Giving Adolescents a Voice? Using Videos to Represent Reproductive Health Realities of Adolescents in Tanzania

Constanze Pfeiffer

Abstract: Visual research forms part of a growing field in participatory research. Lately new discussions among scientists evolved about conceptual considerations and methodological approaches related to the use of visual participatory methods. The following article presents a reflection on a participatory video project with adolescents aged 15 to 19 in Tanzania from the perspective of the adult researcher. On the one hand the project aimed at gaining visual insights into adolescents' realities related to teenage pregnancy. On the other hand, the young filmmakers were empowered to share their experiences and to use the film clips in order to reach policy makers and practitioners. While the use of an adolescent participatory video approach has great potential to represent different realities and to reach policy makers and practitioners in an appealing way, its drawbacks must also be considered. The methodological implications of this highlight the need to reflect about multiple subjectivities and related courses of action of all actors involved on various levels within society. It is argued that symbolic representations have the potential to create knowledge not only for policy and practice but also for science—as long as the research process, personal background, relationships and actions among involved actors, the socio-cultural context and related power dynamics are presented and unfolded in the final outcome of the visual participatory research.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

Participatory research regained importance in the past years. This is also reflected in a *FQS* special issue on "Participatory Qualitative Research" published in 2012 (BERGOLD & THOMAS, 2012). Participatory research forms part of experimental research and focuses on producing knowledge (and action) that is shared by the members of an organization or community being studied and that can be used by the participants to act within their context (FALS-BORDA & RAHMAN, 1991; MARTÍ, 2008; REASON & BRADBURY, 2001). By doing so, participatory research can also be used to inform policy and practice and to bridge the gap between multiple actors on different levels by empowering those that do not often have a say. [1]

Participatory research has been applied to various fields within international development since the 1980s. It builds on the critical pedagogy founded by Paulo FREIRE, who argues that the power relationship between researcher and the one being researched must be overcome by turning the researched persons into masters of inquiry (1990). In doing so, participatory research moves away from the positivist paradigm to post positivism, recognizing and addressing the complexity of human and social problems. It focuses on the experiences of humans as a way of knowing (MARTÍ, 2008; REASON & BRADBURY, 2001). [2]

Due to the recent revival of participatory methods a new discussion among scientists evolved about conceptual considerations and methodological approaches (BERGOLD & THOMAS, 2012; SOORYAMOORTHY, 2007). Many methods have been developed, depending on context and concern. However, participatory research has been criticized especially by quantitative researchers for its lack of methodological rigor and technical validity often regarded as the gold standard of academic research. In addition, it builds on a close researcher-community relationship, leading to changed power dynamics (CHAMBERS, 1994) that need to be reflected carefully. [3]

Considering the rapid development of new technologies, the use of visual media is coming to the fore since it has the potential to provide new ways in creating knowledge (BOYDELL, GLADSTONE, VOLPE, ALLEMANG & STASIULIS, 2012). Within participatory research, participatory video (PV) is a new form of working with media. Individuals or groups create their own film(s). Videos are easy and accessible and have the potential of bringing people together to explore issues, to raise their voices and to share their experiences. The process of participatory video production creates spaces for dialogue (ROBERTS, 2008) and can empower a group to communicate their needs and experiences to decision-makers such as practitioners and policy makers or other members of the society (ROBERTSON & SHAW, 1997). PV differs from documentary filmmaking in that the latter remains the authored product of a documentary filmmaker while PV is the product of a specific group. PV allows the objects of research to turn into active subjects who can decide how they would like to be represented—emphasizing on their own perspectives, experiences, practices and knowledge. It strives to give a voice to those who might otherwise be overlooked. [4]

In the past decade, participatory research has increasingly been used with adolescents—a group that had been neglected for a long time. Young people have been and are still often regarded as objects or informants rather than subjects or agents of change. However, regarding them as subjects might only bear the risk of making shortsighted interpretations (THOMSON, 2008). Thus it is argued that adolescents carry knowledge and expertise, and that they as well as adults can engage together in serious inquiry (HAW, 2008; McCARTAN, SCHUBOTZ & MURPHY, 2012; SOBO, 2008; THOMSON, 2008). It has been shown that involving young people and listening to them offers unique insights and has the potential to improve the policy delivery related to young people (CAVET & SLOPER, 2004; McCARTAN et al., 2012). [5]

Participatory research is frequently used in the context of trans-disciplinary research where researchers go beyond specific disciplines and put those concerned by a project at the heart of it (HURNI, WIESMANN, PASCALE & MESSERLI, 2004). Hereby, information dissemination beyond an academic community is crucial. Nevertheless, KEEN and TODRES (2007) point out that although researchers have an array of presentational styles and formats to choose from (such as drama, websites, video etc.), it is still not common to move beyond the dissemination of qualitative and quantitative research in journal articles. While ethnographic filmmaking and photo essays have a longer tradition (WAGNER, 2006, p.56), research results are still mainly published in journal articles and presented during conferences (THIEME, 2012). Consequently, findings appear to remain on shelves, having little impact on practice, research, policy, or citizens (BOYDELL et al., 2012; KEEN & TODRES, 2007). Publishing qualitative research in writing remains the norm and using different media and inter- and trans-disciplinary collaboration is rather seen beyond the research project (THIEME, 2012). [6]

In the following article, a trans-disciplinary participatory video research project with adolescents aged 15 to 19 in Tanzania is presented and critically reflected. This project was embedded in a research project using a mixed methods approach to focus on how young people in Ghana and Tanzania deal with health threats related to teenage pregnancy. It was funded by the Swiss National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR) North-South. [7]

