

# Grassroots innovation for human development. Exploring the potential of Participatory Video

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## ABSTRACT

Can digital technologies serve to highlight and strengthen the work of social organizations that promote human development? This is the question we want to answer in this article, in which we analyse an eight-month participatory video (PV) process, promoted by a group of university researchers and conducted in collaboration with two grassroots innovations (GI) in the city of Valencia (Spain): the Fuel Poverty Group and Sólár Dómada. The innovative component of PV is situated in two areas: firstly, as an action research methodology, the PV process enables people's participation, with the aim of generating learning, agency and contextual knowledge from the participants; secondly, the innovation is found in the product, the video itself. The video narratives can be used to disseminate the practices of the GIs and offer a space for critical reflection on the structural constraints that may hamper the diffusion of innovations. Furthermore, the audiovisual work itself has its own agency and has the potential to create opportunities for advocacy and contribute towards removing barriers that limit human development.

**Keywords:** Grassroots innovation, human development, participatory video, capability approach, participatory action research

## INTRODUCTION

Can digital technologies serve to highlight and strengthen the work of social organizations that promote a model of a more equitable and sustainable development? This is the question we want to answer in this article, in which we will analyse an eight-month participatory video (PV) process, promoted by a group of university researchers and conducted in collaboration with two social organizations in the city of Valencia (Spain): the Fuel Poverty Group and Sólár Dómada. We call these two groups Grassroots Innovations (GI) according to the definition by Seyfang and Smith (2007), who understand GIs as:

*“Networks of activists and organizations generating novel bottom-up solutions for sustainable development; solutions that respond to the local situation and the interests and values of the communities involved”* (p. 585).

Business and industry are no longer the only actors of innovation, but also groups of people from civil society, mainly activists or non-profit organizations, that generate

bottom-up innovation in response to local needs. The aim of this kind of innovation is to lead to a transition to a more sustainable society, introducing a normative direction of innovation (Smith et al., 2010).

In this paper, we complement this normative perspective of innovation for sustainability with the human development and capability approach, which arises from such a tradition in humanist social philosophy and humanist economics (e.g., Haq, 1999; Nussbaum, 2000; Gasper, 2009). It stresses: a plurality of values, not only the values of economic utility as expressed and promoted within markets; secondly, a human-wide concern and solidarity, as in human rights philosophy: the field of reference is all humans, wheresoever in the world, and in particular all those affected by one's actions; and thirdly, it recognises the normality and centrality of interconnections: side-effects of markets mean that market calculation is insufficient even if we only use a value of economic utility. Human development theory, represented for example in the UNDP Human Development Reports, moves to analyse processes and connections not only within disciplinary and national boundaries. Economic policies towards low-income countries for example can have major wider impacts, on conflict and violence, the flow of arms and the creation or strengthening of international crime networks, disease, migration, international epidemics, and more efficiency (Boni & Gasper, 2012).

Following previous attempts of dialogue between GI and human development (Pellicer, 2016), we can call this kind of innovation *GI for Human Development*.

The first GI is the Fuel Poverty Group, a new group of volunteers, mainly university students that want to challenge fuel poverty<sup>i</sup> by giving advice on how to reduce fuel consumption. This group is part of a wider network named the Platform for a New Energy Model<sup>ii</sup>, which works towards a more democratic and sustainable energy model.

The other group is the Solar Dómada<sup>iii</sup>, a group of people who are occupying a private plot, highly deteriorated at the time of their occupation (2013), as a way to assert the need for social spaces in the neighbourhood. Solar Dómada also seek to highlight that another kind of coexistence between neighbours is possible; one based on respect and intercultural coexistence. In the centre of the plot is the Garden of Ca Favara, one of the symbols of neighbourhood participation, involving more sustainable practices of food production and consumption.

There are, therefore, two experiences of GI that have a common aim behind their activism in that they both seek a more equitable, democratic and sustainable livelihood. The differences between them lie in: the area in which they are located (energy and production of urban space); the age and characteristics of their members (university students in the case of Fuel Poverty Group and people of different ages, educational levels and careers in the case of Solar Dómada); and their strategies (information and technical advice in the case of Fuel Poverty Group and occupation of urban space in the case of the Solar).

