, it's even a problem. But then I believe that if we provide the people with the facility, that is provide you with a toilet facility in your house, I believe you would use it then going to the beach. Because at the end of the day, if, let's say, you have a runny tummy during the night, you prefer to use the facility in your house, than going to the beach or going to the public toilet which is a distance. So, another area is getting the facility closer to the people, and I think when that is done education and other aspect of it, there will be a lot of improvement.

This illustrates how we as facilitators created a space for the proper authorities to hear and respond to community needs. This is a key value in placing strategic attention on response.

The local Assembly representative in Teshie goes on to describe in which ways the video will be useful for ongoing community engagement with these issues:

Yah, it was a very good help to us. Ah, in the sense that with the commencement of the project, you know, we will break the communities into smaller groups where we will be having community chats. So during that process, maybe we can use this video as a demonstrating point to explain some of the things to them. Because definitely when the process takes off, maybe this area will be zoned into a group or be zoning them into various groups and all this type of distance. So the video will be a good help to us. We will try to show them some of the negative aspects of the whole thing. Maybe, when behaviour is changed, this is the way we will have improved situation. It's a very good thing.

There are obvious challenges in fully capturing government response and the level of influence the videos had on creating receptivity and inclusion in decision making. The interviews conducted with government, as described in this paper, reflect more immediate-level response, as opposed to longer-term impact resulting from the PV project. An immediate response, such as the citizen journalism programme in collaboration between ISODEC and the local Assembly, was sparked as an outcome of the PV process given the new capacity and skills for community communication and advocacy:

I'd say the participatory video project has been an important addition to the kind of tools we are trying to put together in our kind of work. Ah, because now it means that we have people in the network, and for partners who also participated, who could go on to train on how to use their mobile phones, how to use iPads to capture things, and use those things to tell particular story about a situation that they like or do not like and share this information with the public. And I think this is very beautiful and this going to aid our campaign, ah, greatly. Already, we are getting some of the participants together, bring them together to see how they can do a short documentary that we will use to promote the, ah, national water forum that will be conveyed by the water citizens' network.

This quotation, from a member of a local CSO and participant in the PV project, alludes to the positive contribution that this process has made for advancing and enhancing community voice in water governance.

Discussion

The case studies described above focus on recognition and response as a helpful framing to better understand the ways in which citizens can participate in, and have influence over, water governance. The co-produced participatory videos provide an example of creative and transparent ways for communities to tell their stories differently, in a way that can enhance personal agency, build a collective knowledge platform and promote capacity for dialogue. PV co-creates important messages that help engage communities through social learning and the discovery of common ground and of others' points of view, which can reach government in new ways. The results from our work reinforce claims in the literature, in terms of PV offering a vehicle for enhancing community agency for participation government, in ways that are otherwise difficult to capture. We highlight here again the key components of recognition and response as helpful framing for understanding how PV might elicit a more responsive government.

In the analysis above, and as is documented well in the literature, we have seen how PV can be a powerful tool in recognising individual and collective lived experiences and stories. Many of the participants experienced enhanced agency and a desire to act for change in their community. The

evidence is clear and compelling regarding a changed sense of self and political engagement from community members. Where our data are less clear is the translation of response, and indications that things will not radically shift due to broader power dynamics and structures.

In the Teshie case study, we see some indication of enhanced recognition of community voice, in that the decision makers provided resources and took the programme seriously by following through on a citizen monitoring programme. We articulate and stress the necessity of creating the conditions and process for government to be receptive and accountable – for them to value community voice. We reiterate the very different responses from local government in each case study to demonstrate the various ways they might be involved throughout the PV process.

Competing expectations

Although not discussed as a major theme in this paper, competing expectations between community and local governments is a subtle yet important observation. We observed that the participatory intervention demonstrated the competing expectations of civic and government responsibility, and the lack of transparency on the part of what the Assembly in Teshie has power or jurisdiction to provide. The PVs and interviews that were conducted with community and government raised important insights into the barriers for authentic community engagement. In this way, PV and other participatory interventions can be helpful in dispelling false expectations that the other holds.

Systemic processes, such as centralised policymaking in Teshie, make participatory mechanisms for governance a real challenge. The video clearly demonstrated a sense of high expectation on behalf of the community for the Assembly to be providing improved services (sanitation facilities, for example), while the Assembly expressed frustration that the residents were not taking better care of their surroundings. In the words of an Assemblyman:

Yah, from the Assembly perspective, ah, the community in the first place shows a lot of apathy towards sanitation. Ah, they don't see sanitation as a way of life. We expect them to actually be environmentally clean. We expect them not to litter. We expect them not to dump into open drains. We also expect them not to defecate openly at the beach fronts. But, ah, these are some of the challenges we face. And, ah, law enforcement and law cannot solve this problem.

What can be seen as a contribution is the way that participatory video can illuminate these competing narratives, unlike other forms of engagement tools typical of traditional public forums. The fact that the Assembly is now alerted to the expectations of the community is valuable in itself, and might support better communication strategies in future planning, or, if possible, advocate for more capacity to be responsive – that is, respond to the community needs. So, although our research does not show evidence that this is transformative all the way through, the sense of this from communities is a good start. We need to recognise and caution others doing participatory interventions that there might also be disappointment and raised expectations that will not be met by improvements in water and sanitation on the ground.

Conclusion

The analysis we offer provides practitioners, communities and local governments insights into the way that PV, and other community-based arts-based interventions, might help to foster inclusive participation in decision making through building agency to address water and sanitation challenges. Focusing on recognition and response as a framing provides an important reflective process whereby communities are driving the engagement process, bringing to light their lived experience as a valuable contribution to governance processes. For local governments, this presents an opportunity to support a citizenry who are active agents, mobilised and engaged on issues that are important to them. The participatory process

enables a greater understanding of citizen concerns, and it can enhance communication with officials. We need to caution, however, that despite the obvious positive benefits to community recognition, without the conditions for government to be able to respond to community needs, efforts might be futile or even damaging.

The research points to the application of arts-based methods, and PV in particular, as an approach that contributes to build transformative agency in participating members, while interrogating and pushing for inclusive spaces for responsive decision making and accountability in water governance. There are several key learnings from our work, including:

1. Participatory video enables representation of key issues to decision makers, but alone it has limited impact for meaningful change. Understanding recognition and responsiveness as the conditions for people being able to claim influence over their lives is critical to disrupt power dynamics necessary for real change to occur.
2. Participatory video processes, when done in collaboration with local decision makers, can elicit positive and long-term impacts, including the development of, and capacity for, community monitoring programmes that engage citizens on topics of relevance and concern, such as access to water and sanitation.
3. While our work demonstrates evidence of positive relationship building (see Tremblay and Harris, 2018), without the conditions for government to be able to both recognise and respond to community needs, efforts might be futile or even damaging. Participatory video interventions therefore require long-term investment and continued support to be impactful.

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Declarations and conflicts of interest

Research ethics statement

The authors declare that research ethics approval for all stages of the work was granted by the University of British Columbia Research Ethics Board, Number H14-01230.

Consent for publication statement

The authors declare that research participants' informed consent to publication of findings – including photos, videos and any personal or identifiable information – was secured prior to publication.

Conflicts of interest statement

Crystal Tremblay is Associate Editor of *Research for All*, in which this article is included. All efforts to sufficiently anonymise the authors during peer review of this article have been made. The authors declare no further conflicts with this article.

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