

Marginalized Communities and ICTs: The Case of Bagyeli Participatory Video and Mapping

Communautés marginales et Tic : vidéo et cartographie participatives dans la communauté Bagyeli (Cameroun)

Las comunidades marginadas y las Tic: video y cartografía participativa en la comunidad Bagyeli (Camerún)

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ABSTRACT

This paper uses a participatory video and GPS mapping exercise undertaken in 2013 in Bagyeli indigenous communities in southern Cameroon as an occasion for discussing potential benefits and deficiencies of projects that seek to mobilize ICTs in service of the development and self-determination objectives of marginalized communities in Africa. While ICTs allowed project participants to accumulate useful data and to “write back” to dominant media representations of their community, the continued relative lack of access of Bagyeli to national communication infrastructures, as well as divisions and inequalities amongst the project participants limited the scope and success of the project. The Bagyeli project thus demonstrates the importance of considering continued technological and social inequalities in analyses of ICT for development (ICT4D) initiatives.

Keywords

ICT4D, participatory video, participatory mapping, indigenous peoples, Bagyeli, Cameroon

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article est basé sur un projet de vidéo participative et de cartographie GPS entrepris en 2013 au sein de certaines communautés autochtones Bagyeli de la région du sud Cameroun. Il soulève les avantages et des faiblesses de ce type de projet qui cherche à mettre les Tic au service des objectifs de développement et d'auto-détermination des communautés marginalisées du continent africain. Bien que les Tic aient permis d'aider les participants du projet à collecter des données utiles et de « répondre » aux principales représentations médiatiques qui existent au sein de la communauté, le

manque d'accès des Bagyeli aux infrastructures de communication nationales, ainsi que les divisions et inégalités parmi les participants eux-mêmes, ont limité la portée et le succès du projet. Le projet Bagyeli démontre, ainsi, l'importance de considérer les inégalités sociales et technologiques dans l'analyse des initiatives « Tic pour développement » (ICT4D).

Mots-clés

ICT4D, vidéo participative, cartographie participative, peuples autochtones, Bagyeli, Cameroun

RESUMEN

Este documento usa un vídeo participativo y ejercicios de mapeo con GPS realizados durante el año 2013 en comunidades indígenas Bagyeli, en el sur de Camerún, como una ocasión para discutir los potenciales beneficios y deficiencias de proyectos que buscan movilizar Tecnologías de Información y Comunicación (TIC) con los objetivos de desarrollar y contribuir a la auto-determinación de comunidades marginadas en África. Mientras que las TIC permitieron a los participantes del proyecto acumular datos útiles y “responder” a las representaciones mediáticas dominantes que existen de la comunidad, la relativa falta continua de acceso a las infraestructuras de comunicación nacional de los Bagyeli, y las divisiones e inequidades entre los participantes del proyecto mismo limitaron el alcance y éxito del proyecto. Por lo tanto, el proyecto Bagyeli demuestra la importancia de considerar las continuas inequidades sociales y tecnológicas en el análisis de TIC para el desarrollo.

Palabras clave

ICT4D, video participativo, cartografía participativa, pueblos indígenas, Bagyeli, Camerún

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INTRODUCTION

It has been over thirty years since the MacBride Commission for the Study of Communication Problems released its seminal report *Many Voices, One World* (MacBride, 1980), in which it acknowledged “*the essential link between media and communication policies and social, cultural, and economic development objectives*” (Mansell, Nordenstreng, 2007, p. 15). The intervening years have witnessed many important changes, in geopolitics, in approaches to international development, and, perhaps most of all, in the nature of information and communication technologies themselves. These changes have allowed a major growth in the use of ICTs to promote economic and social equality in so-called “developing” countries, as marginalized communities increasingly use technology to speak and advocate for themselves in national and international public spheres. However, it is important when discussing ICT for development (ICT4D) projects to avoid overly laudatory accounts. The world is still a long way from being a utopian ICT-enabled “global village.” While in

some cases ICTs have fostered greater social inclusion, in others they have exacerbated inequality. Sometimes they have done both simultaneously.