Over a period of six months (from October 2015 to March 2016), a group of researchers (including the authors of this article) worked with these two groups and facilitated a PV; understood here as a participatory action research where people created their own film, using digital video technology. This PV was a five-stage PV process, from the initial definition and planning to the public screening and debate on the videos.

From our perspective, the innovative component (towards human development) of the PV is situated in two areas: firstly, as an action research methodology, the PV process enables people's participation with the aim of generating learning, agency and contextual knowledge from the participants (Lunch & Lunch, 2006; White, 2003; Millán & Boni, 2016; López-Fogués et al., 2016). In this sense, the methodology is totally coherent with the core values of human development and can itself be considered as a kind of innovation towards human development. Secondly, the innovation is found in the product, the video itself. The video narratives can disseminate the practices of the GIs; offering a space for critical reflection on the structural constraints that may hamper the diffusion of innovations. Furthermore, the audiovisual work itself has its own agency (Latour, 2005); not only does the PV create opportunities for learning, agency expansion and empowerment during the process, but the product also has the potential to create opportunities for advocacy (Wheeler, 2012), and to contribute towards removing the barriers that limit human development.

In this paper we want to examine to what extent this PV process has been a tool of human development innovation. We will explore both the process and the product using different categories belonging to the participatory action research and human development literatures. With regard to the process, we will pay attention to the communicative spaces developed using the PV. As stated by Kemmis and McTaggart (2005), communicative spaces are forums "in which people can join one another as co-participants in the struggle to remake the practices in which they interact" (p. 563). Inside these communicative spaces, the co-participants interact, discuss, learn (consciously and unconsciously), create knowledge and are exposed to power dynamics that can hamper, boost and, in any event, influence participation dynamics (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2008; Millán & Boni, 2016). Therefore, the three main questions to be explored will be: 1) To what extent, in the different communicative spaces created during the PV, did participation take place? 2) What kind of knowledge was co-created? 3) Did participants expand their agency and capabilities? Both agency and capabilities are two main categories of the human development approach, to which we will refer in depth in section 3. Agency refers to the ability of the individual to pursue and achieve the objectives they value. An agent is someone "who acts and makes change happen" (Sen, 1999, p. 87). Capabilities are the substantive freedoms (which the same author also names "the real opportunities") to lead the kind of life that people value. It is important to understand the idea of capabilities as freedoms or opportunities. They cannot be desires, but must be something that can be put into practice. They include both material things and the states of people (Sen, 1999). With regard to the product, we will analyse to what extent the narratives of the two videos

produced are coherent with human development values and whether the video achieved its potential as an agent of change.

In the next part, section 2, we describe the PV process developed, identifying the different communicative spaces produced; in section 3 we address the main characteristics of the theoretical framework applied; in section 4 we discuss the evidences obtained and, lastly, in section 5 we conclude with some considerations of PV as a tool for action-research in *GI for human development*.

## **THE PV PROCESS**

According to several authors, PV can be understood as a manifestation of the relationship between the media and the world of development (Scott, 2014; Plush, 2012), but it is also identified as a methodological tool within the scope of Participatory Action Research (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991). PV like Participatory Action Research is a method of research and collaborative action characterized by the active involvement of people, the participants of the process. The facilitators are those who help structure the process and encourage interaction and discussion among participants to deepen contextual knowledge and, thus, look for possible solutions (Millán & Boni, 2016).

Video is considered a means of creative communication; it is easily accessible and also, when basic technical support is provided, easy to use. In PV, the art of “storytelling” and the collaborative construction of the audiovisual content, mainly seek to provide a space for critical reflection on processes and social struggles and to appeal for advocacy and action on injustices that affect the participants. The PV process also enables those involved to exercise power and take control while generating agency and empowerment between participants (Lunch & Lunch, 2006; Wheeler, 2012; White, 2003).

