

Playback:

Reactivating 1970's Community Video

Edward Webb-Ingall

Royal Holloway, University of London PhD, Media Arts

Declaration of Authorship

I, Edward Webb-Ingall, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

24th July 2018

Abstract:

In the early 1970s, activists and community groups began to use newly available video recording technology to produce what came to be known as ‘community video’. The capacity to record and instantly playback video material enabled groups previously ignored or misrepresented by mainstream media to develop their own means of self-representation. Since its inception, community video has largely been considered as ephemeral and remained at the margins of moving image histories.

This practice-based thesis challenges the marginalisation of 1970s community video through a combination of two approaches. First, the reappraisal of community video projects from the 1970s will describe the context out of which ‘community video’ first developed and align it with other similar approaches to non-fiction moving production. I then use an analysis of primary sources to draw out a methodological approach specific to 1970s community video. Second, I consider the contemporary relevance of 1970s community video practices through the ‘reactivation’ of both the production methods used to make community videos in the 1970s and the videos produced as a result of them.

Referring to a practice of both restoration and of setting-in-motion, the term ‘reactivation’ provides a useful metaphor for the reflexive process that I use to draw comparisons between community videos produced in the 1970s and those videos produced during a contemporary community video project. This combination of reactivation with historical analysis will be used to develop an aesthetic language to describe the particular sensory and perceptual quality of videos produced by

community groups, as well as their uses, pleasures, and limitations. This language helps to understand and articulate what defines community videos and to evaluate how the processes that characterise this specific approach to non-fiction moving image production continue to provide translatable and adaptable methods of collaborative video making and representation.

Acknowledgments:

I would like to thank my supervisors Mandy Merck, for taking a chance on my PhD proposal and who has since worked tirelessly to develop this thesis into what it is today, and Tony Dowmunt, for sharing his knowledge and experience as a community videomaker and for his ongoing support and enthusiasm throughout my PhD project.

I am grateful for the financial support of a full scholarship from TECHNE and the administrative support from the staff in the Department of Media Arts at Royal Holloway, University of London, which made it possible for me to undertake this doctoral project and travel abroad to present at conferences and carry out research.

Throughout this project I have been fortunate enough to call upon the memories and reflections of Thomas Waugh, Carry Gorney, Ron Orders, Caroline Goldie, Tony Wickert, Peter Bloch, Keith Griffiths, Andy Porter, Heinz Nigg, John ‘Hoppy’ Hopkins, Sue Hall and Su Braden, who were kind of enough to answer all of my questions and encourage me to ask more. I am also thankful to Ben Cook and Maria Palacios Cruz at LUX, Lucy Reynolds at MIRAJ and Laura Mulvey and Sue Clayton who invited me to develop my thoughts into written and published works and to Massimiliano Mollona, Nina Wakeford, Michael Birchall, Gail Pickering, Open School East and Margaret Salmon who invited me to share my research and try out my ideas with their students. I was lucky enough to have Dr Nicolas Helm Grovas and Dr Clarissa Jacob provide advice and moral support as my co-supervisees while at Royal Holloway.

The second half of this PhD would not have been possible were it not for the guidance of Louise Shelley and all of the staff at The Showroom as well as The People Make Videos gang; Birdman, Dirmuid, Ismail, Jessica, Kazi Noor Jahan and Robert. I was lucky enough to work with Rosie Eveleigh to produce all of the incredible graphic design and typography that were produced as part of the People Make Videos Project.

It was my friends who always showed interest in my research and supported me to finish this project; Claire Louise Staunton, Laura Guy, Charlotte Prodger, Jamie Crewe, Mason Leaver Yap, Astrid Goldsmith, Markland Starkie, Stephen Robinson, Holly Wood, Holly White, Rehana Zaman, Olivia Plender, Elsa Richardson, Irene Revell, Conal McStravick, Naomi Pearce, and lastly, Robbie Ellen who has only known me for the duration of my PhD but whose support will last a lifetime.

Elements of this PhD have been presented and developed at *Debout! Feminism and Video Making in France and Beyond*, London, Queen Mary, University of London, 2014; *The Annual Conference for the Society of Cinema and Media Studies*, Montreal, 2015; *LUX Blog: writer in residence*, London, 2015; *European Network for Cinema and Media Studies Alternative Film/Video Research Forum: Documentary Intersections*, Belgrade, 2016; *Starting to Happen: A screening and discussion, celebrating 40 years of radical British cinema*, Arnolfini, Bristol, 2016; *Crisis Of Overproduction: Art On The Margins*, TATE, Liverpool, 2016; *People Make Videos: A Manual for Making Community Videos*. London, Showroom, 2016; *Drawing Lines across History: Reactivation and Annotation*. Liverpool Biennial, 2016; *The Video Show: A festival of independent video*, Moving Image Research Journal, 2017; *The Technologies and Practices of Community Video*, in, *Other Cinemas: Politics*,

Culture and British Experimental Film in the 1970s. Ed. Laura Mulvey and Sue Clayton. IB Tauris, 2017.

Contents:

Declaration of Authorship	2
Abstract	3
Acknowledgements	5
Illustrations and Supporting Materials	12
Introduction	14
An Incomplete History	15
Rewind, Stop, Play, and Reactivate	17
Community Video, Just Another Kind of Documentary	21
Section One: A History of Community Video	24
1. Early Experiments with Video	28
How Video Became Portable	28
The Arts Labs	36
The Camera Enters the Community	39
The Institute for Research in Art and Technology (IRAT)	43
Cybernetics	46
Television, from Invaders to Invited	48
Conservatives, Cable and Community	57
2. Insiders and Outsiders	61
Community Action Centre and West London Media Workshop	62
The influence of North America: Liberation Films, Challenge for Change and The Newsreel Collective	70

3. The Arts Council, Community Art and Community Video (1969-1980)	84
Recognition and Rifts: Community Video and Video Art	97
A Changing Landscape (1975-1980)	108
The (Resistible) Rise of Video	111
Conclusion: The end of the 1970s	118
Methodology: Drawing out a methodology from 1970s community video	130
The ‘Insider’ Approach	132
The ‘Hybrid’ Approach	138
The ‘Outsider’ Approach	141
Invited into a Community	143
The Structure of a Community Video Project	146
Playback and Discussion Screenings	150
The Introduction of Portable Video Recording Technology	154
The Context of the Project	157
Section Two: Reactivation of Techniques and Practices of 1970s Community	
Video in a Contemporary Context	163
1. People Make Videos	163
Background for Case Study.....	163
Outline of Project	164
Outcomes	164

Specific Approach	165
Duration of a Project	166
Entering a Community	172
Forming a Group	176
Trigger Video and Discussion Screening	180
Introducing a Video Camera	184
The end of phase one	191
2. Playback	193
3. Community Video and Aesthetics	206
Articulating Community Video Aesthetics	207
The Aesthetics of Outsider Video Projects	212
Outsider to Insider	216
Mise en Scène and Liminality in Community Video	227
4. What remains of 1970s Community Video?	234
Making Room for ‘Cynicism’ in Utopia	236
Processes of Being Seen	243
Absorption, Appropriation and Hybrid Images	251
Dissonance and Polyphony	255
The Personal and the Political	258
Hybridity and the Production of Hybrid Images	263

Outcomes and Intentions: Evaluating the Continued Efficacy of 1970s	
Community Video Practices	267
Conclusion	284
Appendix	287
Bibliography	291
Filmography	305

Illustrations and Supporting Materials:

Figure 01: An illustration of how the video recording and playback system function
p.29

Figure 02: An illustration of the Video Helical Scan System p.30

Figure 03: Images taken from Sony promotional material for Sony DV-2400, 1967
and AV 3400, 1970 p.31

Figure 04: Illustration taken from *Video Work*, The Association of Video Workers,
UK, 1976 p.102

Figure 05: Taken from *Basic Video in Community Work* p.142

Figure 06: Diagram of the contingent relationship between method, context and
content p.161

Figure 07: Original List p.287

Figures 08 and 09: Annotations by the artist Olivia Plender and annotations by curator
Anna Colin p.288-289