This paper uses a participatory video and GPS mapping exercise undertaken in 2013 in Bagyeli indigenous communities in southern Cameroon as a field for discussing some of the potential benefits and deficiencies of projects that seek to mobilize ICTs in service of the development and self-determination objectives of marginalized communities in Africa. Adopting a practice-based approach (Couldry, 2012) to my analysis, I discuss the ways in which technology-use allowed Bagyeli project participants to counter dominant media representations of their community's role in a narrative of national economic "emergence." My analysis of the Bagyeli project, however, also reveals a number of challenges to the simplistic notion that greater access to ICTs will necessarily empower marginalized African communities to "speak for themselves." Persistent power inequalities, many engendered by unequal access to and familiarity with ICTs, limited the scope and success of the Bagyeli project. This "digital divide" manifested itself not only in the continued relative lack of access of Bagyeli to national communication infrastructures, but also in divisions and inequalities amongst the project participants themselves.

ICTS AND PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT

Owing to its Cold War context, as well as to the state of media and communication technologies and infrastructures at the time of its authoring, the MacBride Commission report is famously state-focused in its approach, paying more attention to inequalities between "have" and "have not" countries than to internal inequalities within national borders (Mansell, Nordenstreng, 2007 ; Osolnik, 2005). Subsequent multilateral engagements with the issues of ICTs and global development, however, have increasingly shifted their focus from the state to the local level. Declarations emerging from meetings such as the 2003/5 World Summit on the Information Society, emphasize the rights of "individuals, communities and peoples" to "create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge" in order to "*achieve their full potential in promoting their sustainable development and improving their quality of life*" (WSIS quoted in Sinah, Hyma, 2013, p. 93).

This shift in focus to the local level is related with a "participatory turn" in development practice over the past several decades. Beginning in the 1970s, many development practitioners began to move from a *diffusion model*, whereby development policies and projects were *applied to* communities, to an *exchange model*, which stressed "the importance of cultural identity of local communities and of democratization and participation at all levels" (Servaes, 1996, p. 15-16). Techniques developed during this time, such as Participatory Action Research (PAR) and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), advocated egalitarian "subject-subject" engagements between sympathetic outside researchers and development practitioners and local communities (Reason, Bradbury, 2008, p. 8). Rather than setting foot in communities to implement preconceived, prescriptive development projects, practitioners of PAR and related approaches sought first to open "new "communicative spaces" in which dialogue and development [could] flourish" (Reason, Bradbury, 2008, p. 3). By the 1990s, participatory approaches were a mainstay in programs undertaken by major international development organizations such as the United Nations Development Program (Kindon, Pain, Kesby, 2007). For more on the emergence of PAR in Africa specifically, see Swantz, Ndedyaand, Masaiganah, 2008.

There was a logical compatibility between these new participatory approaches to development, with their interest in communicating with local people, and the use of ICTs. Consequently, development organizations began to experiment with using media to democratize interventions and make them more responsive to community needs and concerns (Braden, Mayo, 1999; Frost, Jones, 1998). The process was greatly aided by the spread of "small media" technologies (Ugor, 2009) and accompanying infrastructures, most importantly mobile phone and Internet networks, into remote

communities. These technologies – especially portable camcorders and, more recently, camera-equipped mobile phones – are increasingly allowing marginalized groups to produce and circulate their own mediated self-representations, informing interested national and international publics about local lives and concerns without the intercession of state or corporate mediators.

By giving voice to local ideas and opinions, the process of mediated self-representation can help to improve development outcomes, allowing heretofore marginalized groups to become “active citizens” (Rodriguez, 2004), making their views known to decision-makers at the national and international level. As Tacchi, Foth and Hearn (2009; citing Couldry, 2000) put it: “Power relations shift when people achieve access to media.” For example, self-representation can increase public awareness of the harmful effects of large-scale economic development projects on local people, thus making it more difficult for governments and corporations to bypass or harm marginalized communities in implementing these interventions. Self-representation through the use of ICTs can also help to make small-scale, *desired* development interventions more responsive to local needs and desires.

Given these positive potentials of ICTs, it is not surprising that many participatory development projects have sought to provide local communities with the equipment and skills necessary to engage in self-representation. Participatory video (PV) projects are among the most prevalent of these types of interventions. The term “participatory video” is used to refer to a few different, though related, practices. Most importantly, one must draw a distinction between PV as a *research* tool used by scholars as a way of learning about community understandings, dynamics, etc. (see Milne, Mitchell, de Lange, 2012; Mitchell, 2011), and PV as a *development* or *advocacy* tool, used by communities (sometimes assisted by development workers and other outsiders) to explore important issues and relay messages to internal and external audiences (see Lunch, Lunch, 2006 ; White, 2003 ; Shaw, Robertson, 1997). Certainly there is much overlap between these two approaches to PV, however for the purposes of this paper, I am primarily concerned with the latter.