PV films are usually produced with particular audiences and objectives in mind. Hence the film project aimed at giving adolescents a voice and empowering them to share their realities with policy makers and practitioners. While the research question and the method were predetermined, the adolescents were responsible for the development of short films and co-determined the dissemination of the results. From January 2011 to June 2011, a group of 16 students discussed, scripted, planned and acted in short films about their sexual and reproductive health realities. In the next step, they presented these films to policy makers and practitioners and engaged in discussions about needed interventions in order to strengthen adolescents' capacity to deal with dominant sexual and reproductive health issues. Due to this kind of adolescents' involvement the project was regarded as "participatory" (THOMAS & O'KANE, 1998). [8]

In the first part of the article the different stages of the projects (preparations, scripting, shooting as well as presentation and dissemination of films) are elaborated. In the second part the potential of videos is critically reflected considering the role of personal attributes of all actors involved, the social field of the project as well as its methodology. [9]

2. The Stages of the Project

2.1 Getting started

The film project focused on teenage pregnancy related realities. Tanzania has one of the highest teenage pregnancy rates in the world. In Dar es Salaam, the largest city, 15% of all women under 19 years of age were either pregnant or mothers in 2011. In the rural areas the numbers were even higher and 26% of female adolescents were pregnant or had started childbearing (NBS & ICB MACRO, 2011). A better understanding is urgently needed about what sexuality, gender, family and having children means, not only for academic purposes but to guide young women and men towards responsible parenthood (TUMBO-MASABO, 1994; WHO, 2006). Therefore the objectives of the video project were to provide insights into sexual and reproductive health realities (with a specific focus on teenage pregnancy) of female and male students aged 15-19 by using a PV approach, which 1. enables adolescents to express themselves and share their realities; 2. informs policy and decision makers, practitioners and researchers; and 3. stimulates discussions on the appropriate and effective design of future interventions. The films targeted international and national policy makers and practitioners as well as the Tanzanian society at large. [10]

The project was implemented by the Swiss-Kenyan film company *Videmus* with the assistance of the Tanzanian production company *Matatizo Production*. A camera team comprising of one Swiss, one Kenyan and one Tanzanian member were present throughout the whole process of making the videos. A rural-urban comparison was chosen in order to gain insights into different contexts (BOYDELL et al., 2012). Two sites were selected: Dar es Salaam, as a typical urban hub, and Mtwara Urban, a rapidly growing rural township in Southern Tanzania. At each site one public government run secondary school located in a low-income settlement was selected, in order to represent the economic realities of the majority of Tanzanians. The headmistresses of both schools were very welcoming and allowed the team to introduce the project to all students aged 15-19. Using an essay writing competition interested adolescents were asked to reflect about teenage pregnancy and its causes as well as consequences in a brief essay. More than 100 essays were submitted out of which 18, written by nine girls and nine boys, were selected. Selection criteria were the overall quality of the essay, reflectivity shown in the texts and equal gender distribution. The team was aware of the shortcomings of this approach. The involvement of exclusively in-school-adolescents and the selection of outspoken and articulate students left out the realities of out-of-school and/or less articulate adolescents which should be at the heart of participatory research. Unfortunately, involving

adolescents out of school would have exceeded the given time frame and the available resources. [11]

After selection of the students was completed consent forms were shared. Signing them was important throughout the process in order to guarantee moral and legal issues of ownership (BARBASH & TAYLOR, 1997). Since almost all selected students were minors, written informed consent was obtained from parents or other responsible guardians. As it is still common practice only to ask for parental permission and to automatically assume children's willingness to attend (THOMSON, 2008), this project put great emphasis on informing the young people about its purpose and on asking for their consent. Intentions to show the videotapes to a broader audience were communicated with all involved actors from the very beginning of the project in order to guarantee transparency. [12]

2.2 Scripting and shooting

The young people were very interested in the project, mainly due to the fact that they were interested in images and films. It is argued that through the creation of images—i.e. visual data—they were probably more ready to share their various realities as compared to textual data retrieved through interviews. At each site, adolescents participated in a one-week workshop. After introductory and ice breaking activities, they discussed about key causes of teenage pregnancy as well as key sources of information that helped them deal with teenage pregnancy related matters. Ranking techniques proved to be a useful tool to structure findings and to agree on priorities. Hereby both teams first identified and listed reasons for teenage pregnancy and sources of information on sexuality. In a next step, they ranked their answers according to priority by using stones (one stone= not so important; two stones= important; three stones=very important). The discussion was facilitated by the research team with the support of the Tanzanian cameraman.

Photo 1: Ranking of key aspects of teenage pregnancy

Photo 2: Discussion about actors influencing sexual behavior [13]

The results of the rankings served as a basis of the scripts and later the films. The most prevalent causes of teenage pregnancy as well as key sources of information that received three stones were portrayed in the films. Categories that received less than three stones were not ignored but took a back seat. The young people decided within their group how they wanted to include and represent these key issues. Hereby, the research team only participated as observers. In case of logistical or technical questions the cameraman was approached by the adolescents. Both teams selected a team representative whose role it was to facilitate interactions among them and with the researchers as well as the camera team. At each site, a female adolescent was chosen. Both representatives grew into their roles quickly and were respected for their "guidance" throughout the shooting. [14]

The stories chosen for the scenes were discussed in depth among the adolescents. During the discussions, they challenged one another and carefully pondered whether their stories, as well as the locations and characters portrayed in them, were representative for themselves and their peers. After having agreed on a joint script, the young people assigned the different parts among them. Hereby, the parts were often selected according to the real life characters of their group. A male teenager, for example, who wore mainly western clothes and was very careful about his appearance, was selected to play a similar character in one of the scenes. The scenes were shot over the course of several days. [15]

The editing was carried out by the Kenyan/Tanzanian camera team with the support of the researchers and including feedback mechanisms by the adolescents. The rough cut was shown to the adolescents, who commented on it and later consented on the revised version before it was shown in public during a workshop with policy makers. During the presentation of the preview copy, the young people discussed about the different representations and agreed that the films were in line with what they had wanted to present. Hence no major changes were proposed by the young participants. [16]