Figure 10a: Original list of guidelines that was proposed p.169

Figure 10b: Amended list proposed by the participants p.170

Figure 11: Original Community Action Centre Poster, 1974 and poster designed for
The Showroom, 2015 p.178

Figure 12: Open Call poster in the neighbourhood p.179

Figure 13: Using playback for a cross-community conversation p.197

Figure 14: Illustration of chair feedback exercise p.200

Figure 15: Scenes from *How Can We Live Now?* p.218

Figure 16: Scenes from *Save the Church Street Drop-in Centre* p.219

Figure 17: Scenes of collective editing in 2015 and in 1974 p.222

Figure 18: Street interview scenes from 1974 and 2015 p.226

Figure 19: An example of some notes made during a discussion about the word
'community' p.240

Figure 20: The poster for the workshop and the cover of the manual p.278

Figure 21: Image taken at the one-day workshop run by the participants of People
Make Videos p.281

Supporting Materials submitted as part of this research project:

What Would You Make a Film About?, People Make Videos, 2015

For your public convenience, People Make Videos, 2015

How Can We Live Now?, People Make Videos, 2015

Save the Church Street Drop-in Centre, People Make Videos, 2015

YOU UP FOR IT, People Make Videos, 2016

Work in Progress, People Make Videos, 2016

Home, People Make Videos, 2016

Sunrise/Sunset, People Make Videos, 2016

Migration, People Make Videos, 2016

Silk Cuts, People Make Videos, 2016

All of these videos can be found here: <https://vimeo.com/album/5060800> and on the memory stick provided, please take time to view these when they are referenced in the thesis.

Introduction:

The invention of portable video cameras in the 1960s ushered in the development of a new form of non-fiction moving image production that followed on from the tradition of direct cinema and cinema verité but with a radically different approach – what came to be known as ‘community video’. Community video has hitherto evaded strict definition, reinvented each time a group who share a neighbourhood or interest chooses to take up a video camera in order to collectively produce a video for, by and about themselves. Where previously 16mm film cameras were used to observe and record action, often with an aesthetic of distance and of perceived neutrality, portable video cameras encouraged collaborative production and the capacity to instantly playback footage enabled participants to share in group reflection.

This thesis is divided in two distinct parts, interlinked by a bridging, transitional middle section. Section one is an historical survey, establishing what community video was. It provides an historical and theoretical analysis of the development of community video practices in the 1970s. It seeks to align community video with the wider history of grassroots activism and political nonfiction filmmaking. Following this analysis, the middle section draws out the specific methodologies that were developed and taken up by community video practitioners in the 1970s. Section two analyses the adaptation and translation of these methods in the service of a contemporary community video project, making use of a process that I describe as ‘reactivation’. Consequently, I am able to identify the processes used to produce 1970s community video projects and articulate how they continue to offer a way for

their participants to negotiate and represent their relationship to the site and context of production.

An Incomplete History:

A combination of two factors has meant that, since its inception, community video has struggled to find recognition. First, community video was characterised by an ‘anti-aesthetic’ that focussed on political content and second an emphasis was placed on group processes over the production of authored, tangible objects. As a consequence of this, community video has occupied a marginal position in the history of non-fiction filmmaking in the UK and, instead, has largely been subsumed into the history of community arts. Both were established at the same time and were characterized by their challenge to single authorship by dissolving the relationship between the artist/maker and the audience/participant. They also shared a similar understanding of the potential for art to liberate, effect change and create new forms of self-representation for marginalized groups.

Claire Bishop’s book, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*, opens with a statement that highlights the importance and pertinence of my thesis. She devotes half a chapter to the community arts movement in the UK in the 1970s, in which she states:

Although there is a large literature produced by community arts, very little of this is historical or scholarly, and even less is critical. The analysis of community-based visual arts tends to take the form of specific reports on specific projects in local contexts, by people invested in supporting these initiatives, without any overarching history or meta-theoretical discourse.¹

¹ Bishop, Claire. *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London: Verso, 2012, p.177

As Bishop suggests, the majority of literature on ‘community-based visual arts’ tends to focus on the practical organisation of the projects. The history and practice of community video have rarely been revisited and have evaded close attention since the publication of the following books in 1980: *Community Media* (Nigg and Wade), *Video in Education and Training* (McInnes), *Video With Young People* (Dowmunt) and *Street Video* (Wade). There are brief mentions of 1970s community video practice in the following contemporary publications: *Participatory Video: A Practical Guide to Using Video Creatively in Group Development Work* (1997, Shaw), *Inclusion Through Media* (2007, Dowmunt et al), and an interview with members of community film and video group Liberation Films is featured in the book *Rogue Reels: Oppositional Film in Britain 1945-90* (1999, Dickinson). Conversely, there have been a number of historical surveys and analytical publications on similar community media movements in Canada and North America (1995, Marchessault; 1997, Boyle; and 2014, Waugh, Baker, Winter), which attest to the continuing contemporary relevance of what was largely considered an ephemeral moving image practice in the UK.

In 2014, the following research project was launched: ‘Community Filmmaking and Cultural Diversity.’ It was established to ‘understand better how community filmmaking practices, in culturally diverse contexts, contribute to the wider film ecology and to representation, identity and innovation and how this contribution can be better supported by policy.’² Rather than beginning with an historical analysis of community video, it addressed the contemporary role of community filmmaking, with specific reference to its benefit for ‘diverse communities’. However, it remains one of

² Malik S., Chapain C. and Comunian R. (2014) ‘Spotlight on Community Filmmaking: A report on Community Filmmaking and Cultural Diversity research’. Published by Brunel University, the University of Birmingham and Kings College London, UK, Accessed 12th February 2018

the only contemporaneous evaluations of the role of community film and video. The project resulted in the publication of a book, *Community filmmaking: diversity, practices and places*.

The book highlights the important relationship between the community mode of filmmaking and diversity through practice; between different kinds of cinema (to the mainstream) and different kinds of (otherwise marginalised) cultural perspectives. Community filmmaking is therefore identified as a critical site for both cultural and community significance and a useful example that can help inform wider debates about diversity and the media.³

This book includes a chapter that echoes similar concerns and interests to the reactivation element of my own research project. In this chapter, 'Community Media as Social Innovation', the authors, Dovey, Sobers and Agusita, use feedback and evaluation from a contemporary community media project to analyse the role of community media production in the context of convergent and ever expanding digital media cultures. The benefits they identify include the development of nurturing, reciprocal, cross-community, pedagogical relationships to 'build and identify the transferable skills of participants'.⁴ Neither of these projects reviews the history of collective and community-led interventions with video in order to understand their contemporary relevance.

Rewind, Stop, Play, and Reactivate:

Community video is characterised by processes that place playback as central to learning and developing new modes of self-representation and the production of videos. The structure of this thesis reflects this approach. Similarly, it relies on a cyclical and iterative process that begins with an analysis of what community video

³ Malik, Sarita, et al. *Community Filmmaking. Diversity, Practices and Places*. Taylor & Francis Ltd, 2017 p.21

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.124

was, in order to reactivate it. In turn, the process of reactivation enables me to better understand what community video is and how it continues to function. It is important to make clear that, despite the historical analysis appearing before my explanation of the practical reactivation, the two happened in unison; my experience and understanding gleaned from one, feeding into and effecting the progression of the other.

To address the marginalisation of community video and argue for its continued efficacy, I begin with a reappraisal of some of the community groups who contributed to its development during its first decade. I analyse why and how the community video movement developed. I begin in 1969, which marks the earliest known use of portable video equipment in the UK for community activism, and end in 1980, when community video changed due to a number of social and political shifts, including the election of Margaret Thatcher and the ongoing involvement of the Arts Council.