In keeping with approaches such as PAR, PV projects focus not only on end *products* such as films and videos, but emphasize the ways in which the *process* of video making can empower community members by transmitting technical skills and providing a venue for critical thinking about social problems and social change, thereby building solidarity and stimulating positive action. PV thus aims both to “enable[e] a group or community to take action to solve their own problems and also to communicate their needs and ideas to decision-makers and/or other groups and communities” (Lunch, Lunch, 2006, p. 10).

DRAWBACKS AND SHORTCOMINGS OF ICTS FOR DEVELOPMENT

While there are many arguments in favour of recommending the use of ICTs in participatory development initiatives, we must take care to avoid overly celebratory accounts. The majority of those writing about the political impacts of ICTs in Africa and other so-called “developing” parts of the world today are rightly cautious and qualified in their discussion of the potential effects of media technologies. These authors draw attention to the continued control of technology-related rules and infrastructures by governments and corporations (Obijiofor, 2011, p. 217) and to the continuing problem of access to technology amongst poor individuals and communities. Relatively less widely discussed, but no less important, is the need to account for internal power dynamics within groups representing themselves using ICTs (Brinkman et al., 2011, p. 248–149). In examining the use of ICTs for development one must acknowledge the ways in which these technologies “are embedded in a complex array of factors that range from physical ability, education and literacy, community and institutional structures to social resources and relationships” at the local level (Sinha, Hyma, 2013, p. 91-92). Indeed, even the seemingly straightforward concept of a participant “community” turns out to be complicated and contingent when one digs a bit below the surface.

Useful here is a *practice based* approach to analyses of media-making. Such an approach “frames its questions by reference, not to media considered as objects, texts, apparatuses of perception or production processes, but to what people are doing in relation to media in the contexts in which they act” (Couldry, 2012, p. 35). A practice based approach to media is thus compatible with – indeed, it almost requires – an ethnographic approach based on participant observation research.

The remainder of this paper adopts a practice-based approach in analysing a weeklong participatory video and mapping exercise conducted in the village of Bella in Southern Cameroon in May 2013. This example, I will argue, provides some support for accounts of the emancipatory potential of ICTs for marginalized communities in Africa, but also reveals the limitations of an overly laudatory view of the purportedly egalitarian or participatory nature of new media technologies. While the Bella project was in some ways empowering of local populations, technical challenges and power inequalities within the project team constrained participants’ ability to achieve the project goals.

THE BELLA VIDEO AND MAPPING PROJECT

A few days before Cameroon’s national unity holiday on May 20th, 2013, two government ministers visited the village of Bipindi, in the country’s Southern region. The area surrounding Bipindi and nearby towns such as Lolodorf is home to many communities of Bagyeli indigenous peoples. The ministers’ visit was carefully choreographed to communicate a message of unity between Bagyeli and their non-indigenous Bantu neighbors. The following evening, CRTV, the state television channel, broadcast images of Bantu and Bagyeli embracing as the ministers and their representatives doled out food, machetes, and other gifts. A few days later, during CRTV’s coverage of the national unity day parade in Yaoundé, a commentator summed up the dominant media narrative of the ministers’ visit: The Bagyeli’s participating alongside their Bantu neighbours in the festivities surrounding the ministers’ visit, the commentator argued, demonstrated Bagyeli inclusion within the Cameroonian nation-state, which in turn implied their acquiescence to a project of national economic “emergence” by 2035. “*They know that they are not Cameroonians apart,*” he said “*they are really Cameroonians.*”