2.3 Presenting the films

In order to give the adolescents a chance to directly communicate and interact with policy makers and practitioners, a one-day workshop was organized in May 2011, during which the videos were presented and discussed by the young people. About 25 representatives of government institutions, national and international NGOs as well as donors took part in the dissemination workshop. The teenagers showed their short films and discussed their teenage pregnancy related realities with stakeholders. The adolescents participated very actively in the workshop. They presented themselves very confidently, as outspoken and well reflected individuals. In general, stakeholders were not only very interested in seeing the short films; they also expressed their surprise about being able to interact with the young people directly. It became evident that working realities of many policy makers and practitioners were based around discussions with other adults only in meetings and at offices. Not often did they get the chance to meet with and learn from adolescents directly. The films were regarded as a very appealing and catchy way of attracting their attention and learning about contemporary issues of teenagers. Adult participants were mainly surprised about how well reflected adolescents made their points and presented their agendas. Several policy makers and practitioners stated that the workshop was the first meeting of its kind they had ever attended and allowed them to get insights, they would not have gotten otherwise. Although many were parents themselves, they admitted that sensitive topics such as sexuality, teenage pregnancy or romantic relationships were not widely discussed within their families pointing out the importance of such open meetings in a neutral setting. An evaluation conducted after the workshop showed that 100% of the participants found the workshop interesting; 75% had gained new insights and 67% felt that the workshop would influence their work in the future. These figures highlight that the PV approach had a potential to reach stakeholders (GERGEN & GERGEN, 2010).

Photo 3: Adolescents presenting their short films in Dar es Salaam [17]

As a reaction, adolescents were invited by several stakeholders to share their experiences in meetings at their respective headquarters. The workshop was filmed in order to document the exchange between all stakeholders. In addition, the young people interviewed the participants and asked them about their opinions in relation to the presented films. The short interviews as well as footage related to the interaction during the discussions among all stakeholders were then included in a film about the objectives, the process and key findings of the PV project. [18]

2.4 Using multi- and hypermedia for dissemination

The Internet and other new technologies enable interactions with an audience moving beyond linear texts. They can be used as platforms to share different types of scientific results with a larger audience. Hereby, results are often presented as download options or put together on CD ROMs and DVDs. Hypermedia allows for linking moving images with sound and written words in an interactive way. While multimedia presentations follow a given sequential order, hypermedia users can click on non-linear links in any order to access information (PINK, 2001). [19]

The presented films discussed in this article were saved on DVD and presented with a hypermedia approach. The final product included 1. the overview film introducing the project, its approach and key findings; 2. two videos representing teenage pregnancy health realities of adolescents in Dar es Salaam and Mtwara; and 3. photos from the stakeholder workshop. A content table allowed users to navigate through the different films and footage. While a multimedia approach would only have allowed for a linear presentation, the selected hypermedia approach enabled the users to take a look at the videos in a non-linear way by providing several paths through the material (PINK, 2001). [20]

In order to target multiple audiences the short films were uploaded on YouTube and a website was launched. The links plus a project flyer were disseminated among responsible stakeholders in- and outside of Tanzania. Various international and national NGOs and donors expressed great interest in the videos and stated that they would like to use and screen them among young people. With the support of Femina HIP, the largest local multimedia platform and civil society organization that had also participated in the dissemination workshop, the films were aired by several Tanzanian TV stations (ITV, StarTV). Doing so allowed for moving beyond the selected target groups by reaching young people and community members at large. The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) financed screenings of the videos during outreach activities in four districts in Tanzania, inviting the young video makers to participate as agents of change. The films were also presented to a scientific audience during different conference presentations in Switzerland and Senegal. A summary of the project was published in the NCCR North-South Series *Outcome Highlight* in May 2012 (NCCR NORTH-SOUTH, 2012). Building on the results of the video project, funds to initiate a youth magazine project in Ghana were successfully raised and the

project was implemented. The uptake illustrates that the videos reached different audiences far beyond academic circles. [21]

However, the fact that information and representations shared in the films are now taken up by an audience that again participates in interpreting these representations requires careful consideration. In the past, the dynamic between users and films has frequently been neglected and needs to be thoroughly addressed. By watching the films new knowledge is produced that can shape the way projects and programs are designed and interventions justified (HOWARD, 1988; NICHTER, 2008; PINK, 2001). This knowledge production process is often being overlooked. Sarah PINK concludes that

> "Ethnographic hypermedia users' experiences are largely unknown. For at least two reasons it is important to understand how ethnographic hypermedia is received. First because as Howard suggested 'hypermedia has the potential for establishing an entirely new kind of relationship between authors and readers' ... Secondly, Martinez (…) has shown that students have interpreted ethnographic films to express problematic assumptions about 'other cultures' that were not intended by the filmmakers. It is equally important to pay attentions to strategies and intentionalities of ethnographic hypermedia users" (2001, p.169). [22]

3. The Potential of Videos: A Critical Reflection

3.1 Crisis of representation in visual research

Although the excitement and uptake was high, reactions towards the short films varied between different audiences. Some adults expressed doubt that the adolescents were responsible for the content and creation of the films. Others argued that the young people represented and reproduced well known cultural stereotypes instead of their own realities. This pointed to a shortcoming of the video project: a sound critical reflection about the backgrounds, motivations and inter-subjectivity of all people involved was missing in the films. Making these aspects visual, too, would have allowed for deeper insights into adolescents` intentions behind the stories or fictions. [23]