In our particular case, PV was used as an action-research method to try to grasp the contextual knowledge produced and as a way to empower members of the two local initiatives through various cycles of reflection and action. An additional objective was to produce an output – the two videos<sup>iv</sup> – that can be useful tools for the goals of the various participants: for the local organizations, as a tool to show and disseminate their activities and add new constituencies; and for the group of facilitators, members of INGENIO a Spanish Institute devoted to knowledge management and innovation<sup>v</sup>, as a way of illustrating a way of conducting research and discussing its social relevance.

The 8-minute video by Solar Dómada presents the occupied plot as a place where coexistence between neighbourhoods is promoted and more sustainable lifestyles are demanded, which are respectful of the differences between cultures and between generations. At the heart of the plot there is a small orchard, literally dug into the cement, symbolizing a space of resistance against a model of the unsustainable and individualistic city in a peripheral and difficult urban environment. The second video (6’50’’) illustrates a recent problem in the Spanish context; that of fuel poverty. The video shows evidence

of what is meant by fuel poverty and how conducting a review of the entire energy consumption of a household can lead to improved energy efficiency.

In Figure 1, we illustrate the different phases of PV (diagnosis, planning, production, curation and sharing) according to a definition developed by Millán and Frediani (2014) and later used to guide other PV processes (Boni & Walker, 2016; Boni & Millán, 2016; Millán & Boni, 2016; López-Fogués et al., 2016). During the five phases we identify the three different communicative spaces that occurred during the PV: inside the GIs, between GIs and facilitators and between GIs, facilitators and other people.

(insert Figure 1)

*Figure 1. Stages of Participatory Video Development (Millán and Frediani, 2014).*

In the first phase, diagnosis, participants identified the most relevant issues. This phase occurred in two types of communicative spaces: inside GIs and between groups and facilitators. In the case of Solar Dómada, the intra-group space was particularly important as it enabled a reconstruction of the history of the group. In the case of the Fuel Poverty Group, the interaction between this group and the other participants enabled them to think about the narrative of the video, embracing a broader perspective of fuel poverty.

The second phase was planning, where the storyboard was developed. This occurred primarily inside groups and then it was socialized in a communicative space of a collective nature, which was also very much appreciated by the participants, allowing them to reflect on the narratives and contents of the two videos.

The third phase was the video production. In the case of the Fuel Poverty Group, the participants asked people outside the action research about the significance of fuel poverty or how they felt about being labelled “energy poor”. As we will discuss in section 4, these interactions were a very important source of learning about rethinking the idea of fuel poverty and the scope of performing energy consultancy as a mechanism to deal with it. In the case of Solar Dómada, the production phase stimulated a variety of communicative spaces between group members and the neighbourhood, providing various perspectives on the plot. The contribution of the facilitators at this stage was to provide technical assistance in recording.

The fourth phase was the publication (curation) of the two videos, which in the case of Solar Dómada was conducted with the help of an external facilitator, while in the case of the Fuel Poverty Group, the task was taken on by the group itself. There was a collective communication space where videos were pre-viewed internally. For the Fuel Poverty Group, this space of collective discussion allowed them to refine the video narrative.

The PV cycle ended with the public presentation of the videos in an emblematic site in the city of Valencia, due to its political character (*Ca Revolta*). After the screening there was an interesting dialogue between group members, facilitators and the audience, composed of activists and academics and neighbours of the Solar Dómada.

## MAIN CATEGORIES TO EXPLORE INNOVATION FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

As stated at the introduction, to analyse the PV process we use three categories frequently mentioned as significant in the participatory action research and the capability approach for human development literature. The first is “communicative spaces”. As Kemmis and McTaggart state (2005, p. 563), “PAR offers an opportunity to create forums in which people can join one another as co-participants in the struggle to remake the practices in which they interact”. The same authors define practice as the real, material, concrete and particular actions of particular people in specific places, which can “comprehend what people do, how people interact with the world and with the others, what people mean and what they value, the discourses in which people understand and interpret the world” (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 565). The second category is participation. According to Bradbury-Huang (2010), participation can be considered on a broad spectrum: from a minimum involvement of practitioners (for example, in a needed consultation) to having those practitioners as co-researchers and co-designers. The third category is knowledge. As we mentioned at the beginning of this paper, through participation in communicative spaces, knowledge is produced. This knowledge is assumed to not only be the understanding of the topics addressed, but also practical knowledge (the skills developed) and the values that underpin the knowledge produced (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005).