One suspects that the impetus for putting forth this narrative had something to do with the fact that Bagyeli and other, related indigenous groups such as the Baka – sometimes grouped together under the moniker “pygmies,” now considered by many to be pejorative – have often been viewed both as less than full citizens and as an obstacle to economic development (Geschiere, 2009 ; Leonhardt, 2006 ; Hewlett, 2000). The accuracy of the national media’s interpretation of the participation of Bagyeli in the events surrounding the ministers’ visit, however, is questionable. Left out of the CRTV reports on the event was the fact that the majority of Bagyeli who participated in the event were collected from nearby villages in cars and buses sent by the government, and that, in addition to food and farming implements, they were offered free alcohol in order to encourage their participation. Nor did the state media coverage make reference to the continuing tensions between Bagyeli and Bantu populations in the Bipindi area over issues such as land expropriation, or to the negative impacts experienced by Bagyeli communities as a result of major economic development projects in the region, such as the Chad-Cameroon oil pipeline (Nelson, Kenrick, Jackson, 2001).

Coincidentally, only a day after the ministers’ visit, I found myself in the village of Bella, a community a few kilometers from Bipindi, filming a very different portrayal of Bagyeli-Bantu relations and economic development. I was assisting Okani, a Cameroonian non-governmental association, with a participatory video and mapping exercise. This project brought Bantu and Bagyeli residents of Bella (some of whom had also partaken in the festivities in Bipindi) together in order to document the potential impacts of a 20,000 hectare palm oil plantation slated to be constructed on forest lands traditionally used by both groups.

Okani has been working on participatory video and mapping in indigenous communities in Cameroon since the mid-2000s. With the help of two British NGOs, Forest Peoples Program (FPP) and InsightShare, Okani has acquired the equipment and training necessary to employ ICTs in its development activities. In 2009 Okani and InsightShare established a PV community “hub” in the Baka village of Mayos, in the Eastern region of Cameroon. Since that time Okani has facilitated the production of dozens of videos regarding Baka culture, rights, and development, which have been screened nationally through traveling cinema, conferences, and exhibitions, as well as internationally at festivals and conferences devoted to indigenous and environmental issues. The organization has also undertaken participatory GPS mapping exercises in a number of Baka and Bagyeli communities. In Okani’s work across a geographically dispersed area, where transportation is often difficult, one can see the advantages of increasingly portable ICTs in action.

Due to time and funding strictures, Okani allotted one week for the completion of the video and mapping project in Bella. In a departure from many similar initiatives undertaken in collaboration with indigenous communities, project organisers invited Bantu residents of Bella to participate alongside their Bagyeli neighbours. This decision recognised that the plantation project would impact both groups. The project sought to raise local awareness regarding the palm oil plantation and its potential impacts on the local forest, upon which community members relied for hunting, gathering, and agriculture. Using video, community members would document their traditional use of the forest. They would also use smartphones equipped with digital mapping software to record GPS points of key forest resources. In addition to informing project participants and other community members, this data would allow the community, aided by Okani and FPP, to advocate for the preservation of certain key parts of the forest (in order for the plantation to be constructed, a large part of the forest would need to be razed). After the completion of the activities in Bella, Okani and FPP would hold screenings of the video and share the GPS data with international organizations such as the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil and with local and national government officials. The data collected as part of the project would, organizers hoped, help to ensure just compensation for traditional lands and resources destroyed to make way for the plantation should the project go ahead.

On the initial day of the project, a group of five Okani PV facilitators, who had travelled from Bertoua to work on the project, recruited approximately twelve community members to participate, with the group roughly evenly divided between Bagyeli and Bantu. The facilitators then trained participants to use the GPS mapping software and video equipment. Over the following days, project participants travelled to several key points in the forest surrounding their community, taking GPS readings and filming video testimonials regarding the potential impacts of the plantation on local traditions and livelihoods. Participants were particularly focused on providing visual and GPS evidence of concrete markers (“*bornes*”), which had been placed in the forest to demarcate the boundaries of the proposed plantation site. On the final evening of the project, an Okani staff member edited the collected footage into a short video under the supervision of project participants and other community members.

The contrast between the CRTV images of the ministers’ visit and the participatory video produced by the Bella community members clearly demonstrates the potential of ICTs to allow local communities to participate in decision-making and exert political influence in ways that circumvent the strictures of dominant media narratives. In contrast to “old media” such as broadcast television, new media ICTs, such as camcorders, and techniques, such as PV, are more interactive and accessible. “Citizens [can] switch roles as information producers and consumers...diminish[ing] the gate-keeping role of journalists in traditional media” (Obijiofor, 2011, p. 210).

