
Article

Video for Change: Creating and Measuring Ethical Impact

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Abstract

‘Video for Change’ refers to the practice of using video as a means to activate progressive social change. Ongoing work in this field seeks to define and establish ethical considerations that can inform and direct Video for Change as an emerging practice. This article reports on a research project carried out with a network of Video for Change organizations. The purpose of this project was to inform the development of an impact framework that could be used to support Video for Change practitioners to design for—and evaluate—their social impact in a way that is considered ethically appropriate. The project began by investigating what makes Video for Change a unique media practice and by considering its genealogy. This was followed by an examination of the ethics and ethical practices that are most valued by Video for Change practitioners. This article reports on research key findings, and proposes an Impact Pathways framework, while also highlighting key challenges associated with designing—and assessing—the social impact of video initiatives across diverse contexts.

Keywords: evaluation; impact; media ethics; social change; video; video for change

Introduction

The term ‘Video for Change’ refers to the practice of using video to activate social change. The Video4Change Network is a growing international network—comprising eleven

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partner organizations¹ and two affiliate organizations—that was created to support the ongoing development of Video for Change as a field of practice. The Video4Change Network organizations work at both local and global levels in Asia, Latin America, Africa, North America, Europe and the Middle East. During the period 2012 to 2016, the Video4Change Network collaborated with researchers² to identify opportunities, needs, challenges and barriers for creating and measuring the impact of Video for Change initiatives.³ The research team carried out their investigation as a collaborative action research project involving a development cycle of listening (to practitioners), learning (from practitioners and example projects), proposing action (to the network), reflecting (with the network and practitioners), and finally taking action (by producing an ethical impact framework as well as a draft toolkit and associated materials). This article discusses key findings from that research project in order to consider: 1) what is Video for Change and what makes it similar to and different from other media practices? 2) what kinds of ethics are valued by Video for Change practitioners? and 3) can ethics form the underlying foundation for a framework that supports practitioners in designing for—and evaluating—their social impact?

Research process

In 2012 our action research project began with a literature review of relevant academic and practitioner materials as well as in-depth interviews with eight Video for Change organizations and three funding bodies to better understand their needs, insights and existing practices.⁴ This was complemented with the analysis of six Video for Change initiative case studies that allowed us to consider how impact was being defined, documented and analysed by each of the implementing organizations. The findings from this stage of the research emphasized that the practitioners included wanted to define impact in relation to their own specific contexts, objectives, values and ethics rather than in a homogeneous way. For example, Video for Change organizations and practitioners told us that they wanted to better understand how the process of production and distribution can impact upon project participants; however, the impact associated with processes or ways of working is not always visible in traditional monitoring and evaluation frameworks. The key issue expressed here was that building the capacities of marginalized, excluded or less powerful groups to tell their own media stories may aim for and result in different kinds of impacts than contexts where a professional media house produces and distributes a

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- 1 These organizations are WITNESS and Organization for Visual Progression (based in the United States); InsightShare (based in the United Kingdom); InformAction (based in Kenya); Steps (based in South Africa); Pusat KOMAS (based in Malaysia); SocialTIC (based in Mexico); Video Volunteers (based in India); EngageMedia (based in Indonesia). See <https://www.v4c.org/en/partners>.
 - 2 Tanya Notley led this research at the University of Western Sydney and Andrew Lowenthal led the research at Engagemedia on behalf of the Video4Change Network. A number of research assistants and consultants were also employed throughout this period and they are acknowledged at the end of this article.
 - 3 The primary motivation for this collaboration was a perceived need—identified in the inaugural 2012 Video4Change Network meeting—for a common language and shared resources that would support Video for Change practitioners to design for, document, and evaluate impact.
 - 4 A report on Stage One of the research as well as additional blog posts discussing the research are available at <https://www.v4c.org>.

documentary film. A number of interviewees expressed the view that an impact framework should recognize the different values and ethics at play in these two different scenarios.

The discussion of values and ethics in our research project emerged organically through the research process. During this first stage of the research, our interviewees repeatedly referred to their ‘way of working’ (process), which we later defined as ‘guiding values and ethics’. In light of this, we identified that while our goal was to develop a framework for designing for and assessing impact, we also wanted to use the research process to identify the core ethics that motivate and are prioritized by those working in the Video for Change field to ensure these would be integrated into the Impact Framework we created. This research also highlighted the issue of unintended impacts (positive and negative) and our interviewees were clear about the need to critique these as well, and to be held accountable for them.

In the second stage of the project (2013–2014), 45 Video for Change practitioners completed an online survey made available in English and Indonesian.⁵ We integrated findings into the development of a draft proposal for an Impact Toolkit—and received and responded to inputs and feedback on this draft from network members and other Video for Change practitioners. This stage of the research particularly tried to tease out the ethical values emphasized in Stage 1 and to get feedback on why these were important and how they may lead to impact. In the following two years (2015–2016) a beta version of the toolkit was created as the third stage of the project.⁶ The project was not launched to a public audience; however, the network were invited to share it with others and to invite feedback. As we write this article the network is implementing a fourth stage of the project which involves the development of additional sections, comprehensive testing by network member organizations, the addition of audio-visual content, Spanish and Arabic translations, and an enhanced online user interface.

Throughout these different stages, we have been committed to an agile and iterative development process: as new resources and technologies have been released and new ideas dispersed, we discussed and analysed these with the network and we considered appropriate changes to our proposed framework where relevant. We also shared details about our ongoing learning and development process via the Video4Change Network blog site (<https://www.v4c.org>).

During the course of our research project we identified that a number of resources had already been created that focus on creating and/or evaluating the social change impact of video (including guides, technology tools, and toolkits). The majority of the resources we identified⁷ were created in the United States or United Kingdom and they focused on the social change impact of feature-length documentaries and often (as we detail later) they did

5 Key findings from this questionnaire can be seen at <https://www.v4c.org/en/video-change-impact-survey-key-findings-0>.

6 In this context ‘beta’ was used to signal that the project was still incomplete and a work in progress. See <https://v4c.org/cookbook>.

7 Examples include Britdoc’s ‘Impact Field Guide’ (<http://impactguide.org>), the Fledgling Fund’s ‘Assessing Creative Media’s Social Impact’ (<http://www.thefledglingfund.org/impact-resources/assessing-social-impact>), and the Harmony Institute’s ‘Impact Playbook’ (https://www.bavc.org/sites/default/files/resource/Impact_Playbook.pdf).

not strongly emphasize considerations such as risk, consent, privacy, and accountability. In many cases they also often neglected to consider the impact of the video-making process, including considerations regarding the impact of the participation of affected communities in the production, distribution, and engagement stages, while there was very little mention of content, needs or practices emerging from the global South. In our research process, we found that this meant that these existing resources had limited relevance to those we consulted from the Video for Change network and related organizations. In addition, our research suggested that many of the new materials that had been created for evaluating the impact of feature documentaries tended to emphasize quantitative over qualitative measures of success, while most focused entirely on evaluating impact in terms of distribution and engagement success, neglecting to consider the impacts that may result from the process of planning, research, production and so on. Often the materials we reviewed placed great emphasis on online engagement and in doing so problematically appeared to assume that target audiences would have unlimited and unfettered internet connectivity and the same capacity to participate online in terms of time, resources and skills.