Community video was born out of a shift from grassroots activism manifested in marches and demonstrations towards participatory and interdisciplinary art and filmmaking practices. Groups such as Graft On!, CATV, TVX, Liberation Films, Albany Video, Inter-Action, Oval Video, WACAT and West London Media Workshop began to use newly available, portable video recording technology to explore the representation of communities of locality, and later, with the development of ‘identity politics’, communities of interest.⁵ These groups, who were previously ignored or misrepresented by mainstream media, harnessed the utopian ideal of this new technology to record and playback video material to develop their own means of

⁵ For the purpose of this study, I have focused on community video groups that were based in London, as this is where the majority of community video projects were first developed; it is also the location where the contemporary reactivation took place.

self-representation and an aesthetic specific to their identities, politics and interests. Women's groups, teenagers, gay liberation activists, tenants associations, those on low or no income and people of colour all had the means to represent and respond to their own experiences collaboratively. They were able to conceive formal approaches and aesthetics that reflected their identification with the subject located in front of the camera and produce videos that could intervene in the lived experience of those involved. The spectator became a partner in media activism, where video's capacity to represent experience was often a prelude to community organising and vice versa.

Following a historical analysis of 1970s community video (in the middle section of this thesis) I draw out the specific approaches that characterized the use of the medium when it was first taken up in the context of community organising and activism. I do this by analysing primary sources produced as a result of 1970s community video and identifying the practical methods presented in them. I explain how most 1970s community video projects can be understood as having been initiated by an 'insider', an 'outsider' or a 'hybrid' combination of these two approaches. The contingent nature of 1970s community video processes mean that they were adapted each time a project was initiated. They are informed by an understanding of the intended audience and dictated by a combination of the identity and intentions of the subjects located in front of and behind the camera, who were often the same as, or familiar to, one another. These factors made community video processes distinct from similar approaches to non-fiction moving image production developing at the time and subsequently. There are, however, a number of elements that community video projects share with one another and it is these that are taken up during the reactivation phase of this project. These include the way a project is structured, the role of a

mediator based in the community or neighbourhood where the project is to take place, the role of playback, the way video recording technology is introduced to a group, and lastly a sensitivity to the social context out of which a project is being developed.

In part two of this thesis, I seek to further understand what characterises 1970s community video as well as assess its continuing efficacy through its reactivation as part of a contemporary community video project that I initiated. Reactivation is best understood as a dynamic process of appropriation and translation. For this thesis, it meant revisiting and setting-in-motion 1970s community video practices and the videos produced as a result of them, in order to initiate a contemporary community video project. The videos made as a result of this project are referred to throughout section two of the thesis and can be viewed online at the links provided and on the memory stick included.⁶ The production of these videos allowed me to understand more fully the processes used in the 1970s, and the videos produced then, as well as to draw comparisons between the processes developed during a contemporary community video project and the videos that they produced.

Writing on the reactivation of what he refers to as ‘political documentaries,’ Thomas Waugh suggests it is important to ‘recover films whose original political context and thus “use-value” may have lapsed, but which may find new uses and engage new aesthetics in new contexts.’⁷ Similarly, a description of the re-appropriation of archival materials by art historian Paolo Magagnoli suggests that such works provide

⁶ All of the videos made during the contemporary community video project can be found here: <https://vimeo.com/album/5060800> and on the memory stick provided, please take time to view these when they are referenced in the thesis.

⁷ Waugh, Thomas. *Show Us Life: Toward a History and Aesthetics of the Committed Documentary*. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1984, p.xxii

‘a resource and strategy central to struggles of all subaltern cultural and social groups... and show possibilities which are still valid in the present.’⁸

By taking up a practice-based approach to understanding the history and practice of community video, I am able to subvert the logocentric position that a purely written approach might take. This process draws on a mode of evaluation developed from within community video, instead of one projected onto it from external sources. Like community video itself, this methodology aligns the processes used to make community videos as equal to the objects and histories produced as a result of them. Art Historian Patrick Greaney refers to this as a ‘quotational practice’ where ‘the past matters not only because of what actually happened but also because of the possibilities that were not realized and still could be.’ He goes on to propose that quotation evokes those possibilities and ‘by repeating the past, artists and writers may be attempting to repeat that past’s unrealized futures.’⁹

As a result of this process of reactivation, I adapt and develop an aesthetic language that aligns community video practices with other similar methods of non-fiction moving image production, such as political films and feminist documentaries made in the 1970s and subsequently. This may seem antithetical to the anti-aesthetic position expressed by many community video practitioners in the 1970s. However, it has enabled me to explain the particular sensory and perceptual quality of videos produced by community groups, as well as their uses, pleasures, and limitations. This

⁸ Magagnoli, Paolo. *Documents of Utopia: The Politics of Experimental Documentary*. New York: Wallflower, 2015, p.9

⁹ Greaney, Patrick. *Quotational Practices: Repeating the Future in Contemporary Art*. Minnesota: U of Minnesota, 2014. p.19

language also allows me to articulate how community video practices function in the present moment.

Community video, just another kind of documentary:

Following the use of video by community groups in the 1970s, similar forms of collective self-representation that use video have developed. These have subsequently been described as ‘activist video’, ‘guerilla video’, ‘participatory video’ and, more recently, as part of ‘socially engaged art practices.’¹⁰ With each new descriptor, the original processes developed in the 1970s have been updated to take into account changes in technology and changes in the requirements set by the social and political context in which the video project takes place. An overarching aim of this thesis is to place community video alongside other non-fiction moving image practices, both historically and aesthetically. To recognise how community video practices can be understood in relation to other documentary processes in the 1970s, I look to the influential essay by the artist and writer Alan Sekula ‘Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary (Notes on the Politics of Representation),’ written at the end of the 1970s.

Writing in 1978 on the changing nature of documentary practices, Sekula described the way non-fiction image making was beginning to eschew its ‘essential realism’ and instead represent a left-wing political position that expressed an understanding of the

¹⁰ See Hallas, Roger. *Reframing Bodies: AIDS, Bearing Witness, and the Queer Moving Image*. Duke University Press, 2009, Boyle, Deirdre *Subject to Change: Guerrilla Television Revisited*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997, Shaw, Jackie, and Clive Robertson. *Participatory Video: a Practical Approach to Using Video Creatively in Group Development Work*. Routledge, 1997. Bishop, Claire. *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. Verso, 2012.

‘relation between form and ideology within the documentary genre.’¹¹ He writes: ‘A small group of contemporary artists is working on an art that deals with the social ordering of people’s lives. Most of their work involves still photography and video.’¹² He goes on to suggest that ‘these works might be about any number of things, ranging from the material and ideological space of the “self” to the dominant social realities of corporate spectacle and corporate power.’¹³

Sekula is able to respond to the emergent use of video and its bearing on new documentary forms. He provides a means to understand how community video continues to be relevant and concludes by asking questions of it that remain as pertinent now as they were then: ‘The initial questions are these: How do we invent our lives out of a limited range of possibilities and how are our lives invented for us by those in power?’¹⁴ By positioning community video in this lineage, I have been able to ask similar questions and propose community video as an approach to moving image production that is distinct from the non-fiction production methods that preceded it, and one that anticipated similar activist and guerilla video practices in the 1980s and 1990s.¹⁵

¹¹ Sekula, Alan. ‘Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary (Notes on the Politics of Representation).’ *The Massachusetts Review*, vol. 19, no. 4, 1978 p.242

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., p.234

¹⁵ This project does not draw a line between the 1970s and the present day, instead it reactivates 1970s community video techniques from the 1970s in the present day, to understand what they were and argue for their contemporary relevance.

Section One: A History of Community Video

The term ‘community video’ was first used in the 1970s¹⁶ to describe a new mode of image making that combined social and political action with the production of videos. As early as 1969, activist and video pioneer John Hopkins used portable video equipment to document a demonstration in Notting Hill, London¹⁷ and community artist Carry Gorney used video cameras in a project working with new mothers and their babies.¹⁸ The use of video technology in this way coincided with the availability of portable video recording technology in the UK at the start of the 1970s. The capacity to record and instantly playback moving images on monitors that looked like televisions appealed to artists and activists seeking a form of moving image production that was distinct and independent from pre-existing modes of communication and representation. By 1980, the social and political landscape radically changed the form and focus that defined community video in the proceeding decade.