As occurred in previous analyses of other processes of PV (López-Fogués et al., 2016; Boni et al., 2016a), we can represent each of these three elements – communicative spaces, participation and knowledge – as the axes of a three-dimensional figure, a cube, taking inspiration from the work of Frediani (2015) and Gaventa (2006), and first developed in Boni and Walker (2016). The use of the cube aims at visualising complex interactions among dimensions in the analysis of participatory processes. In our case, it aims at representing the intersections that occur between knowledge and participation within communicative spaces that take place during the cycles of reflection and action in the phases of the PV. The representation of our analytical understanding is presented in Figure 2, in this we find the cycles of the PV process (see Fig. 1) inside the cube. In the interactions between the three axes, issues of power emerge and shape the kind of participation and knowledge produced (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2008).

(Insert Figure 2)

*Figure 2. Three-dimensional framework to analyse PV processes* (Boni et al., 2016a; López-Fogués et al., 2016)

The other theoretical perspective is the capability approach for human development, which was developed in answer to the question “Equality of what?”. Sen’s response (1992) was to insert capabilities into the evaluative space, that is to understand and measure development as a process of expanding the real freedoms (the capabilities or

well-being freedoms, the opportunity aspect of freedom), that people enjoy to be and do what they have reason to value (their plural functionings or well-being achievements). Well-being is thus understood in terms of how a person can “function”, or what a person can actually be and do.

If capability is freedom of opportunity, agency is freedom of process. Agency refers to the ability of the individual to pursue and achieve the objectives they value. An agent is, as Sen notes (1999), someone who acts and makes change happen. As Deneulin (2014) explains, “well-being not only depends on what a person does or is, but on *how* [author’s emphasis] she achieved that functioning, whether she was actively involved in the process of achieving that functioning or not” (p. 27). Sen’s answer to his famous question “Equality of what?” is not only equality and democratically decided basic capabilities, but also, and just as importantly, equality of agency and process freedoms (Crocker, 2008).

The last characteristic of the capability approach for human development we want to highlight is its multidimensional and integral understanding of good lives. The plurality of dimensions and underpinning of values constitute a crucial anchor and guard against its easy domestication (Boni et al., 2016b). All the values matter and support and reinforce each other. In a more detailed definition of the central values of human development, Alkire and Deneulin (2009) identify four interlocking principles of equity, efficiency, participation and empowerment, and sustainability and elaborate each as follows:

1) *Equity* draws on the concept of justice, impartiality and fairness and incorporates a consideration for distributive justice between groups. In human development, we seek equity in the space of people’s freedom to live valuable lives. It is related to, but different from, the concept of equality, which implies the equality of all people in some space. In human development, equity draws attention to those who have unequal opportunities due to various disadvantages and may require preferential treatment or affirmative action.

2) *Efficiency* refers to the optimal use of existing resources. It is necessary to demonstrate that the chosen intervention offers the highest impact in terms of people’s opportunities. When applying this principle, one must conceive of efficiency in a dynamic context since what is efficient at one point in time may not necessarily be efficient in the long run.

3) *Participation* and empowerment is about processes in which people act as agents – individually and as groups. It is about the freedom to make decisions in matters that affect their lives; the freedom to hold others accountable for their promises, the freedom to influence development in their communities. Whether at the level of policy-making or implementation, this principle implies that people need to be involved at every stage, not merely as beneficiaries or spectators, but as agents who are able to pursue and realize goals that they value and have reason to value.