At the same time, we did find notable exceptions of materials emerging within and outside of the field of Video for Change that did emphasize ethical needs, issues and considerations, while linking these to the evaluation of impact. Indeed, many of the Video4Change Network members have created video-making training resources that clearly focus on integrating ethical considerations including a focus on the participation of women and girls (Video Volunteers 2009), identifying and mitigating risks (WITNESS 2000),⁸ and understanding or challenging power imbalances (Lunch and Lunch 2006). These materials were referenced, where relevant, throughout our research and in the resulting beta toolkit we produced.

What is Video for Change?

In carrying out both a literature review and interviews with practitioners and donors about Video for Change practices, we found that there were no comprehensive books, videos, reports or compendiums that detail the historical development of the use of video for instigating or contributing to social change, and nor did we locate an agreed, commonly used definition for Video for Change. The term itself appears to have gained traction in 2000 when one of the founding Video4Change Network members, WITNESS (<http://www.witness.org>), began to use it in their training and publications.⁹ In this early use of the term there was very much a focus on exploring the potential of new levels of access to video-making tools (hardware and software) for addressing social justice and human rights abuses. Writing from this period suggests that there was a feeling that the increasing accessibility of video technologies had created or would create a new kind of social change movement while also contributing to the ongoing work of existing movements. This early

8 For additional materials on video and mitigating risks see <https://library.witness.org/product-tag/safety-and-security>.

9 See e.g. WITNESS (2000) and Gregory et al. (2005).

writing on Video for Change also appeared to suggest that the potential of this approach was still emerging and not yet fully realized.

Since the early 1990s, the increasing availability and affordability of technology has fuelled the world of social justice video activism. The movement has also been strengthened by new vehicles for online and offline distribution, by novel ways to get around the traditional gate-keepers of media, and by the proliferation of non-governmental organizations and people's movements asserting their rights, voices and identities, particularly in the Global South . . . With access to production and distribution democratized, many more people are now able to participate in the tradition of video and filmmaking to document and challenge prevailing social ills. (Gregory et al. 2005: xii)

In the WITNESS practitioner 'how-to' guide this quote is taken from, Video for Change is used interchangeably with 'video advocacy' which is defined as: 'the use of video as an essential tool in social justice activism—one that can be deployed as strategically and effectively as more traditional forms of 'advocacy' . . . to exert pressure for a defined goal of change, including persuasion, relationship-building, lobbying, organizing, and mobilizing' (Gregory et al. 2005: xii-xiii).

Since that time Video for Change has been developing as a concept and practice. We would argue that despite some of the claims made or hopes expressed in that early writing, a unified, global *movement* focused on using video as a specific technology and communication medium for social change did not eventuate.¹⁰ Rather, in a range of ways video became integrated into the work of many existing organizations whose work is focused on social change and human rights, and this use of video progressed and developed alongside technological and social developments that have increased the production and circulation of video. We believe that only a small minority of social change organizations and groups have made video-making pivotal and central to the way they work and these groups and organizations have adopted a diverse range of approaches and tactics—including using video for community-based film-making, social media activism and broader campaigning efforts. Both video- and change-focused organizations—including a number of those that are part of the Video4Change Network—have at different times played a significant role in training activists and organizations to use video effectively in their work, and in this way they have become catalysts for growing and developing the Video for Change field.

The Video4Change Network see Video for Change as an umbrella term and define it as: 'the use of video to support social movements, document human rights violations, raise awareness on social issues, and influence social change' (Video4Change Network 2012). In many ways this more recent definition—although the subject of ongoing discussion and debate—is broader and more inclusive than the one used much earlier by WITNESS, since it includes or remains open to a number of related, yet diverse, video-making approaches. This research project has identified that the identification and strengthening of commonalities within this emergent field is creating coherency, further

10 While we would argue that the field of Video for Change is growing, it is also becoming more diverse in terms of media styles and formats deployed and the issues it seeks to address. For these reasons it is unlikely to become a unified social movement that acts collectively to promote a particular form of change.

establishing it as a field where different video-making styles, formats, approaches and practices (described later) can be supported, even as technologies, practices, needs, and contexts continue to change.¹¹

While Video for Change is not a term that currently appears regularly in the academic literature, it is worth noting that the term ‘video activism’ has had more extensive use (in the English language literature at least).¹² At the same time, without going into various definitions of video activism, we believe that Video for Change is an alternative and more inclusive umbrella term that can refer to any initiative that deploys video as an approach to support and consolidate progressive social change.¹³ As we discuss later, unlike other terms in use, Video for Change can be used to refer to video initiatives designed for diverse purposes. For example, Video for Change may include: personal storytelling and behaviour change projects that are designed to support people to break addictions or alter practices that are adversely impacting upon their lives; video recorded specifically for use as evidence in courtrooms; development initiatives that use video to document personal reflections or community discussions; and video-based community or oral history or storytelling initiatives that seek to empower marginalized groups and communities to tell, record or archive their own stories. These kinds of video projects do not fit easily into some of the definitions created to describe ‘video advocacy’ or ‘video activism’.

The different approaches taken to use video for social change that we have identified in our research are listed in Table 1. Our research into both historical and current uses of video within social change initiatives highlights how technological, political and social developments have influenced how video is used for social change (Notley 2013). While we describe different video approaches as unique in this table, we also recognize from our interviews with Video for Change practitioners (see Notley 2013) that they are not fixed concepts and nor are they mutually exclusive. Video for Change practitioners refer to backgrounds, training and experience with a number of different approaches and they often combine these approaches; they also use the same terms in different ways to mean different things. Later in this article we will return to this point to discuss the opportunities and challenges for developing resources for the Video for Change field, given the inclusion of practitioners and organizations who work across issues, video formats and genres, languages, cultures and countries.

11 This link on the WITNESS blog highlights the great diversity of Video for Change styles, formats and approaches: <http://blog.witness.org/2012/12/hrd2012-20-significant-human-rights-videos/>.

12 For example, see [Harding \(1997\)](#).

13 While accepting that ‘progressive social change’ is a subjective concept, we also note that most organizations leading the development of this field in terms of training and resource production are closely connected with the human rights sector. In this way, international human rights frameworks and the rights of under-represented, marginalized or exploited groups tend to underpin discussions about what is ‘progressive’. We accept that many approaches to making effective use of video are also utilized in the service of non-participatory, non-progressive causes: here a distinction between effective practices and ethical practices clarifies the difference between, for example, ISIS as an organization who could claim they are doing ‘video for change’ and those who do this work and are clearly seeking to support equality and human rights.