This section describes the context out of which the practice that came to be known as ‘community video’ first developed, focusing on London, which is where the majority of community video groups were first established. Other similar groups outside of London include Sheffield Video Workshop, set up in 1977; Community Video

¹⁶ This term remains contentious in terms of when it was first used and by whom. It is referenced as early as 1972 in the publication *Video in Community Development* and then later in a number of reports by the Arts Council. Hopkins, John. *Video in Community Development*. Ovum, 1973.

¹⁷ ‘List Of Completed Video Production 1969-1979’ (London), John Hopkins/ Sue Hall (TVX / CATS / Fantasy Factory), British Artists’ Film and Video Study Collection. Retrieved October 8th 2014

¹⁸ ‘I’d been working in Leeds and I’d persuaded Yorkshire Television to lend me two enormous cameras, which I carried into some group work I was doing for an agency called Family Service Units... they worked with very difficult, very challenging families, many of them below, what we would now say is below the poverty line... and I brought this bloody great camera in with me one day, and set it up what we called then Closed Circuit’. Interview with Carry Gorney for the London Community Video Archive, www.the-lcva.co.uk, accessed September 2017

Workshop Cardiff, which existed under various names from 1974; Manchester Film and Video Workshop, established in 1977; Media Workshop Belfast, which formed between 1972 and 1978;¹⁹ and Amber film & photography collective, formed in 1968 in Newcastle.

In 1978, the Arts Council of Great Britain issued a list of all the community arts projects known in the country. This totalled 178, of which over half were known to be using newly available portable video recording technology.²⁰ However, the large body of video work produced by community groups in the 1970s has either been subsumed into the history of community arts or consigned to a footnote in the history of video art. The following factors have contributed to this gap in the history of the moving image in the UK. The capacity to erase and record over video footage and the inherent fragility of the medium itself meant that that very few videos from this period remained in circulation for very long.²¹ Many of the videos produced by community video groups were made with specific audiences in mind and were not widely distributed. A focus on process, coupled with rudimentary editing capabilities, resulted in observational, sprawling tapes that were often edited 'in-camera'. This was combined with the purposeful denial of a clearly identifiable aesthetic approach, which resulted in much of the work evading closer attention. Finally, community videos were largely produced by, for and about marginalised sectors including those on low to no income, women, young people, the elderly, ethnic minorities and the homeless. Film experts at the time largely considered the work made by these groups to be outside of a moving image culture that was worth taking seriously. For example,

¹⁹ For more information about these groups see Wade, Graham. *Street Video*. Blackthorn Pr., 1980

²⁰ Nigg, Heinz, and Graham Wade. *Community Media: Community Communication in the UK: Video, Local TV, Film, and Photography* ; Regenbogen-Verlag, 1980 p.24

²¹ Since the establishment of the London Community Video Archive in 2017, sixty community videos made between 1969 and 1986 have been digitized and are now viewable online. www.the-lcva.co.uk

writer and filmmaker David Hall proposed that community videos were only made for small and local audiences and thus dismissed their need for a distribution network of their own:

One of the crucial differences between community work and experimental tapemaking seems to be that the former is essentially self-sufficient from the need for separate viewing and distribution... tapes rarely have any significance outside their 'domestic' context.²²

The following section assesses and evaluates five different organisations that utilized new video technology. As with the writing of any history, the inclusion of these groups should not be considered as a definitive or comprehensive survey of all community video groups, but instead as examples of the many and varied uses of video by community and activist groups in the 1970s. These organisations pioneered the collective use of video for social and political aims in the 1970s. Their actions will be used to explain the confluent and contingent factors that brought about the particular mode of moving image production that came to be known as 'community video'.

The period 1969 through to 1980 will frame the emergence of community video practices described in this section. In chapter one, I draw out the context for some of the early experiments with newly available video technology by artists and activists. This begins by tracing the way in which video recording equipment first became portable and accessible to community groups. This was made possible due to a decrease in the size of the machinery and the subsequent development of a universalized playback system, which enabled greater access and ease of use. The novelty of these advancements resulted in a certain level of technological fetishisation

²² Hall, David. 'Video Report' *Studio International*, Jan/Feb (1976), p.62

and encouraged the development of new forms of documentary and experimental moving image practice. This is followed by a description of the adoption of video recording technology at the newly established Arts Labs in the early 1970s in London. Their interdisciplinary use of video outside of recognised arts institutions provides an example of the involvement of audiences in the collective creation of the art object. The subsequent closure of the Arts Lab and the establishment of the Institute of Art and Technology (IRAT) illustrates the use of video technology by radical media activists to disrupt pre-existing broadcast television. This is followed by an analysis of the problematic top-down, co-option of early community video practices by broadcast and local cable television networks. This tension foreshadows the complicated relationship of community video with large institutions. In chapter two, I analyse the differing working methods of two community video groups. The first is the grass-roots activist group West London Media Workshop who used newly available communications technology to support their activities in Notting Hill, London. They provide an example of what I describe as the ‘insider’ approach to community video. The second is community film and video group Liberation Films. Their work is illustrative of what I describe as the ‘outsider’ approach to community video. Their working methods combined ‘discussion-screenings’ with participatory video projects and evidence the influence of community-led, film and video initiatives taking place in North America. These include those organized by the political filmmaking organisation the US Newsreel Collective and the work of Challenge for Change in Canada. In chapter three, the relationship between community art and community video will be distinguished from one another and framed by an analysis of the work of community art and media group Inter-Action. This is followed by an assessment of the changes that community video experienced and became defined by at the end of

the 1970s. These were characterized by the parallel development of video art and the increased involvement of the Arts Council with the production of community-based art and media.

Chapter One: Early Experiments with Video

How Video Became Portable:

As with the introduction of every new medium, video encompasses a process of development from technical novelty to the formation of media specific forms of expression, which reflects the basic technical conditions governing the apparatus aesthetically and finally culminates in the cultural connotations of a new medium, which can assert its singularity in setting itself apart from other media.²³

The use of portable video cameras in non-profit arenas has been recorded in Britain from the late 1960s.²⁴ Before explaining why artists and activists began using this new technology, it is important to understand its limits and potential, which had previously been the concern of television studios and accessible only to professionals.

For the purposes of this study I focus on Sony's development of portable video recording technology, as their models were most widely used in the UK. (Other companies developing similar technology at the same time were Ampex in the USA and Panasonic and Akai in Japan.)

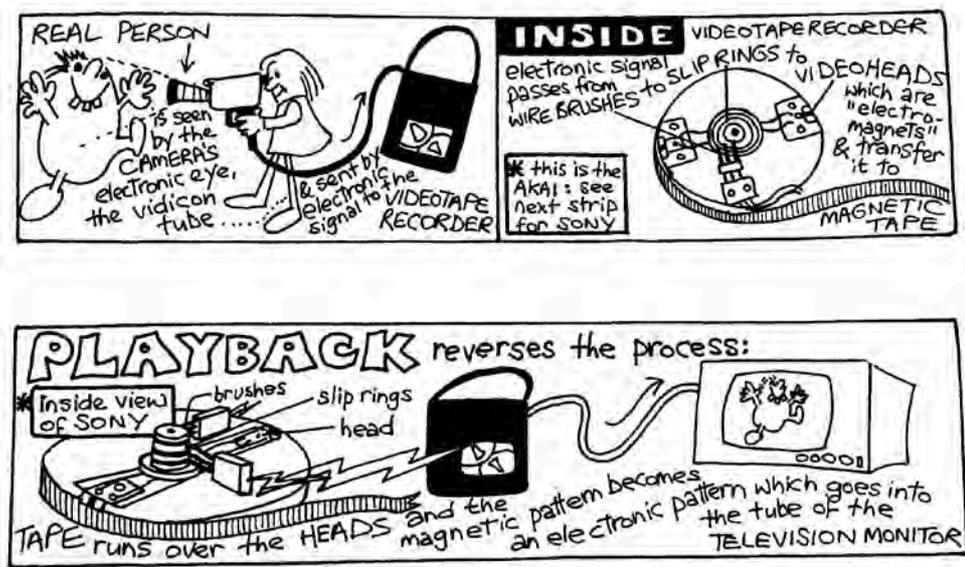
The basic strategy adopted by the Japanese throughout the spectrum of electronic goods is exemplified by video: entry into the market at the low cost end, the establishment of a reputation for choice and reliability and then gradual take over of the whole range of products.²⁵

²³ Spielmann, Yvonne. *Video: The Reflexive Medium*. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2008. p.2

²⁴ 'In Britain low gauge video has been used professionally in non-profit areas for more than 15 years, initially in education and since 1969 in community and arts applications.' Herman, Steve. 'The Broadcasting of Low Gauge Video: A Research Report.' London: Centre for Advanced TV Studies, 1981. Np.