Working with visual approaches requires careful reflection not only of the process but also of its outcome. A major focus among many qualitative researchers is to capture authentically the lived experiences of people (DENZIN & LINCOLN, 2005). But doing so remains challenging. Texts or images generated by researchers can not sufficiently represent the experiences of "others" in the field, since they are always socially constructed. During the research process, new realities were constructed. Thus, a single ultimate discursive presentation of the world does not exist; there are different realities, experiences and representations of them. Due to this crisis of representation, research can only attempt to cover different representations of different experiences (DENZIN, 2002; DENZIN & LINCOLN, 2005). To be aware of this challenge is important for interpretive researchers as they reflect on their and others' roles in the course of a qualitative study. [24]

This also affects visual participatory approaches applied in this study. The use of the visual was and to some extents still is contested in social sciences especially in ethnography. From the 1960s to the 1980s the visual was criticized by many as being "too subjective, unrepresentative and unsystematic" (PINK, 2001, p.7). In the 1980s, COLLIER and COLLIER differentiated between ethnography and the visual. While the first was believed to be an observation of reality, the latter was regarded as constructed narrative based stories of scripted films (1986; PINK, 2001). This statement was later contested by CLIFFORD who argued that ethnographic research itself builds on constructed narratives or "fictions." Using the term "fiction," CLIFFORD stated that "ethnographies can not reveal nor report on complete or whole accounts of reality; that they only tell part of the story" (1986, p.6 in PINK, 2001, p.8). In the 1990s, discussions turned in favor of a new paradigm that would move beyond an integration of visual anthropology and sociology into the dominant scientific-realist paradigm. Instead the visual should follow its own alternative objectives and methodologies. Today, discussions highlight the importance of understanding the reflexivity and experience through which visual materials are produced and interpreted (PINK, 2001). [25]

In light of the above, it is crucial to identify what the video project meant for all actors involved including the adolescents and how they represented themselves. Initially, they were given free reign to discuss, choose, script and act in the scenes related to teenage pregnancy. In the course of the project, they made numerous decisions about the narratives of their videos. Those narratives became spaces for critical subjectivity and reflexivity. The young participants reflected on their agency together with the whole team (BANKS, 2001). Their collective representation illustrated their sense of meaning which is commonly shared by members of a social group and turned into social facts (DURKHEIM, 1974, in NICHTER, 2008, p.4). In order to understand their representation, their history and collective experiences needs to be reflected on. MOSCOVICI (2000, in NICHTER, 2008, p.4) complements this notion by pointing out that societies are highly complex and groups are characterized by a multiplicity. NICHTER states that groups are often characterized by the "politics of othering," meaning the use of negative reputations in order to devalue others (2008, p.4). Hence he summarizes that it is crucial to identify motivations behind the framing of people, their experiences and problems. Representations are to be analyzed in relation to social contingencies, economics, politics etc. in order to avoid the reproduction of stereotypes (NICHTER, 2008). [26]

3.2 Constructed realities, inter-subjectivities and representations

Images and messages presented in a film project that is directed to policy makers and practitioners can justify the future design of interventions and institutions. NICHTER warns that "[r]epresentations take on truth value when presented as facts that go unquestioned and appear compelling as conventional wisdom" (p.5). It is important to understand power dynamics, community and group based cultures as well as existing myths. [27]

In the following, reflections on the way knowledge and representations were constructed during the creation of short films will be presented. BERGOLD and THOMAS (2012) distinguished four different types of reflection: reflection on personal attributes, on the social relationships among the researchers, on the social field of the research project and on the research process. Since personal attributes and the relationship between actors are closely interlinked, both types are combined here. [28]

3.2.1 Reflections on personal attributes and relationships among research partners

Personal dispositions and attributes of all participants such as age, social class, gender, and ethnicity need to be carefully addressed because they influence power dynamics and motivations (HAW, 2008; MILES & HUBERMAN, 1994). The team comprised Tanzanians as well as one German, one Swiss and one Kenyan. The international composition affected the way the adolescents interacted with the adults. Especially the role of the female German team leader stuck out. Being the non-Tanzanian team leader and initiator of the project, she was an outsider in a collaborative project with insiders (MARTÍ, 2008). This position put her in a specific power situation. The young people linked her ethnic background to wealth, which raised expectations related to receiving financial compensation in return to their voluntary participation. This clearly influenced given power dynamics and led to the question whether the adolescents articulated their own "voices" or whether they represented what they thought to be the "voice" of the researchers. Several strategies were used by the researchers to deal with this. Since the team was very well aware of its influence, it talked about the reasons and the aim of the study as well as of the benefits for the young people from the very beginning onwards. In addition, two full days at each site were allocated for an introductory workshop, during which emphasis was put on getting to know each other and establishing trust. Kiswahili, also spoken partly by the author, was the main language used during interactions in order to create a natural setting. [29]

The researchers and the camera team represented different interests. While the first were interested in the process and the results of the videos, the latter focused on its visual implementation and technical aspects of recording. The Tanzanian camera man became quite important for the adolescents as he started to act as the middleman between the young people and the camera team. He introduced them to script writing as well as the potentials and limitations of camera work. Although the camera man was an important guide on technical aspects of shooting, he stayed in the background when the adolescents discussed about content trying not to influence their narratives. Nevertheless his background—a middle-aged, outspoken male Tanzanian with special skills as a camera man—influenced the young people. They respected him and asked for advice whenever they did not know how to best represent a scene. This special relationship between the subjectivities of the camera man and the adolescents themselves produced a negotiated version of how they wanted to portray their "realities." It is crucial to consider inter-subjectivities, as they influenced the way identities were constructed during the process and new realities re-created. [30]

Moreover, power dynamics among the adolescents themselves were crucial (THOMSON, 2008). The short films portrayed a representative voice that aimed at speaking on behalf of the adolescents from the urban and the rural site. However, neither group was homogenous but influenced by internal power structures and dynamics. While the young people agreed on specific representations during detailed discussions, the very same did not *per se* reflect the realities of all group members. [31]