Table 1. The Video for Change genealogy

Video for Change approach and its historical context	Core ethics, focus and functions
<p>Social documentary video</p> <p>Scottish film-maker John Grierson is thought to have first coined the term ‘documentary’ when reviewing a non-fiction film in 1926. He believed documentary film was the next great medium of information dissemination and was best used as a tool to make ordinary citizens aware and engaged with social issues as a catalyst to social change (Barsam 1992). Since this time, the lowered costs of film-making have meant that social documentaries have covered just about every social issue imaginable; some of these documentaries have changed the way we perceive, understand and respond to the world around us.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually focused on exposing /exploring a single problem or issue • Often guided by traditional journalistic practices and principles • Usually aspires to achieve as broad outreach as possible and (more recently) at times also seeks broad audience participation where the audience are asked to ‘take action’
<p>Participatory, grassroots and community video</p> <p>Participatory, grassroots and community-based video initiatives have been proliferating at least since the 1950s, emerging strongly in North America, Canada, Latin America and elsewhere when many associations, labour unions, community and citizens’ groups and NGOs emerged to challenge dominant radio and television networks with low power radio, local television, alternative press, theatre and other communication initiatives that sought to speak directly to less powerful communities (Gumucio-Dagron and Rodriguez, undated; Crocker 2003). Often, the focus of these approaches was to challenge those who derive power from controlling narratives and discourses by supporting marginalized voices and perspectives to be heard.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses on addressing social inequalities and supporting marginalized groups to tell their own stories • Encourages critical thinking and analysis (particularly in relation to development and politics) • Emphasizes project self-reflexivity (critically reflecting on the project throughout the process) • Focuses on locally-led change and collective action • May provide local actors or participants with full ownership and control over footage and editing and distribution decisions • Often emphasizes the importance of local knowledge
<p>Communication for Development, ICT4D and Communication for Change (where video is used)</p> <p>Terms like ‘communication for development’, ‘development communication’ or ‘development support communication’ have been used by a number of international organizations including the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and other UN agencies since the 1960s, becoming more prevalent in the decades that have followed. These terms usually refer to a practice whereby local communities are supported to feed into and critique development discourse and processes. ICT4D is a more recent term that refers specifically to the use of information and communication technologies for development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotes inclusive social, economic and political development • Supports and engages with reflective, critical discourses relating to development plans, practices and outcomes • Can support marginalized communities to impact on and critique development and development projects • Usually provides access to media tools, technologies and training as well as access to targeted audience • Can focus on the development of, or use of, digital technologies to support communication for development

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Table 1. (continued)

Video for Change approach and its historical context	Core ethics, focus and functions
<p>Video advocacy</p> <p>When the term ‘video advocacy’ started being used in the 1980s, access to cameras had become far cheaper, more portable and therefore more accessible (Willett 2009). Video advocacy emphasizes the use of video to ‘speak to power’. Very often the goal is to feed into policy or political change. Since the late 1990s, WITNESS has espoused a specific project methodology they call video advocacy that focuses on ‘the process of integrating video into an advocacy effort to achieve heightened visibility or impact in your campaign’ (Gregory et al. 2005).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focused on addressing specific and targeted law, policy or practice change or influencing a particular event/ongoing situation • Success or impact usually determined by whether the video was able to resonate with specific and targeted audiences and participant communities based on a strategy that sets out how law, policy, behaviour or practice change can come about • Emphasizes knowledge creation and access to knowledge
<p>Oral history and testimony</p> <p>The practice of recording and retelling oral history is as old as humanity. Digital tools that support oral history to be recorded, found and categorized have been growing since the proliferation of cheaper video technologies and the development of the internet, but the field of anthropology also has a long history of using film to record unrecorded cultures and cultural practices.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often plays a special role in indigenous communities by seeking to ensure local knowledge and languages are not lost • May restrict access to the knowledge generated where it is considered appropriate to do so • Focus is often on ensuring people are able to record the stories and histories they feel must be told • Can play an important role in post-violence or post-conflict reconciliation
<p>Digital storytelling</p> <p>Digital storytelling pioneer Joe Lambert (2013) describes this approach to video-making as being about ‘capturing lives, creating community’. Since 2003, digital storytelling projects have flourished around the world. Very often they share a short-video (2 – 5 minute) format with structured training that is designed to enable non-professional, everyday storytellers to create their own personal ‘mini-movie’. While these stories are not always focused on social change, the form itself has social change imperatives embedded within it, since it is about developing and broadening creative storytelling literacies and capacities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on intimate and personal experience as an approach to change-making • Focus on personal story as a form of empowerment • Focus on supporting people to tell their own stories, in their own voices • Sometimes emphasizes the building up of collective memory and/or community-building through story sharing
<p>Video archiving</p> <p>Video archiving has a long history in the context of national sound and video archives or official state or community-based library collections, while</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasizes knowledge creation and access to knowledge

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Table 1. (continued)

Video for Change approach and its historical context	Core ethics, focus and functions
<p>more recent work has focused on digitizing old collections and opening up access via online spaces. These collections have at times supported specific social change-focused collections. Archiving social change videos for current and future use has a growing importance given that old video tapes and films are vulnerable to damage or loss, while social media sites hosting videos are vulnerable to being shut down or censored on short notice. Many large collections can be found (through effective tagging) on large video-sharing sites, such as through YouTube channels; other initiatives create their own websites to host archived collections or use other offline and online storage and access methods.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses on documentation and preservation of events and histories that may otherwise be ignored or forgotten • Emphasis on taking responsibility for collecting and making videos available to the right people (may not be public access) • Can emphasize bringing together different videos to tell a larger (alternative or hidden) story about a specific issue or history
<p>Citizen journalism video</p> <p>The increasing accessibility of the internet and cheap video recording devices, particularly starting in the 2000s, has led to a dramatic shift in both the production and distribution of video by everyday citizens. The use of the term ‘citizen journalism’ usually suggests the adoption of basic journalistic ethics and standards in a non-professional context, often supporting local citizens to tell local news and current affairs stories.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports broader publics to report on the issues that matter to them • Values and enables the production and distribution of local news and media
<p>Witnessing video</p> <p>The widespread use of citizen footage emerged after major political and social events such as the Twin Tower terrorist attacks in 2001 (‘September 11’), the London bombings in 2005 (‘7/7’) and in a developing country context, the Burmese people’s uprising (‘Saffron Revolution’) in 2007 (Allan 2006; Gowing 2009). In each case, citizens’ video and still images became the most viewed and emblematic depictions of these major crises. Allan (2013) and WITNESS have articulated this as ‘citizen witness’ video. Today witnessing video is regularly incorporated into mainstream and alternative news sites and is very often first picked up from social media. The term is also used by NGOs and rights-based groups as a form or practice focused on evidence collection, and that may include practices and technologies focused on ensuring the validity and verifiability of content.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focused on the role of non-professionals and individuals enabled by increasing technology access in exposing or addressing rights abuses or social injustice through the collection and circulation of visual evidence • Can include raw video from direct witnessing of an event or personal testimony documentation

