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Project Design: Beginning with the End in Mind

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Project Design: Beginning with the End in Mind

Introduction

In 1942, T. S. Eliot, in *Little Gidding* drew attention to the significance of our understanding the end before we begin. We see this, in our work, as needing to be aware of the impact and results of reaching audiences in contributing to community and policy dialogue, but to which audiences, and which dialogues, and which results do we refer? In a global context in which social injustices abound, social science researchers are not lacking problems that need to be researched. Understanding an issue is clearly necessary, but how might the research process have an impact on society? Is it not the social scientist's responsibility to 'not just...examine the social reality of the country, but to try to remedy the grave injustices' that they expose (Gott, 2008, para. 2)? Should social science research not be about making a difference (Flyvbjerg, 2001; Schratz & Walker, 1995)? Should social science researchers not be research activists contributing to change (De Lange, 2012; Hale, 2001)? While this might be disputed by some, we have, over the years, tried out participatory visual methodologies in various contexts to explore and simultaneously address a variety of issues. Numerous authors have hailed the value of

participatory visual research in making a difference in the lives of the participants and communities, yet others have cautioned against the exuberant tone said to be used in describing the difference participatory visual research is said to make (see Low et al., 2012; Milne, Mitchell, & De Lange, 2012). In spite of this warning against exuberance, we think that participatory visual research holds potential to bring about change. We draw on Caroline Wang's (1999) ground-breaking work with rural women farm workers whose visual productions were used to engage policy makers. She seemed to have started with the end in mind: to generate a collection of photographs – produced by the women themselves – to be used to engage and persuade policy makers to improve and change the women's working conditions.

But how does this sort of change happen? We acknowledge that sometimes change is entirely serendipitous; someone is somewhere just at the right time, but we do see that research that starts with the end in mind – the kinds of dialogues that need to take place – is critical. While this chapter is not meant to be an exhaustive study of research design, what it does set out to do is offer a sense of what design in participatory visual research might look like when community and policy

dialogue are key features of the work. We begin by considering how research for social change can be designed. We then look at four commonly used methods in participatory visual research: drawing; photovoice; participatory video; and digital story-telling. While each is a separate and unique method, they have common features such as participation, the use of the visual, the creation of a product, digital production, and the potential for widespread dissemination through exhibitions and screenings. We therefore highlight the ways in which thinking through the process of doing, the nature of the final productions (drawings, videos, photo exhibitions, digital stories) as well as who will make up the various audiences are all crucial to having the end in mind before we begin. Finally, as a way to contextualize this work – particularly because community and policy dialogue is typically about a particular community and a particular policy framework – we then go on to include a case study of a project in South Africa that addresses sexual violence on a university campus.

Research Design for Social Change

Essential to any qualitative research project is a rigorous design which fits the identified research problem and the research

questions formulated about the problem. Given our 'from the ground up' approach to effecting social change, we have found Reed's (2007) *Appreciative Inquiry: Research for Change*, useful in informing our research design. While focusing on inclusivity and researching in a collaborative way to generate and analyse data with participants and drawing on their strengths, it also demands an understanding of power before, during, and after the research, as well as the importance of voice, audience, and dissemination. Reed's work however, points to the importance of the principle of 'simultaneity' (p. 26) that drives research such as ours which is simultaneously empirical and theoretical, and that also has a built-in, as it were, orientation towards intervention. The qualitative participatory visual research then works as research-as-intervention or research-as-social-change located in a critical paradigm and focused on addressing a social problem or 'identifying and transforming socially unjust social structures, policies, beliefs and practices' according to Taylor and Medina (2013, p. 6). Donna Mertens (2009) sees such work as located in what she aptly refers to as a transformative paradigm.

Several approaches such as participatory action research (Hughes & Seymour-Rolls, 2000), community-based

participatory research (O'Fallon, Tyson, & Dearry, 2000) and participatory visual methodology (Mitchell, 2008) all fit coherently within a critical and transformative paradigm. We have argued elsewhere that when we are working with marginalized communities or with sensitive topics, a participatory visual methodology is more suitable since it allows ease in participants' expressing ideas around an issue that is difficult to articulate or that falls into the area of subjects that are deemed inappropriate for discussion. In several chapters of this book we also show how the visual data is used with the participants, in the community, and with other stakeholders such as policy makers, to leverage action towards bringing about social change. While this idea is developed more in the area of research in health and well-being than in the social sciences, as D'Amico et al. (2016) point out, it is a useful framework in which to discuss design. As Haalboom, Robinson, Elliott, Cameron, and Eyles (2006) note, 'Research as intervention entails purposefully using aspects of a research process and results feedback to contribute to desired changes in knowledge and practice of research participants and stakeholders' (p. 292). This kind of research is not just a data-gathering activity. D'Amico et al. (2016) focus on the ways in which arts-based research that draws on the visual is particularly appropriate

as intervention. For Barndt (2009), ‘The researcher/artist may structure processes to engage participants in creative inquiry, but if the process is to draw on the knowledge, skills and visions of community members, there must be space for this [research-as-intervention] to happen’ (p. 360). In this context ‘research using the arts can facilitate change while at the same time provide evidence of such changes’ (D’Amico et al., 2016, p. 360).

Who might the initiator(s) of social change be? And how might researchers participate in enabling engagement which could contribute to layers of positive social change? Participatory research is a critical methodology in relation to social change in that it extends the range of who participates in the process of knowledge production, and, perhaps most importantly, it draws in marginalized voices along with new voices. To achieve this we have often relied on using more than one visual method in a project and thus ensuring the generation of rich data from many voices to enable crystallization – or internal validity – as Merriam (1998) puts it. While the co-produced knowledge is critical to the context in which social injustices occur, the knowledge produced needs to be shared widely not only to enable social action, but also to promote critical consciousness,

and overcome internalized oppression (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2001), and oppressive systems. The knowledge produced can then be disseminated and used to direct social change. As Knowles and Cole (2008) argue, participatory visual methodologies position participants not only as knowledge producers, but also as key to spreading the knowledge to a wider audience.

Potential for Sustainability

As we have pointed out above, social science research can contribute to knowledge that recognizes unjust social structures in society and, therefore, to social change (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2001; Mertens, 2009; Mitchell, 2006a; Schratz & Walker, 1995). We acknowledge that the contexts in which social science research is done in itself exert a powerful influence on the potential for change. However, the participants in the research are enabled to push back and to position themselves not as victims, but as able to take action, even if it is in small ways. The potential for social change is thus in the hands of the research participants and their community since they have the necessary strengths and resources, and in the researchers establishing a relationship of trust to deepen their engagement in the community so as to carry out research alongside its

members. We have found that the use of participatory visual methods, with its potential to enable engagement, reflection, and taking action 'ensures a sense of ownership and enhances the potential for sustainability once the research team withdraws at the end of the project' (De Lange & Combrinck, 2011, p. 236). We are interested in what happens when we're gone (Mitchell & De Lange, 2011). We have considered whether a project we started together would continue, whether the participants changed their understanding of the social issues we addressed together, and whether such change in understanding would enable them to do things differently in their own lives and in that of their community. We were also interested in what we could (or should) leave behind when we left the field. For example, in our participatory visual work with a rural community that generated a collection of videos about issues that affect their lives and what they envisaged doing about these issues, we, the researchers, created a composite video of their videos, to be left in the community when we left, and which could be used to sustain the momentum of change (Mitchell & De Lange, 2011).

Gubrium and Harper (2013) refer to an early example of a participatory visual research of Paulo Freire in which he used

photography in a literacy project to ask the participants (street children) to say what they thought exploitation is. They had to respond by taking photographs of how they saw their own exploitation. The photographs revealed examples of institutional exploitation and this enabled them to talk about ways they deemed suitable to addressing the exploitation. In participatory visual research such as this, a space is created for 'empowerment, engagement, ownership, and agency', as Mitchell et al. (2011, p. 22) point out, which could linger in the lives of the participants as an afterlife to the research.