4) *Sustainability* is often used to introduce the durability of development in the face of environmental limitations but is not confined to this dimension alone. It refers to advancing human development such that progress in all spheres – social, political and financial – endures over time. Environmental sustainability implies achieving developmental results without jeopardizing the natural resource base and biodiversity of the region and without affecting the resource base for future generations. Financial sustainability refers to the way in which development is financed without penalizing future generations or economic stability. Social sustainability refers to the way in which social groups and other institutions are involved and support development initiatives over time, avoiding disruptive and destructive elements. Cultural liberty and respect for diversity are also important values that can contribute to socially-sustainable development.

As Alkire and Deneulin point out, these four principles are not exhaustive; other values, such as responsibility or justice, could also be considered. However, we agree with Ibrahim (2014) that an intervention inspired by the human development approach should incorporate all four dimensions; even if its main focus is on one dimension of value, the others must also be considered in relation to the main value chosen. For example, efficiency should not be considered on its own.

Thus, departing from the four values identified by Alkire and Deneulin (2009) and the categories of capabilities and agency illustrated above, in the next section we analyse to what extent the capabilities and agency of participants were expanded through the PV process (also analysed through the interaction between communicative spaces, knowledge and participation) and if and how the main narratives of the two videos inspire and adhere to the main values of human development. Finally, we consider whether the audiovisual products were able to exert their agency once the PV process had ended. Figure 3 depicts our understanding of this analysis.

(Insert Figure 3)

*Figure 3. Capability approach for human development analysis of the PV* (Source: the authors)

We will base our evidence on participant observation conducted throughout the process along with three groups interviews to members of the two GIs at the end of the PV process. In the case of Solar Dómada, two group interviews were conducted: the first with 3 women participating in the GI and the second with two men. The reason for doing it this way is that, during the PV, a difficult power relation between one of the women and the two men was detected. To enable the interview to flow more naturally, it was decided to separate the two groups. In the case of the Fuel Poverty Group a single group interview

was conducted with a woman and a man. All the interviewees give us their informed consent.

The exploration of the narrative of the two videos has been performed by analysing the dialogues that appear in both videos, regardless of any other characteristics thereof (for example, non-verbal expressions). It is, therefore, an exploratory study that paves the way for future applications of the capabilities approach for human development in the analysis of audiovisual content. One limitation of this exploration is it has been made only by the authors of this paper, without involving the participants of the PV process. The authors are aware that incorporating the participants in the analysis could be more coherent with principles of human development and PV. Also, could be a more fruitful way as it can provoke new communicative spaces that can produce meaningful learning and knowledge.

## **THE PROCESS. EXPANDING CAPABILITIES AND AGENCY THROUGH COMMUNICATIVE SPACES**

We will begin this section by analysing the potential of communicative spaces (both collective and within the groups) to create knowledge and foster participation. Starting with the collective communicative spaces mentioned before, both groups acknowledge that the first collective meeting was highly motivating and exciting. As noted by one of the members of the Solar Dómada:

*“It was very encouraging to see that your team [INGENIO team] was interested in our initiatives and because the problems we often have is making ourselves understood by our neighbours... I thought it was a good opportunity to become known in the neighbourhood... also to try something new, editing a video is far from what we normally do.”*

In terms of the knowledge produced, we can identify the second collective moment that happened at the planning phase as being extremely powerful – when the two organizations shared storyboards. During moments of dialogue, participants were able to contrast their visions on the themes that would be address in the videos. For example, one of the members of the Fuel Poverty Group indicated:

*“XX told us that energy is not only electricity... there is solar thermal energy in the roofs of the houses... [all of these] are reflections from other points of view that you can get if you talk to people, and especially if you talk to groups that are already committed... [this is] where richness lies”*

In the case of the Fuel Poverty Group, the collective moment helped the group to adopt a less paternalistic perspective of fuel poverty. Their first option was to show one person affected by fuel poverty and how the energy consultancy could help to reduce her energy expenditure. After the ideas exchange during the second collective moment, the group decided to include a more political perspective of fuel poverty, introducing references in

the storyboard concerning the energy oligopoly that exists in Spain and which hinders better energy consumption.