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Table 1. (continued)

Video for Change approach and its historical context	Core ethics, focus and functions
<p>An increasing element in witnessing video is the use of consumer tools-based live video to provide a first-person point-of-view in social justice contexts.</p>	
<p>Change-focused video memes, remixes and mash-ups and curated collections</p> <p>Increasing access to the internet (particularly broadband access), alongside the increasing usability of video editing software and the ever-developing digital literacies of citizens has changed the way people engage with video content online, particularly since around 2005. There is now some evidence to show that both the remixing and curating of video content ‘found’ online is becoming an increasingly popular activity in some countries, particularly among a youth demographic (Jenkins 2006a, 2006b) and this is also true for social change remixes with some of these videos quickly reaching millions of people (Gregory and Losh 2012).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on engagement with issues through media creation • Can support people not directly affected by an issue (who may be located in another country) to become advocates • Emphasis on creative commons licensing and the value of remix and participatory cultures • Curated collections can focus on amplifying the reach of videos (whether online or through screening events), providing context or verification, or serve to bring different videos together to tell a larger story
<p>Virtual reality (VR) video projects</p> <p>VR video-making has been enabled by technological developments that use headsets to provide an immersive media experiences that provide a 360 degree experience of a real or imagined environment and, in some cases, allow audiences to interact with this world in ways that feel as if they were there. Social change videos that use VR technologies began to emerge in a more widespread manner in 2015 and they include advocacy journalism, documentaries and animations (see Gregory 2016). At the time of writing, it is still unclear to us if VR adds new technological affordances to existing video approaches or if it constitutes an entirely new approach.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasizes ‘walking in someone else’s shoes’ or experiencing, albeit virtually, what it is like to be in a particular time and place • This virtual experience can support empathy by arousing emotions and by creating a connection with people, places and issues via place illusion, embodiment and interactivity • Can focus on immersive spectatorship over action

Ethics in video-making

Our concerns regarding ethics in relation to impact assessment are not unique in the field of human rights. In an earlier Special Issue of this journal ‘Where is the Evidence?’ (2009), all of the contributors raised this issue, with many expressing concerns that donor-driven requirements can over-emphasize the use of particular kinds of evaluation methods and metrics. For example Gready (2009: 380) argued that the ‘evaluation culture’ was rapidly

becoming ‘a feature of human rights practice’ and it needed stronger critique. Greedy highlighted that cookie-cutter and normative evaluation approaches were likely to neglect to recognize or address the issue that initiatives are particularly hard to evaluate in terms of impact when they involve long-term struggles, have complex causes or are inherently political (ibid.). Archer (2009) finds that these kinds of issues mean that while ‘some theory has emerged, some complex frameworks and models have been proposed, and a variety of innovative ideas and practices have been tried out’, the enterprise of measuring impact in the human rights field ‘remains controversial in some respects, and progress has been slower and more arduous than most advocates probably expected’ (ibid.). While the issues raised in that special issue are pertinent to our own endeavour to develop an impact framework, we also believe that video focused initiatives have additional, media specific, ethical issues that need to be interrogated alongside these concerns.

Media ethics ideas, policies and laws stem from morality, both public and private; shared aspirations to minimize harm and risk; respect for individual rights (perceived and legal); and ideas about what constitutes the public good (Spence et al. 2011). Drawing on the work of Stephen Ward (2013), we define media ethics as a reflective engagement with the institutions, technologies, approaches and practices that define how media responds to the urgent problems of the day and to existing power imbalances, in light of both the past and where we hope to be in the future. However, we would argue that many monitoring and evaluation or impact frameworks that have been designed to measure the impact of Video for Change initiatives, particularly those emerging in the United States with a focus on feature-length documentaries, have included no explicit, or rather limited, discussions about ethics. This is a trend that already shows some signs of change, however: for example, BRITDOC’s Impact Field Guide (<http://impactguide.org>), launched in 2014, includes an exploration of ‘top down’ versus ‘bottom up’ approaches to change, suggesting ‘the act of making a film (or other media) is often as important as who sees the film once made’ and that ‘films using such top down approaches have achieved great things on individual issues. But at worst, such approaches can manifest in ways that are patronizing and even disempowering’ (quote taken from beta version 2.1) This point raises important questions about what should be deemed a successful Video for Change initiative and who decides on measures of success. What if, for example, the people the video was meant to support were ignored, harmed or hampered by its making, or the community the video sought to support were against its release and felt it unjustly portrayed or represented them? Or what if the people whom a video is designed to support or represent have conflicting reactions, such as the negative reactions of some audiences in northern Uganda to the ‘Kony 2012’ video campaign, which contrasted markedly with the supportive reactions of teenage audiences in the United States who were not directly affected by the issue and who knew very little of the complex milieu from which it emerged?¹⁴ In these cases, one million or one hundred million YouTube views may be either irrelevant or a negative result if circulation of the video serves to increase misunderstandings of an issue or add to the (re-)abuse or mistreatment of victims.

While recognizing that not all video-makers focusing on social change will have the same concerns and priorities, we felt that ethical considerations needed to be central to our Video for Change impact conceptual framework given the alignment of the Video4Change Network with the human rights sector, with marginalized and excluded groups and

14 See Gregory (2012) as part of this journal’s 2012 review coverage of the ‘Kony 2012’ campaign.

communities, and with organizations which are frequently focused on challenging powerful and influential institutions and actors.¹⁵

In order to begin analysing the ethical concerns and priorities of the Video4Change Network and other Video for Change practitioners, our research first sought to identify shared core values and beliefs that shape the practices of Video for Change practitioners. Using analysis based on findings from interviews and responses to an online questionnaire, we identified six ethical considerations that frequently influence the design of Video for Change initiatives. We believe the first two of these ethical concerns (detailed below) are most relevant at the beginning of a Video for Change project, while the following four are relevant to all stages of such a project—from planning to evaluation.¹⁶

Video for Change key ethical considerations

1. *Clear objectives.* This is an important ethical issue, since the actors or communities that Video for Change makers want to work with and support can feel vulnerable to media exploitation and may have past experience of this. Transparency about intentions can support solid foundations for trust—but this trust must be underpinned by agreed practices or ways of working. Openness about intent is also important for managing expectations: what time and resources will go into the initiative, who will make decisions and how, and what will and will not be possible.

2. *A clear strategy for change.* Very often Video for Change initiatives ask actors or communities to give up their time or to contribute other resources to support an initiative. These actors may need to know there is a well-formed strategy behind an initiative (or a plan to develop one) in order to make informed choices about contributing their investments of time and resources. Defining ‘Impact Pathways’ (which we discuss later in this article) can provide the foundation for a collaborative process that involves the communities or actors that are meant to benefit from an initiative. Again, this is not always critical: for example, some videos (such as protest videos or citizen witnessing) respond immediately to situations rather than being led by strategic planning. However, knowing what a video needs to achieve can support video-makers to shape the way it is created, presented, and distributed.