In addition, gender relations became evident, which were governed by power dynamics (PINK, 2001). All participants (the researchers, the camera team and the adolescents) were gendered individuals. This influenced the way all actors interpreted their as well as their vis-à-vis's identities. Gendered identities were also reflected in the short films. While boys were portrayed as trendy, dressed in Western clothes, more powerful, with money, girls were presented as shy, less powerful, dressed more traditionally, without money. Therefore, the films also re-produce culturally accepted gendered images of femininity and masculinity. [32]

3.2.2 Structural reflections on the social field of the research project

Visual data collection requires a safe environment that allows for open communication (BERGOLD & THOMAS, 2012). While most of the discussions and scenes took place in the streets, preparatory meetings were held and a few scenes shot at the schools of the adolescents. The school environment is a socially constructed space and linked to specific norms and values that influence the way students behave and dress. All of them came from the same schools and therefore already knew each other. Their shared identity was the school background and their collective identity was based on a partnership of convenience. Most of the time, the young people wore their school uniforms during the project. The normative behavior linked to the schools and expected by the pupils was omnipresent and is reflected in the films. [33]

In their roles as students, they included moral messages and raised awareness about teenage pregnancy. In Dar es Salaam, for instance, the students emphasized from very early onwards on the role of the edutainment youth magazines *Fema* and *SiMchezo!,* both published by the Tanzanian multimedia platform and civil society organization Femina HIP. In the ranking, these magazines were rated as one of the most important sources of information on sexuality for adolescents. Thus, the young participants agreed that they ought to be included in the films. [34]

The journals cater to secondary school students and are written in English and Swahili. Both magazines are widely read (PFEIFFER, SAMBAIGA, AHORLU & OBRIST, 2012). They were attributed a key role in the film by the urban adolescents. The young participants presented their main characters in their short films as not only being aware of these journals, but also as reading them and giving each other advice based on the conveyed messages. The main character in the film of the urban team, a girl, eventually decided not to start a sexual relationship with a boy. His attempts to seduce her with presents and sweet-talk

were not successful as she realized that he was only interested in a brief affair—according to the adolescents a common scenario mentioned in the magazines. In the last scene the girl throws a Femina HIP magazine at the boy, telling him that she understood the real motivations behind his courtship. Thereupon, the boy starts laughing and states that he should make sure his sister reads the same magazine in order to protect her against young admirers. Although another study pointed out that magazines indeed played an important source of information on teenage pregnancy in Tanzania (PFEIFFER et al., 2012), the moral message delivered with this ending was quite strong and illustrated the educative motivation. With their messages, they aimed at targeting policy makers and practitioners as well as fellow adolescents. In order to highlight the value of magazines, the educative message was overdrawn. Other reasons for the sometimes blunt and strong representations will be further addressed in the upcoming reflections on the research process. [35]

In the films, current trends in youth culture with regard to clothes, slang and behavior became visible. The very same representations were reproductions of adolescents' realities created by the media such as TV and the Internet (APPADUREI, 2005). Young people in the films were portrayed as choosing their outfits in accordance to the latest trends, thus copying images of modernity (FUGLESANG, 1994, pp.15-16). With reference to GOFFMAN, a "social identity" is attributed to a certain person on the basis of his/her appearance, behavior and recognized connection to a social group (1959). Peer pressure aiming at maintaining the very same social identities by copying global styles became apparent in all short films. Hereby the male characters were often portrayed in the *swagger* style. Swagger refers to the way mostly young people behave, speak and dress up. Swaggers are often admired for their coolness. The style is dominant in the local music style *Bongo Fleva, whose* music stars follow this trend (KISSLING, 2012). In the films, these partly media-generated representations were used exclusively for males. Boys' images were linked to modernity, while girls were presented in a much more traditional manner. The same applied for their language, using slang words, and for their gestures in general. The representation of adolescents portrayed general, locally held beliefs about gendered youth culture and were discussed with the adolescents throughout the process. When asked why they had presented themselves in this way, the boys and girls stated that they had been influenced by gendered characters and behaviors dominant in society. While the female behavior represented normative expectations directed towards girls by the communities, the male roles were much more influenced by images generated in media and music styles. Certain images portrayed in the short films invited analyses of their narratives, mainly in terms of how their representations conveyed their story. By relating the videos to the social context, images about youth culture were revealed (BANKS, 2001; HAW, 2010). It became obvious that the young people not only recognized but also played ironically with certain social myths used by others to construct adolescents. In one scene at the rural site, for instance, girls give their pregnant friend the advice to abort. They giggle, laugh and say with exaggerated voices that each of them had already aborted several times. When asked whether this would really reflect their realities, adolescents argued that

abortions were part of their reproductive life, however, not as common as portrayed in the films. They exaggerated in order to caricature well-known notions and images of "careless girls." By doing so, the young people reproduced common myths about youth culture and behavior that exist not only in the community but also in their own minds. [36]

During their interactions the adolescents managed to deal with conflicts and listened to different points of view shared among them. Nevertheless, disagreement arose along gender lines as girls were often more seriously engaged in the project than their male fellows. The adolescents did not find it difficult to agree on the content of scenes; however, selecting actors and playing the scenes was more of a challenge to the team. Often the young actors, especially the girls, felt shy, while some boys seemed to be much more at ease and enjoyed breathing life into their roles. In addition, especially at the urban site, dissent arose around the parts of the male adolescents who regarded themselves as swaggers. They liked teasing other male and female participants for being too "well-behaved." These conflicts were mirrored in the scenes too. At the beginning of the urban film, for instance, swagger boys banter a younger friend about his lack of sexual experience. They confidently give him advice on how to treat girls and highlight their statements by referring to their cool styles (colorful sunglasses, baggy pants, fancy t-shirts and jackets). By doing so, they made clear that modern appearance in terms of gestures and style is not only linked to gendered images of modernity and youth culture but also to power and status. [37]