The state television channel’s narrative used the Bagyeli (and their Bantu neighbours) in service of a government agenda, seeking to diminish perceptions of conflict or resistance related to economic development in the Bipindi area. The Bagyeli had no say in how they were represented, nor did the

representation bring about any substantive benefits for the affected Bagyeli communities. Relevant here is the concept of social inclusion, which Warschauer (2003) defines as the ability of “individuals, families and communities to full participate in society and control their own destinies, taking into account a variety of factors related to economic resources, employment, health, education, housing, recreating, culture and civic engagement” (quoted in Sinah, Hyma, 2013, p. 92). The state television narrative attempted to proclaim Bagyeli social inclusion without any substantive steps having been taken to bring about that inclusion. Indeed, it is precisely the agenda of national economic “emergence” – which, according to the CRTV commentators, the Bagyeli’s presence at the Bipindi rally demonstrated they were in favour of – that underlies government support for many large-scale agribusiness projects such as the Bella palm oil plantation. These projects often damage the health and wellbeing of local communities and thus actually worsen their *exclusion*. The participatory video project, by contrast, by placing the tools of media production and distribution in the hands of community members themselves, sought to allow Bagyeli and their Bantu neighbours to articulate their own complex, often ambivalent, views regarding economic development and Bagyeli-Bantu relations.

DIFFICULTIES AND CHALLENGES OF THE BELLA PROJECT

While the Bella participatory video and mapping project was certainly far more successful in accounting for local concerns and viewpoints than the narrative put forward by CRTV, it is important to consider the problems and deficiencies of the project and the ways in which these impacted its final results. While the Bella project did succeed in producing a short video and in collecting some GPS data, the project was unable to achieve all of its goals. The video was shorter and more superficial in its engagement with community members than planned. Interviewees discussed their attachment to the forest and gave factual information about where the plantation markers had been placed, but the video did not give an in-depth account of how the community used the forest, nor of the effects that the loss of the forest would have on the community. Likely for this reason (as well as due to various technical difficulties with the laptop used for editing), as of this writing, more than one year after the conclusion of the project, project organizers have not screened the video for either of its intended audiences. The GPS mapping also did not penetrate into portions of the forest that were not easily accessible from main roads. As of this writing, neither Okani nor FPP has employed GPS data collected during the project in a specific advocacy campaign. Indeed, Okani recently began a new GPS mapping effort in the Bella area. Due to technological challenges, however, this project is using different GPS tools, and it is unclear if the data points collected as part of the original project will be used at all.

Logistical difficulties, many resulting from poor communication and transportation infrastructures in the project site, proved a major hindrance to the processes of video-making and GPS data collection. For instance, filming time was cut short due to problems charging the video camera batteries. There was no electricity in the Bagyeli section of Bella and so project participants had to use a poorly functioning diesel generator. The lack of cellular network coverage in the Bella area also made communication between project participants difficult, resulting in further delays. Equipment failures further hampered filming and GPS data collection. Okani’s video cameras are over five years old and have developed a number of technical problems. The same is true of the laptop that Okani uses for editing. As far as I can tell, the state television crew that filmed the celebrations in Bipindi experienced no such problems. Here is a concrete illustration of the persistent digital divide that continues to encumber grassroots use of ICTs as compared to better equipped, better funded state and corporate projects. This is to say nothing of the issue of distribution networks. Whereas CRTV had a national cable and satellite television infrastructure on which to transmit its images of the

Bagyeli, Okani relies on person-to-person contacts and Internet outlets such as YouTube to distribute its works, resulting in much smaller audiences.

Perhaps more detrimental than these logistical and technological difficulties to the project's success, however, were the power imbalances within the participant group. Significantly, only one of the approximately twelve project participants was female—a young Bagyeli girl of about sixteen. I arrived in Bella a day after the project had begun, and project staff explained that, while they had tried to recruit women, none wished to join. This was likely due to a prioritization of domestic responsibilities. Not surprisingly, being the only female participant, as well as one of the youngest, the Bagyeli woman's contributions to the project were limited. She did not speak in group discussions, and did not participate in filming or appear in the video. The fact that an important segment of the participant community – women – was thus nearly excluded from the process of self-representation will not necessarily be visible to those viewing the project video (though some might wonder at the relative paucity of female interviewees). As Huyer et al. assert, “*The relationship between the gender divide and the overall digital divide is very tenuous and does not support the argument that the two move in tandem*” (2005, p. 143).