3. *Analysis of power dynamics.* Power influences everything: our ability to make decisions about our own lives; our ability to change situations; the resources we have access to; and what we are taught, know and think. Since Video for Change is about supporting progressive social change, it is important that the video-making process seeks to identify and

15 This is not to suggest that Video for Change approaches should only take a ‘bottom-up’ approach since, for example, many Video for Change practitioners also emphasize targeted policy and legal change and may employ more traditional forms of documentary-making to achieve this (where those most affected by an issue are not trained or supported to become film-makers but rather become ‘subjects’ in the film). However, we would argue that a Video for Change approach would usually emphasize, if not make central, needs and concerns as they are articulated by the actors, communities and movements the initiative seeks to support.

16 These ethical considerations do not imply that video-makers working outside of the Video for Change field, or those not identifying their work as being part of this field (for example, those who describe themselves as documentary-makers), are not also fully aligned with all or any of these ethical concerns. Our goal in identifying them was rather to support a discussion about if and how these ethical considerations could become integral to the design of our impact framework.

understand how power is impacting on the issue we are working on and on the people we are working with—and understand how this may influence what stories are told, by whom and under what conditions of voluntariness or coercion.¹⁷ In this way, participants and video-makers can make better assessments about how power might impact the initiative and how it might be challenged.¹⁸

4. *Participation and inclusion.* Video for Change initiatives can empower people; but they can also disempower. For example, a video can (re-)victimize people because the video-makers have not carefully considered the consequences of whose story and voice is included or excluded and how this may create or perpetuate problematic discourses (including by promoting or creating stereotypes). To prevent this, Video for Change practitioners can take agreed steps to ensure their initiatives define and then support whatever is considered to be appropriate inclusion and to ensure that this inclusion will be a positive experience for those involved. These decisions require careful forethought and planning regarding vulnerable populations. For example, if children or people with mental illness or disabilities are to be key beneficiaries of a Video for Change project, what kinds of considerations and processes are necessary for their involvement? This may require pre-planning regarding consent processes and the additional involvement of appropriate trained experts or leaders who are known and trusted by the key beneficiaries (such as NGOs, psychologists, school teachers, social workers).

5. *Accountability.* The Video for Change practitioners we surveyed and interviewed believe that their practices and outputs (intended and unintended) should be made accountable to the communities they are seeking to support. For this reason many Video for Change initiatives will include processes that allow affected groups, communities, campaigns and movements to design, monitor, and/or evaluate initiatives. Accountability is also about making careful decisions about co-ownership, including addressing issues relating to copyright and intellectual property, as well as editing and distribution decisions.

6. *Risk assessment and mitigation.* Video-making and video circulation can introduce significant new risks to vulnerable participants and communities and it can exacerbate others. These risks may be caused, for example, by not having spoken to the participants about risks and/or options to remain anonymous; or through a lack of planning for the safe storage or circulation of video or digital files. In order to ensure Video for Change initiatives do not exacerbate conflicts, tensions, problems, and inequalities, and in order to ensure the safety and security of marginalized and vulnerable communities, efforts should be made to carry out and to respond to a careful risk analysis.

We believe that these ethical considerations require that we push far beyond measuring outreach and audience numbers as indicators of impact; rather, they imply that we need to evaluate impact by first defining and integrating ethical priorities throughout the entire video-making workflow including pre-production, production, and post-production, as well as evaluation and final impact communication. Indeed, we would argue that ethical

17 Further to this, see Pittaway, Bartlomei, and Hugman (2010) in the Special Issue of this Journal on 'Responsibility to the Story'.

18 Our application of power analysis has largely been influenced by the work of influential human rights organizations, for example by the power mapping guidance provided by New Tactics for Human Rights (see <https://www.newtactics.org/resource/what-tactical-mapping>). In addition we have drawn on the work of Just Associates on power analysis and transformation (<https://justasociates.org/en/resources/mch3-power-concepts-revisioning-power-justice-equality-and-peace>).

priorities should determine project design and the video-making process. As Jessica Mayberry from Video Volunteers and the Video4Change Network says: ‘your process IS your ethic’ (personal communication, 2014). We see this focus on defining ethical priorities *as both a way to drive the video-making process and as a lens through which to evaluate impact*. We consider that this approach differentiates Video for Change from more traditional forms of documentary practice, which may—for various reasons including style, priorities, funding, fear of compromise and capacity limits—elect to keep affected communities at arm’s length in all or most stages of production. This is not to suggest other media-making practices are not underpinned by ethics—rather, that these ethics are not necessarily negotiated and implemented so closely with the affected actors, groups or communities that are the focus of the media initiative.

The key ethical considerations that we have briefly outlined here also suggest a symbiosis that, while potentially placing some limitations and additional resource demands on Video for Change makers, also provides opportunities for deepening engagement and relationships in ways that can contribute to different types of social impact. The integration of these ethical priorities into planning, design and production processes can, for example, act to protect and engage the communities, movements, and actors that Video for Change makers seek to support and enable the development of trust and respect that are necessary for the meaningful and long-term relationships that are required for sustainable social change. For example, a Video for Change initiative with an active, committed and engaged set of participants or constituents can leverage these relationships to increase outreach, conversation, dialogue, influence and action.

While these key ethical considerations have been deemed important among the Video4Change Network members and other Video for Change practitioners we have consulted as part of this research, we want to again emphasize that we see Video for Change as an umbrella term that may include many different practices and practitioners who emerge from diverse contexts. As we have already noted, some practitioners, for a variety of different reasons, will not strategically plan their Video for Change initiative in advance and they may not have considered or have strictly integrated all of the ethical considerations we have outlined. Reasons for this may include: because they are responding (as witnesses) to an immediate situation like a conflict or an act of violence; they have not received any Video for Change training or support; they have no access to resources or are working remotely, away from affected communities or in a situation where there are no longer any directly affected communities because, in the case of a historically-focused video, those affected have long ago passed away. However, we believe that not considering these ethical Video for Change priorities increases risks and lowers the potential for different kinds of social change impact and for this reason we argue that, wherever possible, it is worth carefully planning a Video for Change initiative in advance, using the ethical considerations we have briefly outlined here, or others that have been defined as important for a specific need or context.

Impact metrics and impact stories

Our analysis of current models for measuring or assessing the impact of a social change video finds that these models often focus on the reception of a video: that is, on measuring audiences and on assessing audience reception. In many ways this continues a past tradition of critiquing the success of cinema or television releases based on ticket sales and viewers.