3.2.3 Reflection on the research process

The selected participatory ranking approach, which acted as a foundation for the development of scenes, influenced the way stories were chosen, issues portrayed and actors presented. While the approach facilitated a participatory discussion with visual elements, it also restricted the content of narratives. The same applies for the format "short film" which provided a limited frame for the way realities were presented. Since the short films were confined in time, only little space could be provided to illustrate and unfold complex relationships and personalities. This led to a sometimes simplified presentation of characters and experiences, ignoring the emotional complexity of their stories. The presentation of the youth magazines in one of the films, for instance, portrays this shortcoming. In one scene, a girl was convinced by her brother to read the Femina HIP magazines. Although she seemed not to be interested in the beginning, she changed her opinion after a few words by her younger brother and all of a sudden was more than happy to read the journals. This gives the impression that the scene was more about a promotion of the magazine and less about a presentation of realities. Then again, this somehow blunt presentation was purposefully selected by the young participants to deliver their messages and to create interest among their audience—policy makers and practitioners. [38]

Nevertheless the format "short film" needs to be kept in mind when thinking of the outcome of this project. A documentary format might have provided more differentiated insights into adolescents' realities. In addition, the dramaturgy of the

short films resonates with other display formats such as Latin-American *telenovelas* or Tanzanian dramas which are very popular among Tanzanians in general. These dramas make use of gendered stereotypes that also became visible in the short films of this project. The media generated images of gendered relationships such as good (often female) versus bad (often male) characters draw a "black and white" representation of constructed realities. [39]

Apart from the selected methodology and format, the project was also influenced by issues of compensation raised by the adolescents. PINK (2001) points out that making a film is less exploitative when the informants are actively involved in the creation of the visual material. This involvement might even lead to an empowerment of participants and to a change of power structures. Thus, she argues that a collaborative approach is one way of giving something back to those participating in a study. While collaborative approaches allow for an equal involvement at eye level, concepts of voluntary involvement often fail because of different realities on the ground. Adolescents' participation in research activities takes place at the intersection of youth development and civic engagement (SOBO, 2008). However, the concepts of civic engagement and voluntarism, which are the basis for participatory action research, did not *per se* reflect the realities and interests of many young people in Dar es Salaam and Mtwara. Due to an increasing commoditization and commercialization, especially in urban areas in Tanzania, the young participants expected financial benefits. Since payment is ethically as well as in terms of reliability and validity of data regarded as a problematic issue, the team decided to pay only small allowances per day covering mainly transport and food. At the beginning of the project, the financial contribution was explained to and discussed in depth with all adolescents. It therefore came as a surprise when, after some few days, the young people launched higher financial claims, arguing that as they worked for the project they expected a salary. [40]

The team was explicit about financial benefits and limits, explaining that transport, food and drinks were covered and that they would get a certificate at the end of the project. Nevertheless, it became evident that the research team's concept of the adolescents' role as volunteers was not in line with how the young people regarded themselves and demands were repeatedly raised throughout the course of the project at both sites. This experience is not bound to Tanzania, a resource-poor setting. WÖHRER and HÖRCHER (2012) experienced similar salary requests in their participatory project with Austrian pupils. They pointed out that working and having fun at the same time is not a contradiction. While the students in Austria opted for goods such as lap-tops etc. as a salary, the Tanzanian teenagers were only interested in cash. They seemed to be partly influenced by their parents. Several times, students referred to their guardians when asking for money. In the end the adolescents' expenses for transport, food and video production were covered but no additional salaries paid. The described payment issues highlighted complex power dynamics and their potential influences on representations as portrayed in the videos. In the end, it was not entirely clear whether the adolescents really portrayed "their own" realities or whether they regarded their participation as a job aiming at developing

entertaining stories for a broader audience. However, the payment issues did not significantly affect the positive atmosphere among participants. Potential discord was absorbed by organizing a leisure event at the end of the project which included going to a restaurant for celebration. During this occasion the certificates were handed over. [41]

The continuous process of negotiation and social construction was further influenced by the use of a camera. It accompanied the team throughout the process. At the beginning, its presence created an awkward situation among the young people who were shy and reluctant to share their views. However, this changed surprisingly fast. Due to the continuous presence of the camera, they soon ceased paying too much attention to it anymore and started feeling more at ease. Then again, the camera was also a tool that reinforced representations. Especially male adolescents tried to present themselves—not only in the films, but also during their preparation as what they perceived to be cool (affecting their clothes and gestures) and copied their favorite *Bongo Fleva* artists. [42]

The team, mainly the German team leader, the Tanzanian camera man and another Tanzanian colleague from the research group, dealt with these issues through continued debriefs within the team and with the adolescents themselves. Debriefing thus involved reflecting about the locations, the points of discussion as well as the ideas for scripts with the young people and the production team. Hereby, the adolescents were invited to openly share the motivations behind their films. They discussed whether potential ideas for scripts were created to please, for instance, their teacher or the camera team. At the urban site, the young people discussed openly during the ranking activities whether they should rank the teachers as a very important source of information or not. While some students said that they would have to honor teachers, the majority decided to focus on their personal experiences instead of representing socially expected politeness. In addition, all researchers as well as the camera team discussed issues relating to the research process on a regular basis, including data collected, serendipitous findings, ethical dilemmas that emerged, and/or whether modifications to the research plan were needed (ONWUEGBUZIE, LEECH & COLLINS, 2008). Being able to discuss thoughts, perceptions, feelings, and experiences with each other helped them probe deeper into the investigation, thereby capturing the participants' "voices" more comprehensively. However, this process was not included in the "making of" documentary that accompanied the short films of Dar es Salaam and Mtwara. Therefore these reflections were not presented to the audience. [43]