Regarding facilitation, members of the two groups expressed that horizontal relations between facilitators and members of the two GIs had a positive and significant impact on communication and exchange of ideas. It was also highlighted in the final meeting that collective spaces had been planned and managed in a very careful way. They were experienced as pleasant and friendly spaces, where people felt comfortable and relaxed, having a positive effect on people's participation. The importance of the emotional aspect in the process has been one of the greatest learning aspects for the facilitation team. Relationships between people are crossed by emotions, and creating communicative spaces where these emotions can be channelled positively is essential in order to generate more knowledge sharing and enhance participation.

With regard to the communicative spaces that have occurred within groups, for Solar Domada's members, the exchanges that happened during the diagnostic and planning phases were very important to reconstruct the history of the organization and the role played by each of its members. As noted by one of the participants:

*“We remember especially when we were recalling those moments with pictures... they were very emotional moments... I loved it when all of us answered without digressions what we wanted to show in the video... we had never seen such an organized and respectful relationship as the one that occurred that day”*

In the case of the Fuel Poverty Group, one of the most interesting communicative spaces from the perspective of knowledge production took place at the production stage when interviewing a woman affected by fuel poverty. The interviewer noted that the most shocking thing was to realize that the woman wouldn't have considered herself fuel-poor if she had been living on her own but she would reconsider this position if this affected her ability to meet the basic needs of her family.

Another important learning aspect for the members of the GIs was the limitations of their voluntary action as a way to challenge fuel poverty. As one of them indicated:

*“The difficult part is that we can help reducing the bill but we can't help you to get reconnected to the power supply... it's an economic issue... this where we say: we can only go so far as fuel poverty volunteers...”*

Finally, the act of making the two videos has also contributed to the acquisition of new technical skills. At the beginning of the process, some of the participants believed they were totally incapable of making a video.

A special mention must be made regarding the power relations that occurred throughout the process; on one side, although the PV process puts the team of facilitators in a position of superiority due to their mastery of the audiovisual tool (Millán & Boni, 2016), this was not a hindrance throughout the process. In the case of the Fuel Poverty Group, the group requested technical support when needed, but much of the technical work was done by

the group itself. Participants recognized that the video could have had a higher technical quality, but their attitude was that this was a first approach to the tool, which would enable them to make more videos in the future.

On the other hand, in the Sólár Dómada group, power relations played an important role. In fact, one of the external facilitators ended up in charge of technical tasks and coordination of the PV process, precisely as a way to mediate between group members. This was viewed positively by most participants, because it was the way to “save” the process and finalize the video. However, one of the participants said he would have liked to have more control over the process, but the difficult relations inside the group favoured the delegation of coordination and technical tasks to an outsider.

With regard to the expansion of capabilities and agency among the participants, one of the main capabilities developed was the awareness capability or the capability to carry out self-critical investigation and an analysis of their own reality (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2008) that contributes towards rethinking and reframing the particular practices of the participants (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). Examining the PV results from a capability lens shows that, throughout the five stages, the process provided the necessary communicative spaces (internal and external) for participants to formulate and express how they understand the challenges they were facing.

Regarding the facilitators, we can say that this PV process enhanced their capability to reflect and improve their understanding of their role as facilitators in the social development field (Boni & Walker, 2016). The facilitators were able to clearly envisage the drivers than can bring about a better performance of PV processes. Paying attention to emotions, or providing safe spaces for participants to share and exchange knowledge, feelings and emotions, was crucial during the PV process.

We can also highlight the expansion of more “instrumental” capabilities such as the “social relations and social network” capability, or the capability to “Participate in a group for learning, working with others to solve problems and tasks and form effective or good groups for collaborative and participatory learning”, both described by Walker (2006, p. 128). All of these capabilities were developed in the interaction between different communicative spaces both inside groups and in the relationship between groups and facilitators, with the exception of what happened with one of the people from the Solar Dómada who, for personal reasons also related to power dynamics, distanced herself from the process.