The project also suffered from a power imbalance between Bantu and Bagyeli participants. There is a long-standing historical inequality between these two groups, with relations often taking the form of patron-client (Colfer, 2005). Likely owing to this inequality, Bagyeli project participants tended to defer to their Bantu counterparts when making group decisions about what to include in the video and where to take GPS data points. One or two Bagyeli who occupied leadership roles within the community were relatively confident in participating in group discussions and decision-making, but the majority remained more or less silent unless prompted to participate by Bantu project members or by project facilitators. When one Bagyeli man agreed, at the urging of Bantu project members, to be filmed speaking about a logging project underway in part of the forest, the Bantu participants more or less scripted his discourse, offering suggestions on what he should say from off camera.

DISCUSSION

The gender and ethno-cultural inequalities amongst participants in the Bella project, as well as the difficulties caused by a lack of access to national communication infrastructures, demonstrate the dangers inherent in simplistic assertions that access to ICTs will “empower” marginalized communities. Certainly, the project discussed here does, to a certain extent, illustrate the ways in which access to ICTs can allow communities to represent themselves, offering accounts of local opinions and experiences that complicate or contradict top-down “old” media narratives. In praising the ability of ICTs to empower marginalized communities, however, it is important to avoid totalizing accounts and technological determinism. There is a temptation to believe that, when a previously “silenced” group or community begins to use technology to express itself, it is speaking with one voice, delivering a message that accurately reflects community views. In truth, even a technique such as a participatory video, which expressly attempts to account for and incorporate divergent opinions, is not always able to adequately address local power imbalances and technological challenges. While some of the difficulties that the Bella project encountered—such as the problems with aging video cameras and computers—could have indeed been resolved through the provision of equipment and training, more deeply rooted problems would nevertheless have remained.

Practitioners of techniques emerging from the “participatory turn” in development practice often proclaim the ability to bypass the state and engage directly with local communities as one of the key advantages of their approaches. This narrative is particularly prevalent in accounts of ICT4D projects. Practitioners and theorists cite the “democratizing” nature of increasingly accessible, affordable, and easy-to-use communication technologies, arguing that these can empower local communities and “give voice to the voiceless” (Swaminathan, 2006). Yet these narratives understate

the continued importance of corporate and government controlled infrastructures—cellular and broadband network, radio and satellite transmission, and, perhaps most importantly, electricity—to local lives and development outcomes. It is true that it is possible to bypass these infrastructures in realizing ICT4D projects—using solar panels or generators in lieu of electricity, distributing videos and other project outputs online, etc.—but it is also true that entities which have access to these infrastructures, such as state television channels, are greatly advantaged in their ease of communication and in the breadth of their audiences. Furthermore, efforts to bypass these infrastructures ignore the powerful desire on the part of many local community members for access *to* and participation *in* national power, Internet, etc. infrastructures, rather than for alternatives to these networks.

There is also a risk that ICT4D projects will ignore local power imbalances and inequalities. It is important to acknowledge that, in “marginalized” communities, not everyone is marginalized to the same extent or in the same way. In speaking of and conceptualizing participant “communities” in ICT4D projects, we must always keep in mind that a “community” is always a construction, and that different people living in the same area may have different notions of belonging, exclusion, etc. Writing about the Kayapó indigenous video project in Brazil, Terence Turner argued that, “by creating a representation of themselves as a fully established, normal community,” participants were “helping to create the social reality they were representing” (2002, p. 87). While this assertion is certainly true, it leaves out a discussion of the ways in which the process of representing a group of people as a cohesive “community” through video or other media may advantage certain individuals over others, privileging certain views and glossing over inequalities. As John Dewey has famously observed “there is more than a verbal tie between the words ‘common’, ‘communication’ and ‘community’.”

My participant observation of the Bella project demonstrates the importance of considering continued technological and social inequalities in analyses of ICT for development projects. A practice-based approach, which examines the ways in which community members interact with ICTs, can help to reveal the pre-existing social and technological structures within which media-making is embedded, and thus allows one to avoid taking any one media object, or the mere fact of media production, as a demonstration that a particular group or community, as a whole, is being “empowered.”

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