The area of “participatory video” is both a good fit for and a distant project of many communication scholars. Today, the idea of “participatory” research still presents a major hot button for many social scientists. But it is in describing the power of and process of participatory communication in development work that this volume is successful. In *Participatory Video: Images that Transform and Empower*, Shirley White has collected essays that report on the work of numerous individuals and organizations that use video to bring about change in the context of “development” practice.

The types of change addressed in the book are both incremental and large scale, though all are generally tied to grand projects of social and economic change through the purview of “development studies.” The authors in the text describe ways in which participatory video can be used to encourage change in both attitudes and social behaviour in an attempt to solicit the participation of communities to identify development solutions that are within their reach. The change addressed in the book, however, tends to concentrate on changing the ways in which members of the community engage in the development process in an effort to make their needs, wishes, and material realities known to the “outside” forces of development. On this level, the book is both successful and limited.

While the book takes into account a wide range of approaches for using video to transform people, relationships, perceptions, and understandings, it privileges the idea of community participation almost exclusively in the work of development. The contributors recount their experiences based on intensive field-research projects, and comment on the process of participatory communication practices by reflecting on extensive research—all in the context of “the developing world.”

While this might be seen as a shortcoming of the book, it stands to reason that if the main application of the formal method of “participatory video” is in the context of development studies, the authors could and would only comment on its application in such settings. It will take a small amount of work for a ‘non-development’ focused communication scholar to transfer the experiences in this book to non-(international) development settings. That is, for someone in Canada interested in using participatory video for ‘local media advocacy,’ the discussions of process might offer a good starting point, but the examples will not offer the most transferable benchmarks. There is, however, a valuable, if brief, description of a Community Communication Centre Model that has a lot to offer to anyone interested in developing participatory advocacy communication practices in any setting.

Interestingly, the practice of participatory video has its roots in the National Film Board (NFB) of Canada. In the 1960s, the NFB, who were at the time actively involved in screen education that saw them exploring the power of educating ordinary people about the power of media, came to the realization that film and video production could offer possibilities for people in “marginalized” communities to have their voices heard in the process of policy development. Early experiments in participatory video, today called the *Fogo Process* named after the Fogo Islands area of Newfoundland where the practice first emerged, were designed to empower residents of a fishing-dependent community to create films about the impact of declining fish stocks and policies developed to deal with this decline. It was thought that the distance between policymakers and effected communities could be bridged by facilitating members of the community to create films and videos that reflected their lived experiences of fishing and social policies in changing economic times.

After describing the *Fogo Process* and the practice of participatory video, the collection of essays paint a picture of how participatory video is a valuable asset in other development situations. While one can easily argue that Canada is not a developing country, the context of resource dependency and pervasive poverty that existed in the Fogo Islands in
the 1960s is often likened to the material and social context of most Southern countries today. In this way, the book is organized to introduce the area of participatory video, discuss its history, and then consider contemporary applications of the practice in “the developing world.”

What the book offers is a good introduction to the area of participatory video. It does so in a logical order divided into four sections. The first section addresses process. The second section discusses the ability of video to transform the process of whose input is involved in development decisions. The third section concentrates on empowerment. Here, the volume provides case studies, particularly of work with marginalized women, showing how community members can be “empowered” to make their voices heard in the process of development and beyond. The final section provides more case studies that concentrate on how participatory videos are used in making development decisions, finally offering possibilities for the future of the practice.

This volume effectively introduces the area of participatory video in a readable and well supported way. It provides a number of case studies from different parts of the world, with differently constituted communities. It does not, however, define participation as an act of consensus, but rather as an act of involvement. The various case studies do not really address how all members of developing communities can participate in video production—just how participatory video can be used by communities to have some of their voices heard. One must assume that in all circumstances, there is a political dimension involved in determining what is in the best interest of the community. By outlining the ways in which communities who create videos and other communication capacities to express themselves can be active contributors to development decisions, the book assumes that some participation is the binary opposite to non-participation. The book does not, however, address whether participation is equal to “the greater good” or simply the utopic vision of some community members and not others.

This book will be useful for anyone interested in participatory communication research. It will most obviously be of interest to those scholars interested in development communication with examples drawn from India, Latin America, and Africa. The book is a good introduction to the area and provides a strong starting point from which one might apply participatory video to non-development contexts. It would be interesting to see the Community Communication Centre Model, presented in the conclusion, applied in various settings and then compared to see if participatory video changes depending on the context and application of the method beyond the practice of development. Perhaps that would be a good place for a scholar who is not especially interested in development studies to transfer this powerful tool to other change focused contexts.

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