²⁵ Armes, Roy. *On Video*, London: Routledge, 1988. p.66-67

In 1958, the Japanese electronics company Sony²⁶ launched their first 'pocket sized' portable transistor radio for the export market. Following its success,²⁷ Sony set about adapting broadcast video technology in order to develop portable video recording equipment. Early television video recording employed a large 'Quadruplex' or transverse system. This uses four magnetic heads that vertically scan two-inch tape at a ninety-degree angle to simultaneously record and reproduce images and sounds. Three key areas control the recording: the tape supply system, the tape drive system and the tape take-up system. When combined, these enable the tape's movement across the head system at a consistent speed and tension. The tape is magnetic, and when passed across the three it completes a circuit. The recording occurs when iron oxide particles become magnetized. The object and sound recorded produces unique signals which in turn cause the electromagnetic heads to vary in strength to produce a series of patterns which translate back into images and sound when played back through the system.

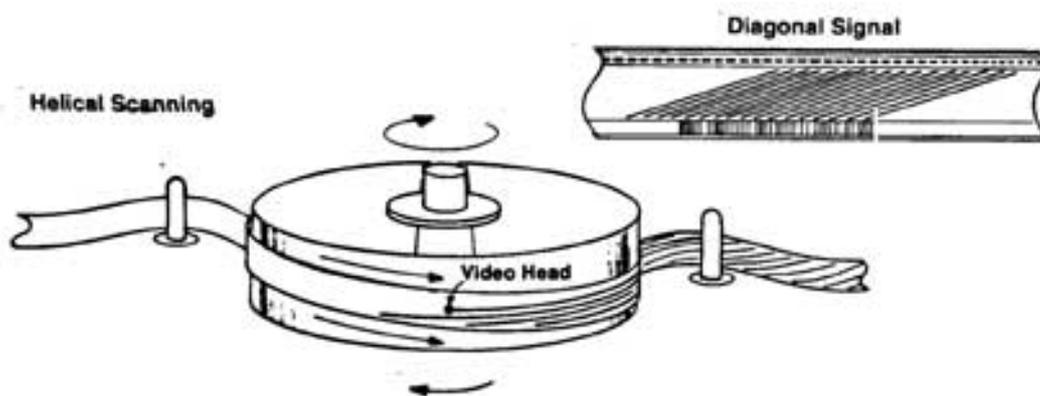


²⁶ Originally known as Tokyo Telecommunications Engineering Corporation

²⁷ Approximately 500,000 units of the Sony TR-610 were sold throughout the world in 1958 (Product & Technology Milestones, Radio. Sony Global <http://www.sony.net/SonyInfo/CorporateInfo/History/sonyhistory-b.html>) Accessed Web. 22 June 2016

(Figure 01: An illustration of how the video recording and playback system²⁸⁾

In the 1960s, Sony began to develop Helical, two-head technology that recorded diagonally onto half-inch tape. This allowed the tape to hold the same amount of information as the ‘Quadruplex’ system but on a quarter of the width. Employing only two heads and narrower tape allowed for the production of a compact and, most importantly, more portable model.



(Figure 02: An illustration of the Video Helical Scan System²⁹⁾

In 1964, Sony unveiled the CV-2000, a helical-scan, monochrome, open-reel video recorder with attachable camera, microphone and monitor. It was their first step towards the creation of a video tape recorder for home use in both size and cost. The recording unit itself weighed 20kg, was similar in size to a small suitcase and, with the video camera attachment, cost \$1425, the equivalent of approximately \$11000 today. Over the next five years, Sony released five more models in the CV range, each time improving the image and sound capabilities whilst decreasing the size and

²⁸ Biren, Andi. *Basic Video in Community Work*. London: Inter-Action Advisory Service, 1975, p.13

²⁹ ‘Origination Formats and Machines’ *The Experimental Television Center*, www.experimentaltvcenter.org/book/export/html/5853, accessed July 9th 2018

cost of the machinery. In 1967, they released the fifth and final CV model, the CV-2400, also known as the Video Rover and later referred to as the Portapak. It was made up of two parts: the handheld video camera (which weighed 5lb 9oz) and a half inch reel-to-reel tape recorder (weighing 10lb 13oz, without the battery pack) that could record up to 20 minutes of black-and-white videotape. The term ‘Portapak’ was used in promotional materials and taken up as shorthand by its users to refer to the compact portability of what had previously been an inaccessible medium. Print advertising illustrated this by showing the recording unit and camera being worn by models with ease over one shoulder.



Sony's AV-3400 was the first complete portapak. Sony's AV-8400 is the second. And the third.

Of course, you know the AV-3400, the famous portable Videorecorder® System that made television production and video recording practical. Simple to operate, easy to carry. Performance is top, the AV-3400 puts levels the field in portable black and white TV tape recording.

But now it's not the only Videorecorder from Sony. Because now we have the AV-8400. And the AV-8400 is a real, real innovation.

It can give us our needs gone. And the AV-8400, it's a second-generation black and white recorder. All built-in. Built-in tape generator. Meets EIAJ Type I specifications. Self-threading with the new Sony auto-thread reel. And the capacity to be transformed at minimal expense into the AV-8400 Color Videorecorder—light weight and portable, the highest quality available in color and in black and white. Records NTSC standard color signals. Built-in step-down conversion. Powered by a self-contained battery pack. AC-coupled car or car battery. Records frame color video camera feeds on our new DVC-10000 monitor receivers, or other video receivers. Compatible with the new video for full editing capability. Excellent portable source for your videorecording system. The best. From Sony, from above.

Which portable is right for you? For black and white sets, at the lowest cost, choose the standard of the industry—the AV-3400.

For black and white now, but color in the future, you'll choose the one that can grow—the AV-8400B.

For color, that's just color now, the top quality AV-8400C—and the new SMC-1000 color camera. Get the details. Write today.

Sony VideoRover. Your choice.

Sony Corporation of America
Video Information Center #E-355
P. O. Box 1394, Herndon, N. C. 28520
© 1970 Sony Corp. of America
Printed in the U.S.A.

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY _____
STATE _____
ZIP _____
TELEPHONE _____
MAIL TO: _____

For A Demonstration Write 118
For More Details Write 111

(Figure 03: Images taken from Sony promotional material for Sony DV-2400, 1967 and AV 3400, 1970)

The next important step came in 1969 when portable videotape recording technology became standardised across manufacturers and countries with the introduction of the EAIJ-1. This made it possible to playback video material interchangeably on multiple models and brands. What followed was an increased investment in this new technology and the expansion of the consumer video market. In accordance with this standardisation, Sony launched the AV-3400 at an initial cost price of \$1495. This model weighed only 8.5kg and was able to record up to 30 minutes of half-inch video footage viewable instantly on the camera's viewfinder. Additional features included improved sound, including the capability to add commentary or background music during playback. The capability to video and then record over the same piece of tape boosted the technology's affordability for commercial and industrial use. Sony's annual report from 1970 notes a 51 percent increase in the demand for video tape recorders and goes on to describe their response to this growth in the marketplace:

To keep pace with this increasing demand the company has continued working on the development and introduction of new and improved products. Reflecting this effort, three new models of a portable video tape recorder (AV Series) were introduced into the market during this fiscal year, including a model offering both color *and* black and white recording, a model offering fully automatic recording and a battery-powered completely compact model. Due to their versatility, all of these models have found wide acceptance particularly in the fields of business and education.³⁰

In spite of these advances, it is important to note that many of the portable video recorders that groups had access to were still at a primitive stage of development. The playback decks were often not battery powered, thus not portable, and only offered rudimentary forward and rewind capabilities. Much early work with video was transmitted from camera to monitor or camera to camera. To screen prerecorded information, the tape was played back on a playback deck, which was often connected

³⁰ 'Sony Annual Report', *Sony*, 1970, p.6

to an ordinary television through the antenna terminals of the set, converting the video and audio into a readable format. The video and audio signals could also feed directly into a monitor. In both cases this had the benefit of replicating the familiar form of broadcast television, but with different aesthetics and concerns.