However this focus is also at least partly the result of new technologies and cultural practices that help measure—and make visible—online outreach and engagement. The ability to aggregate metadata, create databases, use algorithms to interrogate large datasets and exploit the increasing capacity of off-the-shelf analytics software allows video-makers to analyse distribution and some forms of online engagement in new and useful ways. However, the kind of data collected from these technologies and tools is also limited and the availability they provide to certain types of data, particularly click and views, may in fact reinforce historically prevalent modes of measuring success based largely or solely on audience size. Furthermore, many other points of interaction, engagement and outreach are not rendered visible by these tools and as a result, other ways of seeing impact can become neglected in a rush to declare success by counting online views, hits, tweets, comments and clicks. For example, online analytics tools will not help analyse the experience people had at a discussion following a private or public screening of a video or the experiences of those who were involved in a video's production; these experiences can be critical to success and this kind of success can be much harder to understand, measure or evaluate.

More holistic approaches for understanding impact can be conveniently ignored if there is an overemphasis on quantitative measures focused on audiences to assess impact. For example, within the reception stage of a Video for Change impact project there are critical issues regarding the balance between data collection, privacy, and digital security: a consideration not mentioned by the current suite of Impact Guides we reviewed that have recently been released for documentary video-makers.¹⁹ The result of this oversight is that what can be most readily quantified becomes the focus for analysis, as opposed to what is impactful for a specific initiative in a specific context (Tofel 2013: 20).

Despite current momentum building around the desire to measure the impact of communication for social change initiatives (particularly for social documentary video), there also appears to be some resistance to the emerging practices or proposals for achieving this. For example, there was some backlash following a 2014 article, published in the *New York Times*, that reported on a new 'Participant Index' that was created by Participant, a social change entertainment media company.²⁰ The index (which is still not available to the public as we write in 2017) was to assess the impact of a film by measuring what an audience learnt, felt and did (or planned to do) after seeing it. It would achieve this by using survey data, social media data and mathematical formulas (algorithms) to assess a film's success in engaging people emotionally and moving them to action (Ceiply 2014). In one critical response the founder of a social change communication agency, Alison Byrne Fields (2014), suggested that the index was connected to an increased interest by those who fund social change documentaries to calculate a return on investment. She pointed out too that evaluating a film's impact based on actions people take is also problematic since it is easier to promote actions for some issues (such as animal rights) than others (such as economic inequality or a lack of access to health services).

This is not to completely discount the value of online analytics and metrics tools for impact measurement; however, we would suggest that at the very least we may need to

19 For example, BRITDOC's *Impact Field Guide* (2014), Harmony Institute and Bay Area Video Coalition's *Impact Playbook* (2013), and Media Impact Project's *Web Metrics Basics for Journalists* (2014) do not discuss data privacy and security, even though they all discuss and encourage data collection.

20 The project was funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Knight Foundation.

resist the use, or at least the over-use, of these new metrics tools until we at least find more effective ways to collect ‘thick data’. Tricia Wang (2013: para. 6) suggests: ‘thick data reveals the social context of and connections between data points. Big Data delivers numbers; thick data delivers stories. Big data relies on machine learning; thick data relies on human learning’. In this way, we would argue that thick data in Video for Change impact assessment could be used to provide context—about the issue being addressed, the participants who were involved, the place the video was made—and this context could be used to ensure outreach analytics and metrics are not completely disembodied from their social context in a way that may give a misleading or completely false impression of success.

In the rush to quantify online distribution and social media participation, it is important to start by asking not ‘what can we count?’ but rather, ‘what really matters, to whom and why?’²¹ Further, in many cases, online analytics tools are completely irrelevant to success: participant communities and target audiences for Video for Change can be small (perhaps videos even just made for the creator or for a few policymakers) and target audiences may not be online or may have very poor quality or limited internet access. For instance policy advocacy or judicial advocacy can engage small numbers of key individuals, as in the work done by WITNESS to advocate around charges at the International Criminal Court in the investigation and proceedings against Thomas Lubanga, a Congolese warlord (Michael 2009), or around presenting video to key decision makers in the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights (WITNESS 2010). Conversely in the case of community mobilizing video—for example, to engage communities in the Democratic Republic of Congo around the causes of and solutions to voluntary recruitment of child soldiers, although the videos produced by and with the community for this purpose are available online, the viewing statistics for that content are not a proxy for the impact it had (Michael 2009). We therefore believe that it is important that Video for Change initiatives do not assume that higher audience numbers necessarily result in greater or better impact.

Impact Pathways

In our research project we use the term *impact* to refer to any change made to a situation or context. Assessing impact means documenting what has changed, but also documenting contributions to that change. To document change, both intended and unintended impacts need to be recorded, and these may be considered by different actors to be both positive and negative.

Video for Change approaches can focus on small or incremental forms of change. For example, Video for Change may include short-form videos such as digital stories that focus on developing empathy by allowing first-person experiences to be relayed or witness videos that provide evidence of abuses. Video for Change is therefore more often seen by practitioners as a cumulative contribution to change—part of a social change ecosystem that includes, but is not limited to, media and media-based engagement. This isn’t to say that Video for Change initiatives do not have direct and significant impacts; rather, that specific and attributable changes exist within a conceptual framework that acknowledges many moving parts and contingencies that are contributing to (or working against) that change.

21 This is a point repeatedly made by authors included in the 2009 Special Issue of this journal on ‘Where is the Evidence?’, cited earlier in this article.

Our consideration of what makes Video for Change different from other kinds of media or video-making has moved us toward adopting a holistic model that emphasizes Impact Pathways rather than only considering or focusing on final impact goals or outcomes. ‘Impact Pathways’ refers to the many processes and actions throughout the duration of a project that might contribute to impact. Video for Change initiatives often produce multiple products and engage communities and movements across the full arc of production including planning, capacity building, filming, outreach and distribution, engagement, and evaluation. An Impact Pathway approach considers the entire initiative—rather than only assessing the impact of a single, discrete specific video output—when designing for and assessing impact. We believe what is missing from the current impact models and toolkits that we have reviewed (and cited earlier) is an approach that considers points of impact along—and critiques—the video-making process, without fetishizing or exclusively focusing on this. We believe that by supporting and promoting an ongoing approach to evaluating impact (rather than a ‘one-off’ assessment at the end), an Impact Pathways framework can also assist video-makers to understand what is and is not working in their activities so they can respond in an agile way. While it could be argued that this approach simply suggests we are integrating ‘monitoring’ into our impact evaluation, we believe that what we are proposing is quite different to this. Instead we are suggesting that impact is a process and not an end goal, while ethics are not merely a way to frame the right way to do things—rather, their implementation directly creates some impacts while indirectly contributing to others. Whether it is acknowledged or not, both impact and the preconditions necessary for impact are being created at all stages of a video production and these are in part determined by ethical (and unethical) practices.

As Fig. 1 demonstrates, our Impact Pathways framework is overlaid with core ethical considerations that can be integrated into the design and evaluation of every stage of the video-making process and it is underpinned with a clear understanding of how social change will be achieved (for example, through behaviour change or by changing the capacity of people to act). The framework also highlights the different stages in the video-making cycle where impact may be assessed and the key processes involved in doing this.