With regard to the expansion of agency, we must say that prior to starting the PV, all members of the two GIs recognized themselves as agents of change. What was provided by the PV was a major focus on that capacity for change. For example, as we said above, for the Fuel Poverty Group, the PV involved them becoming aware of the limitations of energy consultancy and volunteering as a way to fight and reverse such a complex issue as fuel poverty, which is linked to economic and political factors. However, the fact that the group exists within a wider movement, that of the Platform for a New Energetic

Model, also allowed the GI to form a deeper understanding of the group's "room for manoeuvre" to change a structural problem like fuel poverty. In this regard, we note that the communicative space of the final presentation of the two videos, in which there was an interesting debate on these issues, was very positive for the formation of agency of the members of the Fuel Poverty Group. On the other hand, this collective space served to increase the visibility of the Fuel Poverty Group within the Platform, which also indicates an increase in the agency space of this group.

Concerning the Solar Dómada, in the case of the two men, they entered the PV with a strong impression of being agents of change; in this sense, the process strengthened this agency capacity to some extent. For two of the three women, they gained more recognition from their peers as agents of change and, at the same time, they reinforced their perception of being change makers. In this sense, we can say that the process was extremely empowering for them. But, for the other woman, as a result of power imbalances with its male peers, the process was extremely disempowering and she decided to abandon it. In that sense, the PV was not positive for this participant and, as in other Participatory Action Research processes, more attention from the facilitators should be paid to power relations, as these are crucial in those kind of research.

## **THE PRODUCTS. COMPLEMENTARY APPROACHES FROM THE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVE**

In this section we address the content analysis of two videos from the perspective of the four values of human development: equity, efficiency, participation and empowerment, and sustainability. In the video of the Solar Dómada, entitled "The Orchard of Ca Favara", the most relevant values are those of participation and sustainability. The Orchard is represented as a space "where things can happen" or "where values contrary to individualism and competitiveness are practiced", as narrated by two neighbours. Other characters highlight that the Garden is almost the only green space in the neighbourhood and gives it a better quality of life, making it possible to grow plants and vegetables in the middle of an extremely industrial environment. Additionally, the plot is a place to carry out recreational activities, and used by people of various origins and ages. Somehow, though not predominantly, the value of equity is shown, understood as equal opportunities to make use of the Garden.

By contrast, the videos by the Fuel Poverty Group emphasize the values of equity and efficiency. The first value is expressed in much of the dialogues and testimonies that appear in the video. Fuel poverty is presented as a problem that affects many people, more than it seems, and that can happen in "ordinary" households. In fact, one third of the video is a conversation that occurs in a "normal" home where the mother of two children narrates how fuel poverty not only impedes her from heating water or warming her home, but also makes her feel ashamed. This is a really multidimensional view of poverty and very much aligned with the values of human development. Another key aspect that appears in the video is efficiency; the second part of the video narrative is dedicated to

showing how homes can be more energy efficient with the help of the Fuel Poverty Group, that performs energy consultancy. The video concludes by briefly highlighting the various activities of the group to illustrate the value of collective participation in order to change the energy model. Interestingly, one value that does not appear, despite being closely related to the theme of energy, is that of sustainability.

We can conclude that neither of the two videos incorporates all four values of human development as a whole; rather they are complementary. Also, it is true that there are no counter-values to those of human development.

The final analysis we want to address in relation to the two videos is the capacity of the video itself to exert its agency, detached from the process of its creation. We consider three different communicative spaces to address this issue: the public screening at the end of the PV cycle and the presentations of the videos in two additional spaces: in a training session aimed at Cuban practitioners, and in a Spanish Master's degree on development aid. Both of them took place at the Polytechnic University of Valencia.

The public screening was the most interesting communicative space, leading to meaningful debates on central questions in the two narratives. On the one hand, in the case of the Fuel Poverty Group, the discussion focused on the difficulty both of measuring fuel poverty and knowing who can be considered as a fuel poor – those who cannot afford the electricity bill, or those unable to heat their house, or those who have to choose between cooking, heating or having hot water? The name itself somehow stigmatizes people as “poor”, and many people do not want to be recognized in this way, which makes it difficult to obtain information from them. Also, the discussion touched upon role of gender in fuel poverty, as it is women who are trying more to cope with its effects in the home.