A report by the London-based community video group Community Action Centre in 1976 refers to the way in which viewing moving images made and shown in this way engendered a ‘radically different response to the cinematic experience.’³¹

The size of the television image is such that it presents people and situations usually at less than life size. This means that the person viewing is much more in charge of what he/she is seeing, the television invites reaction, rather than forces reaction. Because the audio-visual stimulation is low-key, he/she is less likely to be overwhelmed, the experience is containable and therefore more open to be shared, discussed, used collectively... Everything works to make it part of what is going on, rather than the absolute dictator. People can see each other, exchange eye contact, talk while the programme is going on; it is an experience that is collective and mutual and can create the conditions for follow up discussions and interaction.

These limitations were also made visible in the aesthetics of early experiments that used video, which were often carried out live, using circulating video signals in the form of feedback, delayed feedback (recursive loops) and time delay.³²

The American video practitioner Sherry Miller Hocking describes the way in which these functional limitations could become aesthetically productive:

Because of the strictures placed on production by the technological capacities and limitations of the equipment, as well as because of the social milieu and the modernist art practices of the time, the documentary works began to redefine the boundaries of what was then known and accepted videography. The tapes themselves were long, and for the most part unedited except in-

³¹ Nigg, Heinz, and Graham Wade. *Community Media: Community Communication in the UK: Video, Local TV, Film, and Photography*. Zürich: Regenbogen-Verlag, 1980. p.35

³² Spielmann, Yvonne. *Video: The Reflexive Medium*. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2008. p.76

camera; single shots were also long, frequently with hand-held camera movements and a strong sense of immediacy. Often of inconsistent quality technically, the tapes dealt with subjects never before seen on video.³³

Unlike cine-cameras, where celluloid stock requires developing at a laboratory before playback is possible, video allowed for the instant playback of image and sound. It offered a self-contained and autonomous mode of communication in an audiovisual language that resembled television, one that was familiar in form to its users and its audience but where the production of the content was in their hands. For the first time, the capacity to instantly video, playback and then record over the same piece of tape became available to those excluded from broadcast television. An article in the North American Journal *Radical Software* draws attention to this distinction and the potential for video to provide users with the opportunity to develop their own forms of autonomous self-representation.

The film process is a one way avenue out from experience recorded, as tape is both an avenue out, and a circuit of immediate feedback into the experience as it occurs...It is this capability which gives tape a clear advantage over film for use in all forms of educational experience, from encounter groups to industrial training, where it is valuable for people to see themselves in action as others see them.³⁴

Up until the late 1970s, the process of editing early video footage was considered rudimentary and largely carried out in one of two ways; editing with an edit deck and editing without one. The publication *Basic Video in Community Work* (1975, Inter-Action) suggests the best method, at the time, was the latter, 'editing in the camera, or

³³ Sherry Miller Hocking, Sherry. "Early Portable Video." Experimental TV Center. N.p., Apr. 1992. Web. Accessed 6 Nov. 2014. <http://www.experimentaltvcenter.org/two-texts-concerning-portable-video#Early%20Portable>

³⁴ 'Meta-Manual' *Radical Software*. v.1 no. 3, Spring 1971, accessed Nov 06 2014 <http://radicalsoftware.org/e/volume1nr3.html>.

“shooting in sequence.”³⁵ This method engendered collaboration as it entailed careful planning by the whole group, with each element discussed and agreed in advance and recorded in the order it would be presented. Minor alterations and additions were possible following the production process by one of the following three ways. First, music or voiceovers could be added over pre-recorded footage where an ‘audio dub’ option was available; second, by using a stopwatch and keeping a note of exact timings, blank spaces could be left and filled at a later date; third, going back to certain elements and recording over them to insert new footage. In more advanced cases, where participants had greater experience of the technology and access to a second portapak deck, it was possible to record elements from one video tape onto a second blank video tape to reorder and construct new compilations of footage. Editing with an edit deck was less common for community video practitioners during the early 1970s as it was relatively expensive³⁶ and considered ‘tedious and time-consuming.’³⁷ The handbook mentioned above explains how one project took ten hours to edit a twenty-minute tape. This was largely because editing decks in the mid-1970s required patience and skill to time each cut, in order to allow for the ‘run-down’ time of ten seconds before every edit point. This approach was particularly prohibitive to smaller groups as it required access to the machine used to make the original tape, an editing deck, two monitors (one connected to each video recorder), the appropriate cables *and* a master tape for the final, edited version.

These new capabilities brought with them questions about how such a format could be mobilised and by whom. Artists were drawn to this medium, in part because of its contemporaneity, regarding it as untainted by the complex history film brought with

³⁵ Biren, Andi. *Basic Video in Community Work*. London: Inter-Action Advisory Service, 1975 p.23

³⁶ A video editing system described in the handbook explains how it cost £2500

³⁷ Biren, Andi. *Basic Video in Community Work*. London: Inter-Action Advisory Service, 1975 p.24

it. British video artist Catherine Elwes describes the appeal of this new medium that, unlike film, did not come with the history of being dominated by male artists. She relates the unique technological and material specificity of video to the exploration of feminine subjectivity she was working through at the time. Video allowed for new experiments suited to the needs and practices of the women's movement such as live playback on monitors, which enabled introspection and intimacy in the form of self-reflective diaristic modes.

Video offered the perfect medium within which to explore autobiography and manifestations of the self. The technology produced instant image feedback and could easily be used in a private space like a mirror, the images accepted or wiped according to the perceived success of the recording.³⁸

However, the cameras were initially heavy and separate from the recording units. To take advantage of their portability, they required at least two people to operate smoothly. While this made video recording difficult for long periods of time, it was particularly suitable for collaborative and shared forms of representation. In the context of a 'community video' project, a single unit was often used by large groups of five to ten people, each wanting to 'have a go'; this resulted in largely handheld camera work and takes of typically two to four minutes. The collective sharing of the equipment allowed for diverse viewpoints to be communicated and engendered experimentation and encouraged new forms of collective authorship.

The Arts Labs:

Early experiments with video by artists and activists were characterised by an anti-authoritarianism, interdisciplinarity and experimentation. The following article,

³⁸ Elwes, Catherine. Interview by Chris Meigh Andrews accessed Web. Accessed 14 Nov. 2014. <http://www.meigh-andrews.com/writings/interviews/catherine-elwes>

written in 1967, is taken from the radical underground newspaper *The International Times*. Drawing out the combination of disciplines, mediums and influences, it sets up the convergence of interests and intentions of those involved with the Arts Labs' establishment in London, which provided a space to experiment with early video recording technology.

The much talked about theatre-cinema-restaurant-bar-book-shop-concert room-gallery-club now seems a firm proposition. For some time Jim Haynes, one of the founders and a director of the *International Times*, has been working on an arts' supermarket based along the lines of his Edinburgh Traverse Theatre Club. He has at last found a suitable building in Covent Garden... another IT [*International Times*] director J Henry Moore will also be involved with this project... The Laboratory will be centred around a small open space free-form theatre and will contain a space for a rehearsal room which can double as an environment area and serve as a concert hall. There will also be room for offices, film processing and a roof garden for coffee... In addition to the theatre they plan to have regular film showings, tape concerts, video tapes, readings, happenings, lectures and exhibitions. They plan to be as experimental and international as the Home Office will let them be.³⁹

In 1967, Haynes, who between 1964 and 1967 was artistic director of the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh, set up the London Arts Lab on Drury Lane in Covent Garden. Along with his collaborator at the Traverse, Jack Henry Moore, Haynes worked with Biddy Peppin and David Curtis, later members of the London Film Makers Co-operative, and technician David Jeffrey to design and build both a cinema and theatre.⁴⁰ As an early adopter of newly available video equipment, Moore's

³⁹ Martin, Bradley. 'International Times Archive. IT -'. [Http://www.internationaltimes.it/archive/index.php?year=1967&volume=IT-Volume-1&issue=12](http://www.internationaltimes.it/archive/index.php?year=1967&volume=IT-Volume-1&issue=12), Accessed. 06 Nov. 2014.