Participatory Visual Methods

There are numerous participatory visual research methods that can be used with participants in their local contexts to co-construct knowledge for social change, ranging from digital platforms to photovoice, and from digital story-telling and participatory video to what might be regarded as low-tech approaches (body mapping and, sometimes, drawing). As the themed issue of *Global Public Health* on participatory visual methods highlights, this is a dynamic area as a result of new technologies such as GIS (Geographic Information System) mapping and the design of new apps, but it is also dynamic

in the sense that methods and tools that have been used in one context have been adapted for use with other populations or in other social contexts (Mitchell & Sommer, 2016). When we found ourselves in a research context in our work with girls with disabilities in Vietnam, for example, it was an on-the-spot decision for us to combine photovoice and drawing so that the girls could produce policy posters. As we explore in [Chapter 7](#), they very clearly had an audience in mind since they had just met with a group of policy makers at a forum, and there was high motivation to create something meaningful and concrete (Nguyen, Mitchell, De Lange, & Fritsch, 2015).

These participatory approaches serve to move towards making research democratic and also to move away from the idea that research is for a 'highly selected group of specialists' (Schatz & Walker, 1995, p. 14). As Reavey and Johnson (2012) observe, participatory visual methods 'hand over agency to the participants rather than requiring them to answer researcher-defined questions' (p. 174). They also work as a 'springboard for more talking, listening and reflecting' (Clark & Moss, 2011, p. 8). Van der Riet and Boettiger (2009) point to this shift in research dynamics in participatory research, highlighting that by addressing the issue of power in such research, the

participants' participation is increased; multiple knowledges from the research context are voiced. This enables participants who are implicated but often marginalized to address their own problems, express their knowledge, reflect on their knowledge, and offer an analysis of how to contribute to taking action and bringing about change. The purpose of such work is 'not to tell truths about the world but to open up spaces that allow us all to think about how our worlds may be changed' (Cotton, 2007, p. 41). As Wallerstein and Duran (2008) highlight, participatory research is not a simple linear process, so it is important for participants and researchers to engage with the knowledge in reflexive ways to develop their understanding and learning.

Reflexivity is a defining feature of participatory research and should thus be a constant part of the researcher's work (Holliday, 2007; Pillow, 2002) in making transparent the research processes and the epistemological stances (Ruby, 2000). In participatory visual work reflexivity is also central to participants; they should be enabled to be reflexive about their own lived experiences, as Pink (2001) suggests. Yang argues that 'researchers have come to acknowledge the intricate relationship between researcher and researched, and [should] critically reflect on the methods they choose, the roles they play,

and the power relationships they create in research settings.’ (Yang, 2012, p. 100).

We go on, now, to describe briefly the basics of four participatory visual methods that we explore further throughout the book. By referring to basics we are not implying that using such methods are without challenges and so we point them out as we go along (see also Buckingham, 2009; Guillemin & Drew, 2010).

Drawing

Claudia, with the research team in Nairobi, Kenya (Mitchell, Chege, Maina & Rothman, 2016), started with the end in mind, wanting to engage with the housing policy makers and getting them to see the conditions the children were living in and for them to improve the safety and security of the children in the Nairobi slum areas. Drawing was seen as an appropriate method for working with the young children and the drawings were intended to be included in the digital production to be shown to the policy makers (see [Chapters 6](#) and [7](#)).

Drawing, whether done with pen and paper, or digitally using software and a computer, is a simple method of data generation

that has been used across a wide range of social research areas. Theron, Mitchell, Smith, and Stuart (2011) in their edited book, *Picturing Research, Drawing as Visual Methodology*, frame the use of drawing as a participatory method for use with children, youth, and adults particularly in contexts in which participants have difficulty expressing themselves in language, or because of the nature of the topics under discussion. While adult participants and even young people past a certain age may often feel daunted by the idea of drawing because they think that an aesthetically pleasing masterpiece is required, it is in the process of drawing that their thoughts might become crystallized and clarified so that they produce an artefact that can be drawn on to ease them into a discussion of their viewpoint. Drawing as a method can facilitate the expression of and engagement with one's own ideas and understandings of the issue under study, and can also enable engagement with each other's work thus leading to improved mutual understanding. The simplicity of expressing ideas through drawing and generating something tangible as findings not only gives the participants immediate access to these ideas but also helps them to think about taking action and thus acquire and/or exercise agency which leads to giving them a sense of empowerment.

Figure 2.1 Drawing, depicting safe and unsafe spaces in Nairobi slum areas



Drawing from *More than Bricks and Mortar: Housing, the way children see it*

MacEntee and Mitchell (2011) address the thorny issue of analysis, pointing out how the drawings might be analysed, first by the participants through their writing captions and explaining their own drawings, but also collectively and in a participatory

way in collaboration with the researcher. This allays the fears of the researcher community of subjective analyses during which the researcher reads into the drawings what she wants to see, as Theron points out (Mitchell, Theron, Smith, & Stuart, 2011). Using drawings in publications, toolkits (Khan, 2015) and also in various forms of dissemination such as exhibitions and catalogues and videos (Mitchell, Chege, Maina, & Rothman, 2016) to engage relevant audiences is extremely valuable in, for example, reaching stakeholders and policy makers as can be seen in our work with children (see [Figure 2.1](#)) in slum areas in Nairobi, Kenya (Chege, Maina, Mitchell, & Rothman, 2014).

Photovoice

We worked together on our first research project, *Learning Together*, in South Africa, in a rural community ravaged by the HIV and AIDS epidemic. While in this project we wanted to understand how people in the community were affected by the epidemic in a time when HIV-related stigma prevented people in the community from disclosing their status and accessing treatment, we also wanted to contribute to opening up a space for the community to openly talk about HIV and AIDS. We understood that interviewing the participants on such a sensitive topic might not be easy, and knowing that working

with the visual eases expression of difficult and sensitive issues, and that if we could work around the ethics of the visual, the participants might generate photographs, from their perspectives, which could be displayed in strategic places in the community, such as in the community health clinic and schools, and so open up spaces for talking (Mitchell & De Lange, 2008). With this in mind we set out to generate photovoice data, as we explain here, which might be used in an exhibition in the community (see [Figure 2.2](#)).

Figure 2.2 Photograph, showing an exhibition in the *Learning Together* project



Photograph taken by Naydene de Lange

Photovoice, putting cameras in the hands of marginalized groups and working with the photographs in various ways,

requires participants, for example, to access meanings that they attach to situations of injustice and to explore whether and how these social conditions could be changed. Caroline Wang (1999) coined the term photovoice. She worked with Chinese peasant women who toiled in rice paddies and asked them to take photographs of their unsatisfactory working conditions. These were then shown to policy makers who had the power to improve their working conditions. In this example, photovoice created a democratic space in which these women could tell their stories, and, by having them framed in terms of human rights, be given power. Lykes and Crosby's (2013) work, like Wang's, situates photovoice work in the feminist tradition. De Lange, Mitchell, and Stuart (2007) in *Putting People in the Picture, Visual Methodologies for Social Change*, draw together examples of how photovoice has been used with various groups of participants and in different contexts in South Africa to engage communities about conditions that require change. As we have already said, it is often difficult issues that need to be addressed and in our photovoice work with girls and young women in Vietnam, for example (Mitchell, De Lange, & Nguyen, 2016) we could see that taking photos made it less difficult for them to talk about the sensitive issue of being excluded (see also Aldridge, 2007). As Coffey, Budgeon, and Cahill (2016, p.