Apart from the actors involved in the creation of the short films, the interaction and reaction of the audience also needs to be considered and put into context. While discussions about visual media tend to focus mainly on the participants, less attention is put on whether their work is being recognized and if so by whom (HAW, 2008). Hence, the project centered around information dissemination by the adolescents themselves and neither the researchers nor the camera team. During the presentation of the videos in a dissemination workshop, it became clear that the adults were in doubt that the young people had scripted the short

films themselves. Some anticipated that the camera team and researchers would have told them what to do. Although the adolescents themselves were the master mind behind the films, it became obvious that adults did not believe them to be capable of discussing, planning, scripting and acting in short films. These comments highlighted the socially constructed connection between age and the notion of being mature (THOMSON, 2008). The reactions of the adult audience reflects a common image of young people as still having limited capabilities to comprehend and not yet being able to understand what happens around them (SOBO, 2008). Thus, adolescents are often treated as objects by different actors, no matter whether it is in science, policy or practice. All the more the audience was surprised by the confidence the young participants displayed during lively discussions with the adult audience. During the workshop discussions, though, especially among policy makers the continuous process of creating meaning among participants was revealed as they changed their perceptions of youth. While these discussions started to evolve during the dissemination workshop, lack of time prevented all participants from exploring them further. When showing the finished product to an external audience for comment and interpretation, neither the authors nor the adolescents themselves could control how the audience interpreted the representations (HAW, 2010; PINK, 2001). The audience created different meanings and carried them forward. This is of particular importance, since the individual meanings influenced the way policy makers look at young people and might design their policies and interventions. [44]

4. Conclusion

The aim of this article—written from an adult researcher's perspective—was to reflect on the process of making short films, including the different constructed realities that were negotiated and presented during the project. Since these reflections were missing in the film, a critical discussion in an article was perceived to be an important complement to this project. Through the short films, adolescents who might find it harder to express themselves in text had the chance to provide accounts of their experiences (HAW, 2008) and to create space for dialogue with other actors who would not have listened to them as thoroughly without videos. The young people were keen to express their beliefs and emotions. The process of the project had special meaning for them as they gained confidence which was eventually reflected in the interactions between the adolescents and policy makers as well as practitioners at eye-level. Practitioners' use of the short films beyond the video project illustrated the importance they attributed to these visual narratives. In line with BOYDELL et al. (2012), it is argued that qualitative methodologies should be broadened to include visual approaches since they have the potential to move beyond typical data collection and dissemination of results. [45]

While the use of a youth participatory research approach with videos has many advantages and great potential to represent different realities and to reach policy makers and practitioners, its drawbacks must also be considered and reflected. This article points to the importance of making critical reflection visible in films that form part of participatory research approaches in order to avoid

misunderstandings and the re-creation of stereotypes. Symbolic representations of a collaborative project can be used for scientific and action oriented purposes as long as own methods are scrutinized. At the same time, subjectivity, background, experiences of and between involved actors as well as power dynamics are to be unfolded. The methodological implications of this stress the need to reflect about the multiple subjectivities of all actors involved on various levels (THOMSON, 2008). Like other ethnographic representations the narratives presented in the videos are inevitably constructed (PINK, 2001, p.79). Yet, the same applies for any knowledge production between researcher and informant. Videos should be treated as representations rather than visual facts. Although representations bear the risk of presenting culturally accepted realities, these negotiated versions of reality still provide valuable information. [46]

5. Ethical Clearance

All participants were asked for written informed consent after having been explained the purpose of the study and informed of their right to withdraw from it at any time. For minors, parents provided written informed consent, too. The study was conducted within the framework of the Swiss National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR) North-South funded project "Sexual and Reproductive Resilience of Adolescents in Ghana and Tanzania." The research component in Tanzania was cleared by the National Institute for Medical Research (NIMR/HQ/R.8a/Vol. IX/935; NIMR/HQ/R.8c/Vol. II/33) and the Tanzanian Commission for Science and Technology (2010_311_NA_2009_86, dated October 19, 2010). The study was authorized by the Regional Administrative Secretary. In addition, the headmistresses of the selected schools granted permission to conduct the project at their schools. [47]

Acknowledgments

References

Appadurai, Arjun (2005). *Modernity at large: Cultural dimensions of globalizations* (7th ed.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Banks, Marcus (2001). *Visual methods in social research*. London: Sage.

Barbash, Ilisa & Taylor, Lucien (1997). *Cross-cultural filmmaking: A handbook for making documentary and ethnographic films and videos*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Bergold, Jarg & Thomas, Stefan (2012). Participatory research methods: A methodological approach in motion. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *13*(1), Art. 30, http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs1201304 [Accessed: 12/4/2013].

Boydell, Katherine M.; Gladstone, Brenda M.; Volpe, Tiziana; Allemang, Brooke & Stasiulis, Elaine (2012). The production and dissemination of knowledge: A scoping review of arts-based health research. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *13*(1), Art. 32, http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs1201327 [Accessed: 12/4/2013].

Cavet, Judith & Sloper, Patricia (2004). The participation of children and young people in decisions about UK service development. *Child: Care, Health and Development*, *30*(6), 613-621.

Chambers, Robert (1994). Participatory rural appraisal (PRA): Analysis of experience. *World Development*, *22*(9), 1253-1268.

Collier, John Jr. & Collier, Malcolm (1986). *Visual anthropology: Photography as a research method*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Denzin, Norman K. (2002). *Interpretive interactionism (2nd ed.).* London: Sage.

Denzin, Norman K. & Lincoln, Yvonna S. (Eds.) (2005). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Fals-Borda, Olando & Rahman, Mohammad A. (Eds.) (1991). *Action and knowledge: Breaking the monopoly with participatory action research*. New York: Apex Press.

Freire, Paolo (1990). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum.

Fuglesang, Minou (1994). *Veils and videos: Female adolescents' culture on the Kenyan coast. PhD Thesis, Department of Social Anthropology, Stockholm University*.

Gergen, Mary M. & Gergen, Kenneth J. (2010). Performative social science and psychology. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *12*(1), Art. 11, http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs1101119 [Accessed: 12/4/2013].