⁴⁰ In June 1966, the London Film Makers Co-op (LFMC) was founded, following a series of screenings of underground films at Better Books on Charing Cross Road and at the Notting Hill Gate Festival. The LFMC soon moved into the Arts Lab, began a regular screening programme and set up basic film printing and processing facilities. In a space that emphasised autonomy from hegemonic institutions, the move to control all aspects of the filmmaking process from production to exhibition and distribution was a natural progression and borrowed from models already developing elsewhere. Particularly the artist-run, non-profit Film Makers Co-op in New York City.

relationship to video evidences the myriad ways this new technology was used and circulated.⁴¹

These counter cultural developments and multi-media experiments illustrate the interdisciplinary inclinations of those who sought expression outside of traditional arts institutions. A report written by the Arts Council in 1974 describes the impact of the Arts Lab on the subsequent development of alternative arts practices in the UK, including what came to be known as community video:

This was no longer one small room, but a collection of rooms, which divided itself into cinema, performance area, coffee bar, bookshop, studios, gallery etc. It attracted a new youthful audience and presented work that otherwise would not have been seen in London... A whole era of youth oriented activities mushroomed on a scale that London had not seen before. Smaller arts labs opened in Birmingham, Brighton, Beckenham, Halifax, Liverpool and Cambridge... The organisations were loosely organised and concentrated all their activities towards encouragement of new work.⁴²

The Arts Labs encouraged a multi-media, interdisciplinary approach to the production and exhibition of art. One example of this was their development of ‘happenings’, by combining them with the projection of moving images, so that films and videos would be screened in settings other than traditional cinema auditoria. The aim was to create an active audience, one engaged in the production of the art as much as observing it. Alan Kaprow, who developed the concept of the ‘happening’ in New York in the early 1960s, performed at the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh in its first year of operation. Happenings undermined the art object and its commodification, dissolving the line between audience and artist by drawing them into the work itself. Events

⁴¹ Moore later went on to create the first video-cinema by converting pre-war British TV sets into video projectors, and subsequently founded Videoheads, a collective of artists interested in using new video technology in their work.

⁴² ‘The Development of Community Arts with the Arts Council,’ 1974 Held at Victoria and Albert Archives, London, Accessed March 2015 (underlining in original text)

such as these had a lasting influence on the participatory spaces Haynes and Moore developed.

Concurrent with the development of the Arts Labs and the take up of video by activists operating outside of recognised Arts and Film institutions, political and independent film collectives, including groups such as Cinema Action and the Berwick Street Film Collective, were also establishing themselves and developing their own practices. These groups developed comparable models to community video groups and were influenced by similar social and political activities to those taken up by community video practitioners. These included the self-organised production, exhibition and distribution of their own films. However, the medium and approach used by these filmmakers differed greatly from that taken up by community video groups. These political film groups were largely interested in working collectively and pooling resources and time for a common goal. Their work tended towards producing films about local issues and campaigns. However, they were not driven by the imperative to include the community themselves in the production process. Instead, they placed a greater emphasis on individuated, authored and artistic practices.

The Camera Enters the Community:

It is unclear when and how portable video recording equipment was first used in the manner that came to be known as 'community video'. A likely starting point was the collaboration between the Arts Lab and John Lennon of the Beatles. This partnership led to the introduction of portable video cameras into alternative arts spaces to be

used by individuals and groups with social and political aims. From June 2 to 9, 1968, the Arts Lab on Drury Lane exhibited John Lennon and Yoko Ono's first joint artwork under the title *Four Thoughts*. The exhibition was made of two instructional sculptural pieces: Lennon's *Build Around It*, twinned with Ono's *Danger Box*. Jack Henry Moore had previously recorded Yoko Ono's 1966 performance at London's Jeanetta Cochrane Theatre called *Music of the Mind* and in 1968 he also recorded Ono and John Lennon's *Bagism*, their contribution to the Alchemical Wedding fundraiser at the Royal Albert Hall. In this performance, the pair climbed into a large, black bag on stage and sat together for 45 minutes with only their heads exposed.⁴³ The growing collaboration between Lennon and Ono with Moore, was founded on his exhibition and recording of their work, as well as his experience and interest in the application of new technological forms. It resulted in the pair's gift of the latest portable Sony Video camera to him.⁴⁴

In February 1969, Haynes and Moore attended a cultural festival in Italy organized by their friend and collaborator from the *International Times* and the UFO Club John Hopkins.⁴⁵ While there, they had a conversation about newly available video technology they had been experimenting with. Hopkins later described the significance of this encounter in an interview:

Jack said to me 'video'. He only had to say a couple of sentences to me and I knew what it was. I went back to England, and I went to see Sony, who were the producers, and I borrowed from them a 'Portapak' and the necessary equipment to playback (you couldn't playback a tape without a mains deck) for 6 weeks, experimented with it and then I wrote them a report. 'Artists themselves have shown a keen interest and an awareness that video as a

⁴³ Doggett, Peter. 'The Art & Music of John Lennon.' London: Omnibus, 2005

⁴⁴ 'Jack Henry Moore – Obituary.' The Telegraph. Telegraph Media Group, 25 Apr. 2014. Web. Accessed 06 Nov. 2014. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/10788743/Jack-Henry-Moore-obituary.html>

⁴⁵ Curtis, David. 'Lives Remembered.' The Times & The Sunday Times, Accessed 10 Feb. 2015, www.thetimes.co.uk/article/lives-remembered-2959w65fttf.

medium offers a new range of expression.’ That was my take on it. My view was that video was a new communications medium.⁴⁶

By April 1969, Hopkins shot his first video of a housing demonstration and some street theatre.⁴⁷

Hopkins, more commonly known as ‘Hoppy’, graduated from Cambridge University at the age of 20 with a degree in physics and mathematics and took up a research post with the Atomic Energy Authority. A graduation gift of a stills camera changed the course of his career. He became a photojournalist, with a focus on London’s burgeoning psychedelic and alternative scene. During the mid-1960s, he helped establish a publishing company, co-organised two Notting Hill carnivals, promoted Pink Floyd, co-founded the underground newspaper *The International Times*, set up the London Free School and co-ran the psychedelic club UFO with Haynes and Moore.⁴⁸

There is some confusion over which camera Hopkins would have been using at this time.⁴⁹ In an appendix of video material produced between 1969 and 1979 by Hopkins’ group TVX and its subsequent incarnation Fantasy Factory, a listing titled ‘TVX Selection from the Archives 69-72’ is described as being edited together in

⁴⁶ Transcript of Interview with Sue Hall & John Hopkins: London, Feb 7th, 2005. Interview by Chris Meigh Andrews. [Http://www.meigh-andrews.com](http://www.meigh-andrews.com). Accessed 6th Nov. <http://www.meigh-andrews.com/writings/interviews/sue-hall-john-hopkins>

⁴⁷ ‘List Of Completed Video Production 1969-1979’ (London), John Hopkins/ Sue Hall (TVX / CATS / Fantasy Factory), British Artists’ Film and Video Study Collection. Retrieved October 8th 2014

⁴⁸ REWIND, Interview by Jackie Hatfield with Sue Hall and John Hopkins 17 Nov. 2004. Accessed on 06 Nov. 2014.