15) put it, we, too, were impressed by the ‘performative, playful, staged and situated nature of the photos’.

Photovoice involves the use of any type of camera (disposable, point-and-shoot, digital, cellphone) available to the researcher and participants.¹ While there is not any orthodoxy to photovoice, participants typically work with a prompt like, for an example, ‘Take photographs of challenges and solutions to addressing HIV and AIDS in your community.’ Once the technicalities of the camera or device and how to take photographs have been explained, the participants work individually or in groups to take a small collection of photographs in response to the prompt. It is necessary that the participants understand visual ethics; they must make sure not to take photographs of people without their permission, or take photographs of themselves which might compromise them in some way, or take photographs that show faces, and so on (see Mitchell, 2011). When the photographs have been printed, the participants typically write captions and also explain what they intended to show in their photos (see [Figure 2.3](#)), and this is then followed by a discussion. This serves as a participatory analysis and prevents the researcher from imposing her own interpretation on the images. Dissemination could take the form

of exhibiting the collection of images in the community and to policymakers.

Participatory Video (and Cellfilming)

In our early participatory video work in the *Learning Together* project in a rural community in South Africa, we wanted to further understand the challenges in the community in the context of HIV and AIDS, through the making of participatory videos. We soon realized that if we set out with the idea of screening the videos in different community contexts, we needed to ensure that what was being shown did most good and least harm, and so we set out with the end in mind, to generate participatory videos (and later cellfilms) which could be used in the community to enable discussion about addressing HIV and AIDS (Moletsane, Mitchell, De Lange, Stuart, Buthelezi, & Taylor, 2009).

Figure 2.3 Photo poster, created by teachers to depict the challenges in the context of HIV and AIDS



Photograph taken by Naydene de Lange

Participatory video (and cellphilmimg), a method for working with communities has been used to explore issues troubling them. This approach allows participants to engage with an issue/topic through collaboratively planning, filming, and, sometimes, showing the video. This process includes generating solutions to the issues, as Choudry and Kapoor (2010) put it, in learning

from the ground up. The criticism that the research team arrives with the video cameras and, when they leave they take the equipment back with them thus rendering the community unable to continue similar work, falls away given the ubiquity of cellphones with good video camera functions. Dockney and Tomaselli (2009) coined the term cellphilm to denote a film made with a cellphone. This has changed the dynamic of our participatory video work. This resolved the access to equipment dilemma that we describe elsewhere (Milne, Mitchell, & De Lange, 2012). As we point out in the *Handbook of Participatory Video*, while participatory video 'often aims to reveal hidden social relations and provoke collective action' (p. 1) it enables a deeper engagement with communities and allows and promotes agency while also offering opportunity for reflexivity on the lived experiences and how these might be changed. In this regard Milne et al. (2012) point out the value of participatory video in terms of creating high-impact materials and its usefulness in contributing to policy outcomes. Participatory video is also central in getting the point across to as many people as possible in a way that is real, local, and, therefore, relevant to the community.

The video-making process like photovoice, typically involves

lead-in time, engaging the participants with the purpose of the work (Mitchell & De Lange, 2011). Operating in a participatory frame we ask the participants to work in groups and to brainstorm all the issues or challenges in their community and then to vote on these to pinpoint the most pressing one. We then facilitate a discussion on whether the topic is the most pressing and whether it could become the subject of a video. The groups then plan out and create a storyboard and film the story. Before filming, we provide, if video cameras are being used, a brief overview of how they work. No particular genre of getting the point across is stipulated, but we have found in our work in South Africa that many participants draw on performance and melodrama to stage their story. We have used a No-Editing-Required (NER) process: the shots are filmed one by one, by the participants pausing the camera, and then continuing to film the next shot. This means that the video is filmed right there and then and that the participants can view their video immediately after the filming (see [Figure 2.4](#)).

With the advent of our use of cellphones, we have followed the same process as we did with video cameras, and have found that the participants often spontaneously use a one-shot-shoot (OSS) (Mitchell, De Lange, & Moletsane, 2016) process, filming

all the planned shots on the storyboard as one shot, without pausing the filming. This filming without editing immediately provides further opportunity for discussion and reflection on the issues being captured. Such participatory videos or cellphilms made by the community, in the community, and for the community are materials for getting the ideas across in a visceral way to the broader community, other communities, and the policy makers. As we highlight in [Chapter 5](#), the screening of the videos or cellphilms is key to getting the message across (MacEntee, Burkholder & Schwab-Cartas, 2016; MacEntee & Mandrona, 2015; Mitchell, 2015b).

Figure 2.4 Participatory video, *Poverty*, showing teachers working in a vegetable garden at school



Screenshot of *Poverty*, a video made by teachers in the Learning Together project

Learning Together (Producer).(2006). *Poverty* [Participatory Video]. Durban: University KwaZulu-Natal.

Digital Story-telling

A digital story-telling project, *Taking Action II* with 18 Indigenous young people from various regions of Canada began with the idea that each of these participants would be involved in a week-long digital story-telling workshop in Toronto, and would then go back to their communities as youth leaders to screen

their productions related to HIV prevention activism (Flicker et al., in press). In such a ‘beginning with the end’ approach, the messages produced by the participants highlighted much more of the themes that youth themselves saw as critical (addressing Indigeneity and decolonization) as opposed to conventional public health messaging focusing on individual harm reduction strategies.

Digital story-telling, in similar ways to research methods such as drawing, photovoice, and participatory video, also enables participants to reflect back and to look forward to how things might change. Gubrium (2009), who uses digital story-telling in health promotion research, describes digital stories as ‘3- to 5-min visual narratives that synthesize images, video, audio recordings of voice and music, and text to create compelling accounts of experience.’ (p. 186) (see [Figure 2.5](#)). The power of these short digital stories in making hidden stories heard, and then acted upon and repurposed to inform social policy, should not be overlooked. In their *Participatory visual and digital methods*, Gubrium and Harper (2013) point out how the digitally produced stories can be used for advocacy purposes and to mobilize the community. Locating the use of digital story-telling in community-based participatory research, according to

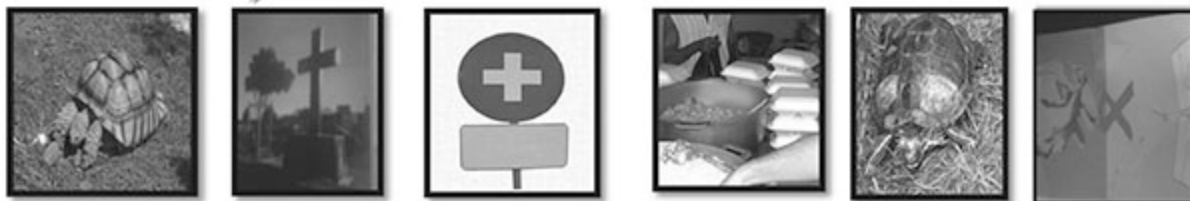
Gubrium (2009, p. 186), enables 'new knowledge to emerge that is mediated by Indigenous perspectives and returns this knowledge to communities as indigenously informed'.

As Gubrium highlights, the process of making digital stories entails having participants work in groups in story circles to tell their stories in a safe space. The stories might be about difficult issues, and, as with focus group discussions, the participants are required to keep the stories they hear confidential. Within the circles the participants listen to and do not interrupt each other but they are given the opportunity to make affirming comments and suggestions, keeping in mind that each story is owned by the participant. According to Lambert (2006) there are seven elements important to digital story-telling. These include point of view, dramatic question, emotional content, voice, soundtrack/music, economy, and pacing all of which have to be kept in mind when one is creating a digital story. The story is thus written and rewritten several times to ensure that it adheres to these elements and then it is turned into a digital story, using the voice of the owner of the story, and, sometimes, a selection of multimedia content. Gubrium (2009) argues that in the discussion of participants' stories, 'a unity of mission develops, forming a sense of collaborative accomplishment' (p.