In an attempt to frame how impact can be conceived of and documented, our approach seeks to critique both more immediate short-term impacts as well as longer-term impacts. Immediate impacts could include, for example, informing new audiences about an issue through screening events, building the capacities of social movements through the provision of video training, or mobilizing target audiences to take an action like attending a rally or signing a petition. Longer-term impacts, such as changing social attitudes or changing a public policy or law, are more likely to require multiple efforts over time by many different actors. We believe shorter-term impacts are often either the complete focus of evaluation methods most frequently used in the field of video and communications for social change (through documentation that emphasizes recording outputs, for example) or they are completely ignored in impact evaluation (where outreach and audiences are the sole focus). The Impact Pathways approach we are advocating instead seeks to document and understand short-term impacts in a way that helps practitioners to understand and tell stories about how different activities and ways of working might or might not be contributing to the creation of the right environment or context that is needed for longer-term impact and broader social change.

Added to this, we believe that an Impact Pathways framework is also more congruent with the nature of Video for Change initiatives that engage collaborative, networked, or

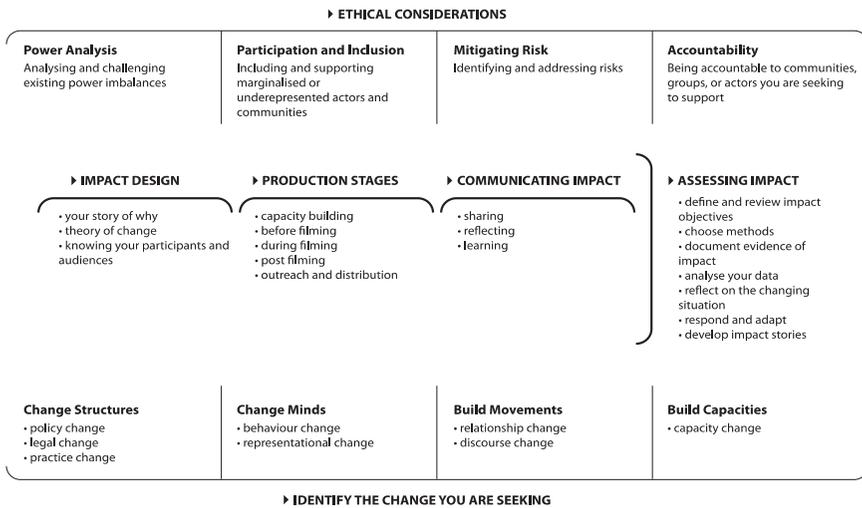


Figure 1. Video for Change Impact Pathways framework

crowd-sourced production and distribution processes that are participatory and multi-authorial, since these kinds of processes require more iterative responses to design and measurement. We also consider this approach to be more closely aligned with bottom-up forms of participation.

Furthermore, our Impact Pathways approach is founded on the belief that the design and evaluation of initiatives (and everything in between) should be connected, both conceptually and in practice. This ensures those involved in an initiative are able to make decisions about how innovation and design relate to impact, and also ensures discussions about what should be counted—what matters—happen early on. This may result in plans to prioritize results (particular outcomes) when designing for and assessing impact, but it also might result in prioritizing particular processes and ways of working that are deemed important, appropriate and ethical, or indeed as necessary for sustained and long-term social change.

The Impact Pathways approach also avoids an over-emphasis on the use of number-based metrics or outreach indicators as a way to understand and assess impact. In this approach, both quantitative and qualitative methods as well as the rich contextualization of video content can be used to tell ‘impact stories’ that serve to capture and understand rich and diverse experiences relating to the design, production, outreach and distribution associated with a Video for Change initiative. In our beta toolkit we recommend diverse methods (including documentation of events as well as the use of reflective participant video diaries and ongoing participant feedback discussions) to help tell impact stories.

The challenges and opportunities involved in adopting an Impact Pathways framework

As we have noted in this article, the Video for Change field has evolved in tandem with the movements and organizations involved, and often in line with the technologies available for video-making, organizing, and audience engagement. The latest developments that are changing and driving how video is being used for progressive social change highlight some of the challenges and opportunities of using an ethically-driven Impact Pathways

conceptual framework that emphasizes the needs, aspirations, intentions and safety of affected communities. For example, there are many challenges in applying bottom-up, participatory forms of accountability across the full spectrum of Video for Change initiatives outlined in Table 1. Remix video is perhaps the most problematic of the approaches we have outlined there for the Impact Pathways approach. Drawing on what danah boyd (2008) has characterized as the properties of the social media and networked publics—namely, persistence, searchability, replicability, scalability and three related dynamics—of invisible audiences, collapsed contexts and the blurring of public/private spheres, we can see how content created in and for one specific audience, time and place is embedded with assumptions around purpose, visibility and privacy. Yet videos can have their context collapsed and their audience and visibility radically altered when they are replicated, remixed, and re-shared, and this can have both positive and negative impacts for participants in the original context. In these ways remix video complicates the capacity to address some of the ethical considerations we have emphasized and discussed earlier in the article.

We see this ethical dilemma present in the human rights and social justice contexts as well as the context of everyday popular remix and meme-based viral video. An iconic example of the latter is the persistent patterns of remix and re-adaptation of the footage of ‘Star Wars Kid’²² where personal footage of a teenager pretending to be a character from Star Wars was shared, publicized, and remixed (often disparagingly), and was viewed by over a billion people. In cases like this, intention and context are removed in ways that were at the time unimaginable to the creator. In the Video for Change context, remix videos are increasingly being created by producers who are physically close to the issues, violence, or trauma they are exposing, as well as by those who are acting as remote or distant witnesses. One example of this type of practice is the work of Tamer Shaaban, an Egyptian student living in the United States, who produced ‘The Most AMAZING video on the Internet #Egypt’. This remixed footage of the Arab Spring went on to become one of the most widely-shared videos of the Tahrir Square uprisings of early 2011 (Gregory and Losh 2012) yet it was made out of ‘found footage’ from a highly volatile situation by a person not directly involved, physically connected to the events or in touch with the people or movements shown.

Another question emerges when we consider the relevance or appropriateness of the Impact Pathways conceptual framework when videos created through acts of citizen witnessing²³ and citizen investigations or journalism seek to share documentation of a crisis or present issues in ways that are not guided by a prior strategy that considers issues including accuracy, or by an assessment of the risks involved for communities depicted in or potentially affected by the video.²⁴ Are people creating a Video for Change initiative if their intentions are not clear, or if they are not guided by the ethical priorities we have outlined? Curiously, citizen witnesses and citizen journalists who record their own video footage or source it directly from primary or secondary sources—particularly when documenting acts of violence—must make a rudimentary decision about their Impact Pathway when they upload to commercial video-sharing platforms like YouTube. This is because these platforms will often exclude context-less content that breaks their rules on violent acts, hate

22 See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Star_Wars_Kid.

23 Citizen witnessing is a term used at WITNESS in a way that connects with the work of academic Stuart Allan (see e.g. Allan 2013).