In the case of the video by Solar Dómada, the discussion focused on the importance of making visible the work done in peripheral and industrial areas, such as that where the plot is located. This led to a debate about the role that PV can play in the long term and with different audiences. The role of the university in accompanying these kinds of long-term processes was also discussed, with the intention of trying to avoid temporary collaborations, as various activists remarked at the public screening.

The communicative space with Cuban practitioners was interesting because it allowed, on the one hand, to show the PV as a communication tool for social change and, on the other hand, to bring about an exchange of perspectives on the potential of GIs in recovered urban environments in Cuba and in Valencia. Finally, the projection in the Master's course served to illustrate the potential of PV as a tool of participatory action research and the role the university can play.

Something that was verified is the potential of video as a very good communicative tool; its visual nature makes it more comprehensible, regardless of the literacy of the audience

and its easily reproducible properties make communication possible without the need of those who appear in the images to attend (Millán & Boni, 2016). In a global context where the low cost and easy access to platforms and digital devices are making it easier for citizens to propose and communicate alternatives participation and influence to the traditional structures of political and social power, video is currently emerging as the audiovisual medium with the greatest social influence on digital content (Vallet et al., 2015).

## **CONCLUDING THOUGHTS AND WAYS FORWARD**

From the analysis in terms of the expansion of capabilities and agency and the alignment of the narratives of the two videos with the values of human development, we can say that the PV has proven to be a methodology that enhances GI for Human Development.

The process has expanded the capabilities of the participants, particularly those relating to rethinking and re-signifying their own innovative practices, and the more instrumental capabilities developed in connection with the use of video and teamwork. This capabilities expansion occurs through participation in communicative spaces in which knowledge is created from the internal interaction of the members of the GI and in the relationship between the GI and facilitators. There is also an enabling communicative space when the participants interact with outsiders.

As in other processes of action-research, the capabilities expansion is limited by power relations, as seen in the case of Solar Dómada. In relation to agency, although members of both GIs can be considered agents of change in the sense given by Amartya Sen (1999), we can conclude that, especially in the case of the Fuel Poverty Group, through rethinking their practice, individual and collective agency has been fostered. The idea that it is necessary to go beyond energy consultancy to combat fuel poverty gives a more structural approach to the practice of the Fuel Poverty Group.

Furthermore, the two audiovisual products can also be considered as part of the innovation for human development. As illustrated in the example, videos contribute, firstly, towards spreading a certain vision of the GI aligned with the values of human development and, secondly, to creating communicative spaces where such innovation can be shown and discussed. In spite of this, we cannot conclude from the examples that the videos have had an impact on policy change, which may be one of the potentials of PV (Wheeler, 2012).

As a limit of this work we can point out that both the analysis of the process and the outputs (the two videos) can be done with a major involvement of the participants. Indoubtely, this can reinforce the participatory side of the research and can provide new communicative spaces to produce learning and knowledge.

Also, it would be of interest to explore the potential of PV innovation in the production system of scientific knowledge itself. The fact that it is a methodology of participatory action research, that is being promoted from a research group that is embedded in a university, leads us to an interesting reflection regarding the potential of these research methodologies to promote innovation in ways that generate and disseminate a kind of knowledge aligned with human development values. This would be an even greater contribution of PV towards contributing to a more equitable and sustainable development model.

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## ENDNOTES

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<sup>i</sup> Fuel poverty can be understood as the difficult situation faced by a household that can't afford to pay for their energy consumption, leading to a lack of normalized access to gas and electricity. This situation brings about a deprivation of the freedom to live a decent life (Pellicer & Lillo, 2014).

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.nuevomodeloenergetico.org> [retrieved 20th September 2016].

<sup>iii</sup> <http://domonomada.blogspot.com.es> [retrieved 20th September 2016].

<sup>iv</sup> Available at <https://repensandoelcambioclimatico.wordpress.com/5o-ciclo-proyeccion-publica/>

<sup>v</sup> More information of the Institute is available at <http://www.ingenio.upv.es/en>