186), which could be turned into taking action. She adds that the story circles can also offer a sense of healing to those who have experienced difficulties.

Figure 2.5 Digital story, *Tortoise's Story*

I am a tortoise. I chose this animal because I wish I could just hide in the presence of people I know. I was born with HIV and I have recently started ARVs. It is hard for me to go to the clinic and get my ARVs because I always hear people - adults, even those with HIV - gossiping about me when I am in the clinic to get my treatment. They do not know that I was born with it [HIV]. They say "izingane zishasha ziqale ucas" ["nowadays children have an early sex debut"] because they think I contracted it through sex. My friend's mother works in the same clinic and helps me with my needs such as the ARVs and the food that we get from the clinic. I always throw it [food] away in fear of bringing it to the school since I start at the clinic then to [go] school. The other students call me names and judge me because of my status. I fear carrying the food parcel because it is known that it is donated to the HIV-positive people. I need the food, this affects me at school. Even my school work has declined. My mother passed away two years ago and it has been hard for me as a teenager, growing with no one to talk to or no one who cares about me. I wish people can come to a better understanding about HIV and stop stigmatising so that I can feel accepted, especially [because I am orphaned] orphans. I chose a tortoise because I am trying to live with a purpose, but when someone offends me I crawl back into my dark, cold and lonely shell. After that I have to come out again and rebuild my character by trying to be optimistic ...



Tortoise's Story, a digital story made by one of Thoko's participants

Mnisi, T. (2014).

Cross-cutting Features of Participatory Visual Methods

These methods draw on the centrality of both the process and on the visual/artistic productions. Both imply the intense engagement of the participants, thus ensuring optimal participation, developing the understanding of the issue under study, and creating opportunities for taking the issue forward. We offer some cross-cutting features of using participatory visual methods that are particularly powerful in the context of community and policy dialogue.

Digital Production

First, the use of the visual opens up a variety of possibilities for exploration and digital production. While it is argued that the internet creates an egalitarian space, Schradie (2011) warns that a digital production gap remains that leaves the vast majority of people with little possibility for digital production. Using research methods that draw on digital production then can enable those on the other side of the digital divide to participate in production and to acquire new skills. Geldenhuys (2016), for example, explored rural school children's understanding of gender-based violence in their community by using digital drawing, a digital archive, and digital story-telling,

all of which enabled them to participate as digital consumers and digital producers, through remixing content for use in engaging other school children in a dialogue about addressing gender-based violence. Although Schradie (2011, p. 145) suggests that 'elite voices still dominate in the new digital commons', participatory visual research methods seem to enable access for those who are most often marginalized, and whose voices are not heard, in particular in relation to policy-making. Through digital production, their collectively produced knowledge can be disseminated on digital platforms, thus enabling a wider reach of audience.

Participation and Co-production

A second point is that participation is seen to be key when we are using visual methods, making the co-production of knowledge possible. Power, however, is linked to participation and hence participation may vary at different stages of the research process (Van der Riet & Boetigger, 2009), depending on how power is shared. Ensuring meaningful participation is challenging. We refer to how several authors have conceptualized participation, and focus on the end they had in mind. While the end each one suggests is commendable, reaching it is no mean feat and is not without challenges,

requiring the researchers and participants to negotiate relationships as well as the realities of contexts. In Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation, for example, the highest level of participation is participant control; in Hart's (1992) ladder it is youth-initiated, shared decision-making with adults; in Pretty's (1995) ladder it is self-mobilization; in White's typology (1996) it is transformative participation; and in Treseder's (1997) it is child-initiated and directed participation. Getting participants to participate at these levels means that power shifts away from the researcher to the participants. Clearly, when there is meaningful participation at such level participant autonomy is enhanced, thus paving the way for sustainability of agency and social change.

Participant Use

It is important to recognize that the creation of a production enables the exploration of the issue under study but also leaves the research participants and community with the actual productions to return to, to reflect upon, and to use individually or collectively. As Flicker et al. (2014) highlight in their work with Indigenous youth in Canada, the productions are, in and of themselves artful. These productions include drawings, photographs and photo posters, participatory videos and

cellfilms, and digital stories. The drawings could be low-tech paper and pencil/pen/charcoal/crayon individual productions or high-tech digital drawings, each with a caption created by the producer. In photovoice the products can be printed photographs with captions added by the participant or photo posters containing printed photographs and clarifying text. However, we have also found that some participants preferred to create PowerPoint slides with their images, so the materiality of images is not necessarily a given. The participatory videos made using a video camera or a cellphone could be short two-to-three-minute films made in groups, with title, subtitles, and credits. These short videos could be assembled into a composite video that draws together the participatory visual work done and that consists of contextualizing footage and the collection of short videos, ending with a section that raises further issues or asks the audience members to consider how they might contribute to resolving the issue (see [Chapter 6](#)). The digital story-telling process enables the production of short digital stories which could again be used to elicit dialogue.

Dissemination and Knowledge Mobilization

Finally, all these approaches offer the potential for widespread dissemination through exhibitions, catalogues, and screenings,

extending the individual or group knowledge and learning to a wider audience. A particularly compelling feature that we build into both the training that we do on participatory visual research and in our work directly with participants is the idea of what we have come to call ‘over and over and over again’.² While we sometimes refer to it lightly in relation to the refrain of the vintage 1960s pop song by the Dave Clark Five, ‘Over and over and over again’ we offer it as a serious point: a set of photographs or drawings, a set of cellfilms, participatory videos or digital stories have high currency for being exhibited or screened many times over.

Farrington, Bebbington, Wellard, and Lewis (1993) talk of narrow inclusion when the participatory research is undertaken with a small group of participants but we see that it could be extended to wide participation through screenings and exhibitions. For example, in our participatory research with a group of girls and young women with disabilities in Vietnam, they produced drawings of how they see themselves in their community. The collection of drawings with participant-produced captions were exhibited to an audience consisting of the participants themselves, community members, NGOs, and policy makers (De Lange, Nguyen & Nghiem, 2016) and