24 See for example the discussion by Land (2016) on the issues associated with the use of technologies for participatory human rights investigations.

speech and other forms of objectionable content, but will allow it to remain if context and presentation indicate that it falls within an educational or documentary category: that is, if in its presentation the contributor has made explicit that they want it to be used and seen as documentation, evidence, education, or news (Glensky 2013).

The practices of video curation and archiving, both involving the aggregation of video content, have also emerged as Video for Change approaches in recent years, and these too offer challenges in terms of ensuring our Impact Pathways approach remains relevant. These kinds of video initiatives often take on the responsibility for assigning context, meaning, and distributive reach to citizens' media, acts of citizen witnessing, and documenting. Examples of work in this field include the video sharing platform focused on environment and social justice, EngageMedia (<https://www.engagemedia.org>); the WITNESS collaboration with Storyful and YouTube, 'The Human Rights Channel on YouTube' (<https://www.youtube.com/humanrights>), as well as a series of ongoing curation projects at the WITNESS Media Lab (<https://lab.witness.org>); journalistic experiments such as 'Watching Syria' by the *New York Times* (<http://projects.nytimes.com/watching-syrias-war>); and many acts of individual curation that emerge as trusted sources in particular contexts, such as the 'Only Mehdi' YouTube channel during the Green Revolution in Iran in 2010 (<https://www.youtube.com/user/onlymehdi>). Each of the Video for Change initiatives cited here clearly aspires to use video to support social change, whether that involves changing minds and behaviours, changing structures such as policies and practices, or building movements or individual capacities.²⁵ Yet these curating and archiving processes sometimes ignore, or do not know, the original creator's intent, or more pertinently do not have the understanding of risk, consent, intent and benefit that participants in the material have. This too can challenge the ethical principles that underpin our Impact Pathways framework.

The ethical foundations of our Impact Pathways framework are particularly challenged in the case of so-called 'perpetrator videos'—a genre of videos shot by perpetrators of violence or rights violations—that have often been re-purposed and re-contextualized as evidence of both specific human rights violations and of general patterns of violations, and where the creators' intent and the consent and protection of the people in the video are not aligned. In an analysis of the use of Egyptian police violence videos, Gregory and Zimmerman (2010) note how, in a number of ultimately crucial cases, footage shot by policemen themselves, such as the el-Kebir case of torture, was collated, re-contextualized, and identified as human rights footage (not as entertainment or an attempt at humiliation) by bloggers like Wael Abbas and Noha Atef. Yet this same footage can also be found alongside footage from other contexts of police and state violence in videos like 'Police Brutality—Police Get What They Deserve', a remix video seen close to two and a half million times on YouTube before it was taken down; in this case specific incidents of police and military abuse are subsumed into a broad narrative that loses all connection to the specificity of each incident within it. In some of these perpetrator video remix incidents—for example, the notorious Squatgate incident in Malaysia—the individuals who were abused and violated in the videos requested that others stop circulating the footage (Padania 2006).

Citizen witnessing videos and (to an even greater extent) perpetrator videos complicate requirements for informed consent and informed participation—two key aspects of the core ethical principles of Video for Change in the impact framework we have described in

25 Tanya Notley's taxonomy of Video for Change Impact is included into our Impact Pathways framework and further detailed here: <https://www.v4c.org/en/content/video-change-and-our-taxonomy-impact>.

this article, which are an integral part of many cultures and practices of social justice and human rights.²⁶ This is due to the fact that informed consent is not considered a fundamental citizen-reporting element, and in the case of perpetrator videos, the stripping of power and agency from the victim is precisely the point of the act of filming (for more, see [Gregory and Zimmerman 2010](#)). Examples of situations where this contrast has been particularly dynamic occurred with footage shot by the assailants of violence against LGBTI youth in Russia that was subsequently used in advocacy around the issue ([Bair 2015](#)), as well as around footage shot of sexual assault at Tahrir Square in Cairo ([Bair 2014](#)). Solutions to these situations are hard to find—and as noted above, may rest more in the different ways online platforms determine, monitor and deal with issues of consent, or in the decisions made by a range of sometimes unidentifiable or unaccountable intermediary actors who elect to upload, copy or share video content.²⁷

Adding to these concerns regarding shifting online structures and dynamics is the over-emphasis of the value of online environments, which can lead to widening disparities and the exclusion of marginalized voices. Most of the world's population are still not able to easily view videos online. Initiatives that focus only on online distribution need to be evaluated in terms of who they include and exclude and what effect this has on overall impact.

Conclusion

This article has described some of the opportunities and challenges associated with designing for and assessing impact in the Video for Change field. First, it has outlined that Video for Change includes many diverse genres, formats and approaches, and this alone means that developing a framework to support both the design and evaluation of impact is a challenging task. Second, we acknowledge in this article the relevance of broader work that has identified key issues associated with measuring impact in the human rights field and we concur with claims made that there are inherent and serious problems associated with standardized notions of impact, given the complex contexts human rights initiatives may be operating in. Added to this we argue that in the field of film and video there are historical tendencies to focus metrics of success on viewer or outreach numbers—that is, by how many people saw the film or took a prescribed action. We argue that this kind of 'thin' evaluation narrows the opportunity for understanding and assessing impact. To counter this, we propose an Impact Pathways approach that acknowledges that video-making involves a number of different stages—from planning and project design to filming, editing and outreach engagement—and each of these stages produces impacts. We suggest that identifying impacts at each stage supports a richer understanding of how impact is created, not as a one-off event or moment, but as a part of process. Third, we argue in this article that ethics (or a lack of them) underpin all impact: that is, the implementation (or not) of ethics directly creates some impacts, while it alters or affects other impacts. In the project this article reports on we have identified particular ethical considerations that are important to Video for Change makers and we have used these as the basis or foundation for an Ethical

26 See [Gregory \(2010\)](#), as part of the Special Issue of this journal on 'Responsibility to the Story' that explores the ethics of storytelling about 'victims' and survivors in human rights work.

27 In an attempt to shape this discussion, these topics have recently been explored in [WITNESS \(2015\)](#), which tries to apply many of the core Video for Change ethical priorities to this developing area of practice.

Impact framework and toolkit that has been developed to support Video for Change makers to both design for and evaluate impact.

One area for exploration and further research will require us to consider how some of the dilemmas we have highlighted around participatory media production and the growing number of video creators, producers and sharers (many of whom operate outside of traditional media frameworks) have analogues in the challenges faced in the broader human rights fields when a greater range and diversity of non-traditional and non-professional participants are involved in collecting, generating and sharing ‘human rights’ information and engaging in campaigning. In addition, it will be important for us to examine and respond to feedback as organizations and practitioners test the beta toolkit our project has created. This will involve looking carefully at the ethical framework we have proposed to assess whether it is appropriate for the needs of diverse different contexts. However, we believe that a flexible impact framework that is conceptually underpinned by the ethical concerns that are already prioritized and practised in this field will provide a useful way forward.

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