Goffman, Erving (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. New York: Doubleday Anchor.

Haw, Kaye (2008). "Voice" and video: Seen heard and listened to? In Pat Thomson (Ed.), *Doing visual research with children and young people* (pp.192-207). Oxford: Routledge.

Haw, Kaye (2010). Risk and resilience: The ordinary and extraordinary everyday lives of young people living in a high crime area. *Adolescents and Society*, *41*(451), 451-474.

Howard, Alan (1988). Hypermedia and the future of ethnography. *Cultural Anthropology*, *3*(3), 387-410.

Hurni, Hans; Wiesmann, Urs; Pascale, Anton & Messerli, Peter (2004). Initiating research for mitigating syndromes of global change in different contexts. In Hans Hurni & Urs Wiesmann (Eds.), *Oriented research partnerships. Perspectives of the Swiss National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR) North-South* (pp.11-30). Bern: University of Bern.

Keen, Steven & Todres, Les (2007). Strategies for disseminating qualitative research findings: Three examples. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *8*(3), Art. 17, http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs0703174 [Accessed: 2/5/2013].

Kissling, Franziska (2012). Adolescents and leisure places in Makurumla Kagera. *Master Thesis, Institute of Social Anthropology, University of Basel.*

Martí, Joel (2008). From local practices to public knowledge: Action research as scientific contribution. Review essay: Kathryn Herr & Gary L. Anderson (2005). The action research dissertation: A guide for students and faculty. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *9*(2), Art. 2, http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs080320 [Accessed: 4/22/2013].

McCartan, Claire; Schubotz, Dirk & Murphy, Jonathan (2012). The self-conscious researcher—Post-modern perspectives of participatory research with young people. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *13*(1), Art. 9, http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs120192 [Accessed: 3/10/2013].

Miles, Matthew B. & Hubermann, Michael A. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) & ICF Macro (2011). *Tanzania demographic and health survey 2010*. Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: NBS and ICF Macro, http://www.nbs.go.tz/takwimu/references/2010TDHS.pdf [Accessed: 12/15/2012].

NCCR North-South (2012). Voices of adolescents. Tanzanian teens turn their own lense on teenage pregnancy. *NCCR North-South, Outcome Highlight*, *8*, http://www.north-south.unibe.ch/content.php/page/id/315 [Accessed: 12/30/2012].

Nichter, Marc (2008). *Global health: Why cultural perceptions, social representations, and biopolitics matter*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

Onwuegbuzie, Anthony J.; Leech, Nancy L. & Collins, Kathleen M.T. (2008). Interviewing the interpretive researcher: A method for addressing the crises of representation, legitimation, and praxis. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *7*(4), 1-17.

Pfeiffer, Constanze; Sambaiga Richard; Ahorlu, Collins & Obrist, Brigit (2012). Helping teenage girls avoid pregnancy. *Evidence for Policy Series, Regional Edition East Africa*, *3*, http://www.nccr-north-south.unibe.ch/publications/Infosystem/On-line%20Dokumente/Upload/Regional_Policy_Brief_03_East_Africa_Reproductive_Resilience%281%29 [Accessed: 12/30/2012].

Pink, Sarah (2001). *Doing visual ethnography*. London: Sage.

Reason, Peter & Bradbury, Hilary (Eds.) (2001). *Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Roberts, Brian (2008). Performative social science: A consideration of skills, purpose and context. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *9*(2), Art. 58, http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs0802588 [Accessed: 12/15/2012].

Robertson, Clive & Shaw, Jackie (1997). *Participatory video: A practical approach to using video creatively in group developmental work*. London: Routledge.

Sobo, Flores K. (2008). *Adolescents participatory evaluation. Strategies for engaging young people*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley and Sons.

Sooryamoorthy, Radhamany (2007). Behind the scenes: Making research films in sociology. *International Sociology*, *2*(5), 547-563.

Thieme, Susan (2012). "Action": Publishing research results in film. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *13*(1), Art. 31, http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs1201316 [Accessed: 3/10/2013].

Thomas, Nigel & O'Kane, Claire (1998). The ethics of participatory research with children. *Children & Society*, *12*, 336-348.

Thomson, Pat (2008). Children and young people: Voices in visual research. In Pat Thomson (Ed.), *Doing visual research with children and young people* (pp.1-20). Oxford: Routledge.

Tumbo-Masabo, Zubeida (1994). Conclusions. In Zubeida Tumbo-Masabo & Rita Liljeström (Eds.), *Chelewa, chelewa. The dilemma of teenage girls* (pp.211-214). Östersund: Nordiska Africainstitutet.

Wagner, Jon (2006). Visible materials, visualised theory and images of social research. *Visual Studies*, *21*(1), 55-69.

Wöhrer, Veronika & Höcher, Bernhard (2012). Tricks of the trade—Negotiations and dealings between researchers, teachers and students. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *13*(1), Art. 16, http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs1201164 [Accessed: 5/1/2013].

World Health Organization (2006). *Building a better future for adolescents: Learning from experiences and evidence*. Geneva: WHO.

Author

Constanze PFEIFFER is a sociologist working as a postdoc within the Medical Anthropology Research Group, Department of Epidemiology and Public Health at the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute (SwissTPH). She is based in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania where she is leading a Swiss National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR) North-South funded project focusing on "Sexual and Reproductive Resilience of Adolescents in Tanzania and Ghana." Her research interests are focused on resilience of young people in dealing with teenage pregnancy.

Contact:

Constanze Pfeiffer

Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute (Swiss TPH)
Dept. Epidemiology & Public Health (EPH)
Socinstr. 57, P.O.Box, 4002 Basel, Switzerland

E-mail: constanze.pfeiffer@unibas.ch
URL: http://www.socialresilience.ch/

Citation