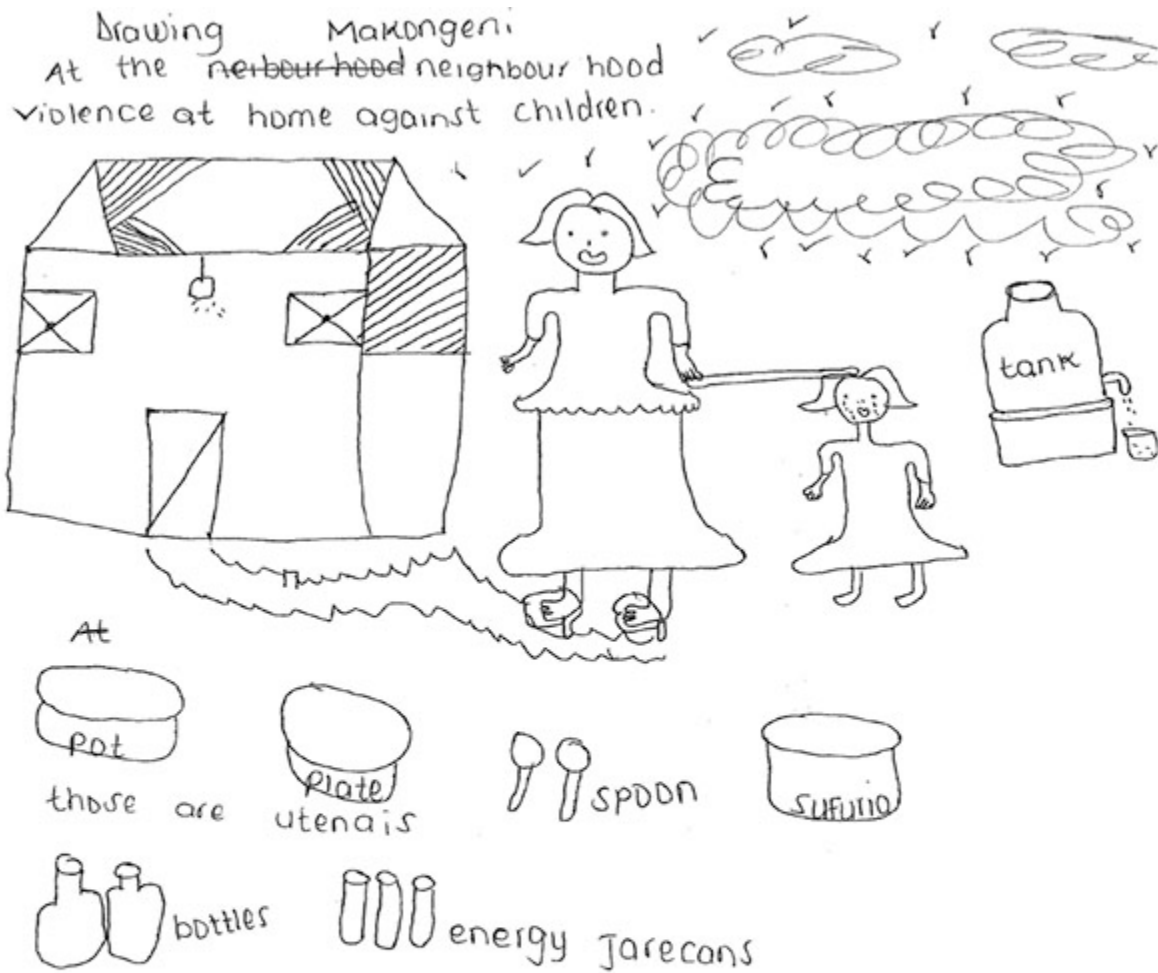
engagement and comment was invited. A second example is the collaborative video production of Eberts and Cotton (2008), *Where the water meets the sky*, made with a small group of rural women in a remote area of Zambia to explore gender violence and HIV and AIDS, but which was disseminated to the whole community with the women themselves presenting their video, engaging the community, and raising awareness of the issue with the goal of bringing about change.

Which Mode?

We are often asked questions about each of these modes of representation and whether they work similarly? Are there certain themes and issues that are best addressed through one mode versus another? In the broad area of visual representation these are of course broad questions that are also framed by the study of drawing, photography, and video production, each of which has its own bodies of literature and conventions. In some cases there will even be convergences as we see in the use of visual art in creating a drawing and the use of drawing in creating a storyboard as part of the participatory video process. [Figure 2.6](#) is a drawing created by one of the children in a project on safety and security in an informal settlement in Kenya. Participants highlight the storying

process represented in the drawing. [Figure 2.7](#), a storyboard produced by a group of teacher educators in a workshop addressing HIV and AIDS similarly draws attention to the use of drawing and writing in mapping out the story. At the same time, when located within the area of participatory research the questions are perhaps more contained since, as we highlight above, it is the narratives of the producers and the emerging dialogue that is so critical.

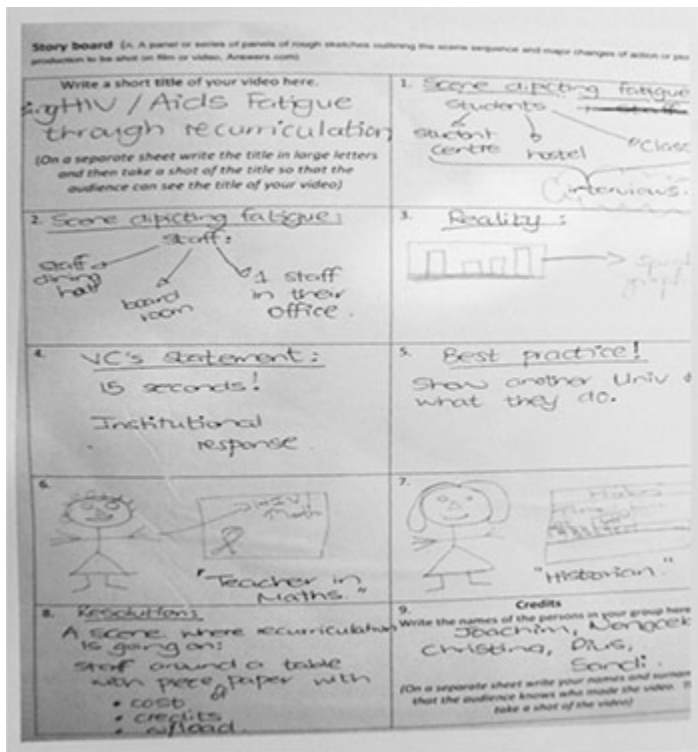
Figure 2.6 Drawing, depicting home as an unsafe space in Nairobi slum areas



- the girl she is being abused by his mother because she did not wash the utensils
- her mother was very tired to saw that girl And that girl dlicated to ran a way from that home house.
- her mother after that girl ran a way the mother cook his own food, fetch water from the river, cook for whole family.

Drawing from *More than Bricks and Mortar: Housing, the way children see it*

Figure 2.7 Storyboard, *Integrating the Disintegrated*, created by teacher educators



Storyboard created in the HIV and AIDS Education Community of Practice

HIV&AIDS Education Community of Practice (2011). *Using a different lens for HIV and AIDS Education*. Port Elizabeth: HIV and AIDS Education Research Chair, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University.

While this is clearly an area that warrants further study, we can point to some work that has begun to explore these questions. Digital storytelling as applied to work in the area of identity is

often carried out as an individual activity (see for example St John Ward, 2015), also in the area of HIV-related stigma (see for example Mnisi, 2014), although MacEntee (2016b) offers examples of how young people have worked in small groups to develop digital stories about HIV and AIDS and sexuality. Mitchell, Walsh, and Moletsane (2006) consider the ways in which gender violence might be taken up differently in projects involving young people, depending on whether the work involves drawing, photovoice or participatory video. Drawing is more likely to be an individual activity. Picture taking in photovoice can be either an individual activity or a group activity although typically, as we note above, the analysis is done by the groups. Participatory video, because it is typically done in small groups ‘can create a strong collective response that includes both producers and viewers – although this could overshadow the individual’ (p. 111). To examine further meaning-making through digital representations of gender violence, Weber and Mitchell (2007) offer an analysis of a video, *Rape*, produced by a group of secondary school boys in KwaZulu-Natal. In their analysis they detail the various ways that participatory video contributes to creating a collective response, highlighting the significance of such features as constructedness, collectivity, embodiment, and reflexivity and negotiation (see also De

Lange, Olivier, & Wood, 2008).

Which Device? Which Technologies?

We would be remiss if we did not say something about technology given the focus on digital production in this chapter and in the rest of the book. When we first started doing participatory visual work using photovoice in 2003, the technology debate for us was primarily between using simple point-and-shoot self-loading cameras or single-use disposable cameras although we were also inspired by the more artistic focus that Wendy Ewald (2000) describes in *Secret Games: Collaborative Work with Children, 1969–1999* and her numerous other publications that highlight her work with children. As for using participatory video with communities in 2006, the main technology was some type of a camcorder, although again we have also been inspired by the work of Sadie Bening and her innovative use of a Fisher Price pixel camera she received as a gift when she was 16 from her father (Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2002). Although initially angered about receiving a child's camera, she turned its use into an artistic mode of expression. With the advent of digital cameras, especially those with a good video function, we of course found that it was possible to do photovoice and participatory video on

a single device. Around 2010 thanks to the ubiquity of mobile phones, especially in our work in rural South Africa, the idea of the cellphilm emerged and the cellphone camera ensured that participatory visual research could easily be done. However, with the proliferation of tablets with similar functionality for video and photo production, the questions are now more related to cost, access, fashion, opportunities for dissemination through a variety of social media platforms, and the principle of building on the media making practices and technologies that already exist in a community. We highlight this point as a way to maximize local engagement and to minimize the control of the equipment primarily in the hands of researchers. New debates of course emerge: Is a digital production created on a tablet still called a cellphilm? Does the 'everydayness' of a particular technology or device minimize its significance? What is gained and what is lost through various technologies? What are the limitations? We have discovered for example that although everyone in a group might have a cellphone that is appropriate for cellphilm production, participants might not have enough memory left on their device to produce a film. Some adaptations also require more sophisticated knowledge than was required for making a simple N-E-R video using a camcorder or a 2010 entry-level cellphone, and require additional editing knowledge and skills

unless the participants opt for a one-shot-shoot film. Time may also be a feature then, something that is particularly important in a workshop format where it is key that participants get to screen their productions during the session.

At the same time we have known participatory visual researchers to opt in 2017 for single-use disposable cameras as a way to 'liberate' the process or as one of our colleagues commented 'to capture the moment', something that is perhaps not that different from the popular practice of having disposable cameras available for guests at a wedding to capture the moment. As Mitchell McLarnon observed in relation to a project with Montreal youth:

We discussed how with cellphones and digital cameras, we were constantly looking for the perfect shot and spent more time editing shots and images and less time in the moment. We started with one camera to be shared amongst 5 participants but soon they each asked to have their own disposable camera so that they could concurrently document their home lives The project continued over the entire summer with some youth carrying the cameras around on

shoestrings, snapping moments throughout the day and others taking photographs while they were partying. We eventually did digitize the photos to upload them to online platforms they engage with. Interestingly, one youth even scanned the printed copies to preserve the 'original graininess.' I call the disposable camera aesthetic 'the original Instagram filter'. (Mitchell McLarnon, personal communication, March 20, 2017)

We might think of this disposable camera aesthetic as aligning nicely with the work with Bening's Fisher Price aesthetic, or with the pin-hole camera, or even photobooth photography as a precursor to the selfie and perhaps the foundation of participant-led visual research. As Hines (2002) observed of photobooth photography; 'It doesn't matter whether you are in a train station, on a busy street, or in the middle of an amusement park What matters is that you are both photographer and subject. Alone in the booth, you forgo the behaviours and attitudes expected when a camera is forced upon you. You cannot be coaxed into position; you cannot be commandeered to smile In the photobooth picture, unlike any other portrait or photograph, truth and fiction easily commingle. In a

photobooth we choose the moment and the way we represent ourselves. We choose the truth' (n.p.). As for polaroid aesthetics, very well-known photographers such as Robert Mapplethorpe and Andy Warhol used polaroids in the 1970s, and various artistic practices with polaroids continued until 2007. There is an emerging new interest in this earlier technology. Claudia worked with Super8 film in a participatory way with ninth graders in a small fishing village in Nova Scotia in the 1970s (see Mitchell, 2011). We however see a renewed interest in these earlier technologies and what the medium itself might portray. More than anything though, this discussion on choice of technology should be a reminder of the need for continuous reflection and re-assessment on the part of the research team in close consultation with community members and participants.

A Case Study: Addressing Campus-based Sexual Violence

When other researchers ask questions about the design and findings of a participatory visual research project, we find that it is often difficult to actually answer the question 'How did you get here?' especially when one gives a 20-minute presentation at a conference. We so often want to show the cellphilm or

photo exhibition, *and* talk about the participants, *and* talk about the policy context, *and* talk about all the dialogues *and* talk about how we came to be doing the work in the first place, *and* where the project is now. Projects sometimes go on for a long time, and, as we highlight in another publication, long after the research team leaves the field, or long after the original participants have left (De Lange & Mitchell, 2012b). Often there is not a clear beginning, middle, and end, especially if one works in the same community over a period of years while drawing on different funding sources. We even challenged ourselves to try to produce a visual essay of a project as a journal article as a way of addressing some of the challenges of representation (De Lange, Moletsane, & Mitchell, 2015). In order to show the beginning with the end in sight, we offer a case study of our work on addressing sexual violence on a university campus in South Africa, a problem that is becoming worldwide (Bennett, 2009; Phipps & Smith, 2012; Schaffer, 2016). The focus is on the use of participatory visual methodology to influence broader policy processes in relation to addressing sexual violence at a university.

Beginning at the Beginning

To situate the case study, we start first with the policy context.

This does not have to be the first step in any study but it is an important area to consider early on and throughout the study. What are the participants seeking to change? What is it about the visual that is important? Who needs to hear or see what they have to say? In this case study the broad policy context is sexual violence, and the very specific policy context is campus-based sexual violence.

In South Africa violence affects every sphere of life (Dartnall & Gevers, 2015). It is a country with one of the highest rates of sexual assault in the world (Abrahams et al., 2009). Sexual violence within as well as outside sexual relationships requires being addressed continually (De Lange et al., 2015; Jewkes, 2010; Wood, Lambert, & Jewkes, 2007) because it has far-reaching public health and human rights implications. This broader context of sexual violence in South Africa provides the frame for understanding what is happening in the higher education sector since university campuses are no strangers to sexual and gendered violence (Phipps & Smith, 2012; Schaffer, 2016). Research, for example, points to coercive sexual practices and gender-based violence (Clowes, Shefer, Fouten, Vergnani, & Jacobs, 2009); to transactional sex (Shefer, Clowes, & Vergnani, 2012); as well as institutional violence

(Dowler, Cuomo, & Laliberte, 2014) in South African universities. More recently the South African news media reported on the rape culture in place at some universities, the protest demonstrations by young women demanding proper investigations into cases of rape at universities (Mail & Guardian, 2016), as well as how university policies are set aside when it comes to reporting rape.

The Constitution of South Africa protects the rights of all South Africans, and commits the state to addressing discrimination and inequality, including gender-based violence, while Acts such as the Protection from Harassment Act 2010 (No. 17 of 2011) and the Criminal Law (sexual offences and related matters) Amendment Act 32 of 2007 focus specifically on gender-based violence. It is within this policy framework that universities are required to formulate their own sexual harassment policies to prevent gender-based violence and sexual violence on campus. While the university policies might be meaningful, they do not seem to be able to halt the gender injustices on campus. There are several reasons for this; relevant policy is not implemented; sexual violence is normalized; and ensuring gender equality at universities is not prioritized. Bennett (2009), in an article entitled, *Policies and*

sexual harassment in higher education: Two steps forward and three steps somewhere else therefore argues that ‘feminist activism in South Africa needs once more to theorize and challenge overt and covert forms of sexual violence facing higher education communities’ (p. 7).

Positioning

Although we have engaged in participatory visual research in many different settings, the case study we discuss here is one that is particularly close to the work we do of conducting research and teaching in a university setting, and, at the same time, it reflects a key theme in much of the research we have carried out together in rural settings. We started thinking about the vulnerability of first-year women students entering the university, especially young women who come from rural areas, because of our work in such areas where sexual violence is already a huge problem (De Lange, Mitchell, & Bhana, 2012; Moletsane, Mitchell, & Lewin, 2015). We know of the challenges that young women often face just to graduate from high school and to get accepted into university. In some of the settings where we have worked, it has been hard, if not impossible, to reach policy makers, perhaps because we ourselves had to try to figure out who the policy makers might be. But we

have been working in university settings for decades and we saw that we could bring to bear some of our insider knowledge on what from the ground up or grassroots policy-making could look like. From our previous experiences of using participatory visual methodology we also knew how powerful working with the visual could be – powerful in raising consciousness and in enabling agency, but also powerful in persuading (Burns, 2011) those who might view the visual productions, in this instance the university policy makers. So beginning with the end in mind we worked with 14 young women to consider how best we might get our voices across to the university policy makers.

We chose to engage with the purposively selected first-year women students in a safe space away from campus and where we could work and stay together for two days over a weekend. Such a retreat approach (Mitchell, DeLange, & Moletsane, 2014) provides a conducive space for working on a sensitive issue such as sexual violence on campus. We engaged the 14 women students in introductory activities to first get to know each other, and also to introduce the work. With all the necessary preliminary work done, talking about ethics, and visual ethics, and about how we would handle any discomfort or upset they might experience, we began exploring their

understanding of sexual violence on campus.

We used participatory video as a research method to engage with the issue and to have the participants represent their understanding of sexual violence on campus by exploring the prompt, *feeling safe and feeling unsafe* on campus. The young women worked in four groups and used cellphones to produce four videos (see [Figure 2.8](#)). The videos themselves were illuminating and diverse in relation to the themes and issues they raise. *Careless Securities* highlights how the failure of security personnel to fulfil their task professionally leads to unsafe situations for girls in the residences. *Getting into Res[idence]*, as the title suggests, talks about how personnel at some off-campus residences coerce the new women students to have sex with them in exchange for a placement. *The Game* shows the vulnerability of young women students when members of the public come onto campus to sports events, and *Xanadu Square* depicts how girls are sexually harassed by their male peers when passing a particular square in front of the male residence. In those early sessions we viewed these productions together and discussed the messages contained in each of the videos.

The cellfilms evoked a great deal of discussion in the group especially about the idea of getting the message out about the issues that had been raised. The idea of audience, however, also came into play, and while the cellfilms were, of course, available for screening, there were some limitations (screening space and time, and interpretation of the messages), so the idea of producing a simple and clear message that a poster might convey seemed like a useful plan. With this in mind, we worked with the young women to make policy posters. As we describe in greater detail in [Chapter 7](#), policy posters consist of a photograph or a drawing to represent the issue, along with a message. Here, too, the process of participation deepened and six policy posters (two new issues that emerged during the process were added), with the following messages were produced.

Figure 2.8 Cellphilms, *Getting into Res, Xanadu Square, Careless Securities, The Game*



Screenshots of *Getting into Res, Xanadu Square, Careless Securities, The Game*, cellphilms made by Girls Leading Change

Girls Leading Change (Producer) (2015). *Getting into Res, Xanadu Square, Careless Securities, The Game* [Cellphilms]. Port Elizabeth: Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University.

My body your toy? No such luck; Safety in our home away from home, we need to feel protected and safe in our residences; My right to privacy, your responsibility to respect it! Male visitors to women's residences compromise the privacy of women students when using the bathrooms; Unsafe in my space; Sexual harassment, we are victims of our protectors! Who should we trust? and Date rape, it is

still rape! Report it!

Working with the cellfilms and the policy posters, the young women considered what needed to be done. What could they do by themselves and what did the relevant policy makers at university need to do to address sexual violence on campus? We introduced the idea of writing action briefs, which explained the particular situation on campus, outlined the problem, and then listed several carefully thought through actions which could be taken (see [Chapter 7](#) for Policy/Action briefs). In total, six action briefs were produced which were linked to the policy posters, which were developed from the cellfilms.

While the participatory video process was, as always, quite open-ended and informed by decisions the young women took throughout the participatory research process, we, as researchers, worked to insert an approach based on beginning with the end in mind (see [Figure 2.9](#)). We conveyed that idea as a strategy to them since we thought about what would be needed to facilitate campus-wide discussion about policy, and with which policy makers. The set of productions (four cellfilms, six policy posters, and six action briefs) were to be used in the meetings we were able to set up with a number of

different university policy makers (see De Lange, Moletsane, & Mitchell, 2015), representing the various facets of the university community such as top management, residence, campus security, and institutional transformation. While we, as researchers, facilitated setting up the meetings, the young women took ownership of the presentations. They wanted T-shirts with their activist group name, Girls Leading Change, printed on them to ensure a united look but also to reflect their goal. Together we composed a PowerPoint slideshow and each young woman prepared to present a section or two. The young women responded to the questions coming from the audience. Following Jessica Taft (2010), these in themselves were powerful in strengthening the young women's sense of agency and political activism to ensure their own safety and well-being.

It is important to ask what difference this has made in bringing about change so far. We have seen the change the engagement has brought about in three areas; the young women's agency, political engagement, and in the university context. Their agency can be seen, for example, in taking up invitations to address audiences on issues of sexual violence, as well as initiating their own activist activities in the university

(participating in the #bringbackourgirls campaign against Boko Haram's abduction of young girls in Nigeria) but also in their communities (addressing school youth in their rural home towns on safety and well-being). Their political engagement – and the idea of political listening that we introduced in [Chapter 1](#) – is seen for example, in their talking with policy makers at the university to make the issue of sexual violence a priority; putting forward what should be done; and participating on a national level in the *Agenda Feminist Dialogues*.³ Material change in the university context, as a result of their work, was monitored and tracked when the young women visually documented changes they saw as a result of their engagement with the university policy makers. Using their cellphones, they took photographs of the improved lighting for security purposes and the clearing of overgrown areas to eliminate possible hiding places for attackers to ensure the safety of personnel and students according to the requirements of the university Occupational Health and Safety Policy. They also took photographs of clearly displayed codes of conduct in the residences that adhere to the House Rules and Procedures Policy. The Higher Education Act also requires an Institutional Forum which, inter alia, has to address issues of gender. While the university does have

a Gender Equity Policy, a very significant change was the university's steps to initiate the establishment of a Gender Forum. Some of the Girls Leading Change members were invited to participate in the initial meetings.

Figure 2.9 Participatory visual research methodology design of *Girls Leading Change* study

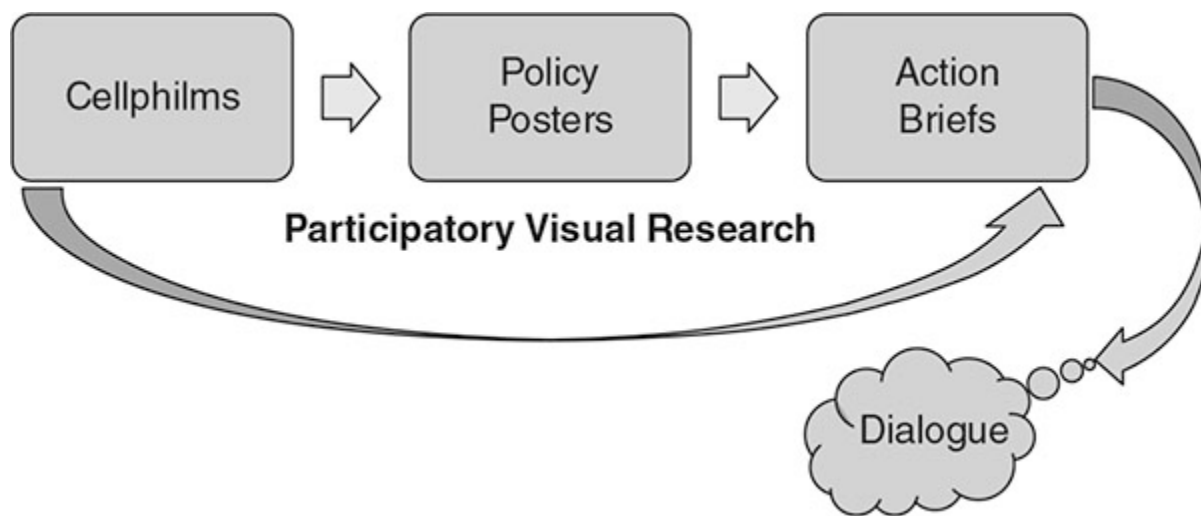


Diagram developed by Naydene de Lange

Some Challenges Encountered

Participatory visual research can throw up several technical and conceptual challenges. While the current era is said to be a digital one, not all participants in the case study of the Girls Leading Change, especially those who are marginalized, share and participate online. They do not necessarily fit the profile of what Howe and Strauss (2000) refer to as the Y generation or

Millennials. This can make digital production a tedious process since we as researchers have to ensure that the participants gain the necessary skills to enable them to do the participatory visual work, as in the case of using digital software to make a drawing, or using a video camera or cellphone to make a video, or using digital tools to create a digital story. In our work with the young women, one challenge we experienced in making the participatory videos using cellphones was getting the participants to understand how the camera works so that the images in the end product are not upside down or sideways. Not all cellphone cameras have a pause button, so we sometimes needed to do a one-shot-shoot to film the story. The cellphones we used, however, had a pause button, and so pausing to stop the filming between the shots of the storyboard, often left them with a cellfilm consisting of the participants talking about how the shot should be filmed, instead of the shot itself.⁴

Doing participatory visual work is also time consuming since the process of producing the visual product is important in enabling the agency of the participants. In each of the methods we refer to, the process takes time; the participants have to think about and engage with the issue under study; learn how to use the equipment to express their thinking; learn how to work within

the particular visual method; and then follow a participatory process of data production; explaining their production; getting feedback; and even considering how to adjust the production to make the point they want to put across clearer. Throughout the process there needs to be lots of time for discussion among the participants and with the research team. Dissemination also requires preparation; scheduling the meetings; preparing the presentation or the exhibition; and then of course engaging with the policy makers.

Authors such as Thomas and Britton (2012, p. 209) write about the aesthetics in artistic collaboration, referring to the 'quality of the art' in relation to social and cultural practices. They point out that what is considered aesthetically pleasing in one culture might not be considered so in another culture. For us, this raises the issue of whether the visual production should be improved or left as it is to reveal the original work of the participants. We have grappled with this and even though we have digitized the productions, we have not tampered with the original composition of the representations. As viewers ourselves, we might try to fix sound, but we have learned that the flavour of the local and the real is appropriate and appealing when we are showing the cellfilms in the community and

to the relevant policy makers. The policy posters, too, might have benefited from an artist's airbrush. We do wonder what the policy posters might have looked like had an artist been included in our research team and been part of the process of making them.

While the participatory visual research process often concludes with a collective expression of the issue under study, the research team and the participants have to carefully engage with the issue of power and ownership. Miller and Smith (2012) have written about this in relation to participatory video and the dissemination of the work, and Wheeler (2012) has written about it in relation to participatory video and engaging in policy processes. For us the dissemination should be negotiated, in terms of what format it will take; where it will happen; how the work will be exhibited and engaged with; who gets to speak; and who gets to answer questions? In the case study described above, we presented the work to the policy makers as a team of researchers and participants with each one contributing in her own way. As months went by the young women grew in confidence and took full ownership of the presentations; they responded to the questions, enabling us, the researchers, to withdraw from the presentations and wait and watch in the

wings. On their own, too, the young women decided to add song, typical of their Indigenous cultures, to introduce the presentations and to conclude them. This turned the presentations into powerful ones that accentuated their indigeneity and that contextualized the work in a participatory way.

Finally, then, when does a project actually end? When do we measure and/or describe the impact? Drawing on the question of what gets left behind and the fact that participants get on with their lives, regardless of what we might see as interventions, the idea of studying what difference this makes becomes all the more complex, as we explore in [Chapter 8](#). Working over several years, writing and presenting findings for different audiences, we know that there are clearly many different ways of talking about the impact of this work that just keeps going on and on. For example, long after the young women had presented their policy posters and action briefs to some of the policy makers on campus, it was clear that they had much more to say and indeed, perhaps reaching these policy makers was only a tiny part of what needed to happen. In a follow-up session where the 14 young women reflected on the processes thus far, it was evident that talking about sexual violence so publicly

and in a collective way had also evoked a great deal of the personal for them. A follow-up writing workshop led to their writing a collection of personal narratives, *14 Times a Woman: Indigenous Stories from the Heart* (2016). This work has, in turn, been choreographed into a performed reading with the young women dressed in their Indigenous clothes reading their stories to an audience, thus sparking further dialogue about being a young African woman at university in South Africa.

Conclusion

We have shown how we see the value of participatory visual methodology to envisage and inform policy dialogue and return here to the idea of beginning with the end in mind. A collection of drawings or photographs, or a set of cellfilms or digital stories presented to policy makers by the participants themselves has the power to engage the audience and to evoke responses which could move them to bring about change. A policy informed by the people's from the ground up local knowledge recognizes the importance of how communities experience their realities and what changes they want and how these could be brought about. In this way, policies that are made have a better chance of being implemented and of

contributing to social change.

A participatory visual research study designed with the end in mind builds in appropriate methodological opportunities to explore the social issues under study and to enable different facets to be made visible and multiple voices to be heard. It is in these methodological engagements that participants reflect on and deepen their own understanding of the social problem and begin to explore the potential of their own agency. When the participants are community members who might not necessarily have the confidence or opportunity to engage with policy makers who are tasked to ensure that policies address the issues on the ground, the self-created visual artefacts are critical resources that can be used in the process of dialogue, and to ensure that policy makers can see close up what the social realities that need to be changed, actually look like.

Key Points of the Chapter

- Starting off by thinking – with the participants – what the issue is that needs to be addressed and how the results might be shared with audiences to enable community and policy dialogue to contribute to social change.
- Framing participatory visual methodology within a critical

and transformative paradigm in the project design.

- Regarding the visual productions as key in enabling the participants to drive the social change when the researcher leaves the field.
- Understanding the range of participatory visual methods available (for example, drawing, photovoice, participatory video and digital story-telling) and their relative benefits and limitations.
- Considering the potential of participation and co-production, the produced artefact, and audience (disseminating and mobilizing knowledge) in the design of a participatory visual research project for social change.
- A case study as example of a participatory visual research project: Young women at a South African university contributing to change in relation to sexual violence.

Notes

¹ We note that the practices of finding photographs, often on the internet, is also sometimes regarded as a type of photovoice, and indeed in one of the projects that we refer to in [Chapters 4 and 7](#), many of the participants found photographs on the internet as representative of what they saw as change, rather

than taking photographs with a camera themselves. The participants did create their own captions and these eventually led to discussions about change so in some respects this could be regarded as photovoice. Most researchers, however, follow the practice of participants actually producing photographs.

² At a Higher Education AIDS Education Community of Practice training session we introduced the idea of using and showing the visual productions many times by chanting ‘over and over again’.

³ Agenda and Feminist dialogues, <http://radiodut.co.za/the-agenda-feminist-hosts-dialogue-talk/>

⁴ We acknowledge the range of digital media available, the changing landscape of apps that could be used for cellfilming, and how these various apps might influence the productions. Snapchat and Instagram, for example, offer easier ways to share cellfilms, but the time constraints on how long a particular ‘shot’ might last can change the type of production. The relatively simple project cellphones that we have typically used have made No-Editing-Required and one-shot-shoot approaches very easy to accommodate. At the same time we

recognize the quality of the production and various aesthetics may change.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781526416117.n2>