[http://www.rewind.ac.uk/database/searchrewind.php?table_name=REWINDArtistDetails&function=details&where_field=Artist_Name&where_value=Sue Hall/John Hopkins&Section=Details](http://www.rewind.ac.uk/database/searchrewind.php?table_name=REWINDArtistDetails&function=details&where_field=Artist_Name&where_value=Sue%20Hall/John%20Hopkins&Section=Details)

⁴⁹ In different interviews Hopkins has mentioned Haynes telling him about the Portapak and Hopkins stating that he had the first Portapak and Haynes had the second. ‘Jack Moore was a very important influence in what was going on in video, because I had the first Portapak, and he had the second. That’s roughly how I got into it’ Transcript of Interview with John Hopkins by Heinz Nigg and Andy Porter, UK, 2015, www.the-lcva.co.uk, accessed August 2017

1974 and composed of 'about ten, three-minute pieces recorded between 1969 and 1972 on a Sony CV-2100.'⁵⁰ Had Hopkins been borrowing equipment from Sony in 1969, it is unlikely that he would have been loaned what was, by that point, an obsolete model. Conversely, in December 1969, Hopkins wrote a letter to the newly formed New Activities Committee at the Arts Council requesting financial support for the filming of regional festivals, in which he states that he had been borrowing a camera from John Lennon in order to make a visual record of local events and makes no mention of the loan from Sony.⁵¹ It is of course possible that Hopkins used a number of different video recorders during this time.

Following this early period of experimentation, Hopkins began to see video as a 'generalised tool, which could be used by various people for various means.'⁵² He describes these as 'use categories,' which included the arts, pop music, TV companies, news reportage, filmmakers and local TV.⁵³ The fact he drew on multiple disciplines across various sites is indicative of how this new technology was first used and circulated. Such a varied and localised usage was to become a common feature of community video projects throughout the 1970s, and goes some way to explain the reasons for the subsequent sublimation of this history into the histories of other practices.

⁵⁰ 'List Of Completed Video Production 1969-1979' (London), John Hopkins [JH] / Sue Hall [SH] (TVX / CATS / Fantasy Factory), British Artists' Film and Video Study Collection. Retrieved October 8th 2014

⁵¹ John Hopkins, 'Memorandum Re: Visual Record Of Events' (London, 1969), John Hopkins [JH] / Sue Hall [SH] (TVX / CATS / Fantasy Factory), British Artists' Film and Video Study Collection.

⁵² Transcript of Interview with Sue Hall & John Hopkins: London, Feb 7th, 2005. Interview by Chris Meigh Andrews. [Http://www.meigh-andrews.com](http://www.meigh-andrews.com). Accessed 6th Nov. <http://www.meigh-andrews.com/writings/interviews/sue-hall-john-hopkins>

⁵³ Ibid.

The Institute for Research in Art and Technology (IRAT):

Throughout the 1970s, many activists and community groups were seeking the means to bring about fairer representation of themselves and those marginalised groups they saw as allies. Some of these groups, with access to portable video technology, believed that this could be made possible if they were able to take up or take on broadcast television. Writing in the 1970s, the critical theorist Hans Magnus Enzenberger reflected on the radical potential of the mobilisation of communications technology in his essay *Constituents of a Theory of the Media*:⁵⁴

For the first time in history, the media are making possible mass participation in a social and socialized productive process, the practical means of which are in the hands of the masses themselves. Such a use of them would bring the communications media, which up to now have not deserved the name, into their own. In its present form, equipment like television or film does not serve communication but prevents it. It allows no reciprocal action between transmitter and receiver... Networklike communications models built on the principle of reversibility of circuits might give indications of how to overcome this situation: a mass newspaper, written and distributed by its readers, a video network of politically active groups... The author has to work as the agent of the masses. He can lose himself in them only when they themselves become authors, the authors of history.⁵⁵

The groups that started at the Arts Labs and the audience members activated by what they saw there were encouraged to combine art and technology to create their own forms of self-representation. By November 1968, the lease for the Drury Lane Arts Lab had run out and it closed its doors, Haynes and Moore left for Amsterdam and the

⁵⁴ In an interview in 2017 Jon Dovey, he explains how, in 1980, this essay became required reading for anyone working in community video. 'The first meeting of the London community video workers collective that I went to, I was young, and they were all a bit older than me. So I went along as this fresh faced University graduate and they were all sitting around and we were recommended to read Hans Magnus Enzenberger's 'Theory for the Constituents of the Media' as a set text for this meeting' Interview with John Dovey, 2017 www.the-lcva.co.uk accessed September 2017

⁵⁵ Enzenberger, Hans Magnus, and Michael Roloff. *Raids and Reconstructions Essays on Politics, Crime and Culture*. Pluto Press, 1976 p.22

groups who had been previously using it began looking for new premises, with more space for workshop facilities.⁵⁶ In October 1969, they formed the Institute for Research in Art and Technology (IRAT), also known as the New Arts Lab, in Roberts Street, in the London borough of Camden.⁵⁷ Hopkins describes how IRAT built on the Arts Labs' interdisciplinary nature, with a focus on combining art and technology:

We considered ourselves to be artists. I've got the letter head of the institute here, and these are the disciplines: Cinema, electronics, cybernetics, exhibitions, music, photographics, printing, music, theatre, video, words, semiotics, the Computer Arts society, London Film-makers Co-op...⁵⁸

In issue 59 of the *International Times*, 1969, Bradley Martin⁵⁹ expands on Hopkins' description and the specific role that video would play:

Run by scientists, computer builders, filmmakers and artists IRAT will pursue independent research in a factory made available by Camden Council. One of the directions of research is video.⁶⁰

IRAT was based just north of the Euston Road, in a four-storey factory rented to the group by Camden Council. It consisted of a group of about twenty-five people, whose diverse range of disciplines is indicative of the context community video's development. Alongside a dedicated video workshop, this included the LFMC, whose film processing facilities were then run by Malcolm Le Grice; a photography

⁵⁶ A Dusinberre, Deke. 'An Audio Documentary of the Early Years of the LFMC, A New Constitution.' <http://www.studycollection.co.uk>, www.studycollection.co.uk/auralhistory/intro.htm. *British Artists' Film & Video Study Collection*. Accessed on 06 Nov. 2014.

⁵⁷ Housing had become a key policy area under the new Labour government led by Harold Wilson from 1964–1970. Mass demolition made way for the building of 1.3 million new homes between 1965 and 1970.⁵⁷ In the interim of rehousing tenants and residents the London borough of Camden allowed a number of arts organisations to have short-term tenancies in large unoccupied buildings.

⁵⁸ Transcript of Interview with Sue Hall & John Hopkins: London, Feb 7th, 2005. Interview by Chris Meigh Andrews. <http://www.meigh-andrews.com>. Accessed 6th Nov. <http://www.meigh-andrews.com/writings/interviews/sue-hall-john-hopkins>

⁵⁹ According to Julia Knight, Bradley Martin was Hopkins' pseudonym when writing for the *International Times*, Knight, Julia. *Diverse Practices: A Critical Reader on British Video Art*. Luton: John Libbey Media, Faculty of Humanities, U of Luton, 1996, p. 27

⁶⁰ Martin, Bradley. Editorial. *The International Times* [London] 07 Apr. 1969: p. 21 <http://www.internationaltimes.it>. Accessed on 06 Nov. 2014

darkroom run by Ian Robertson and Graham Peet; a screen printing workshop run Ian Robertson and Judith Clute; a litho press run by John Collins; a cinema space programmed by David Curtis, with screenings six days a week; an art gallery run by Bidy Peppin and Pam Zoline, a theatre space run by Martin Russell and Diane Lifton, musical facilities run by Hugh Davis, a macrobiotic café and, for the first time, a video workshop.

The video workshop at IRAT organised its activities under two names, TVX and the Centre for Advanced TV studies (CATV). John Hopkins, assisted by his friends Jo Pattiniott and Olivier Rickmers, initially ran it. TVX was ‘the reckless experimental group’ while CATV ‘tried to make an interface with the formal world – organisations like the Institute of Mass Communications Research, colleges, universities, the importing and selling of publications.’⁶¹ TVX were later joined by Joe Bear, a friend of Hopkins’ from New York; Cliff Evans who originally worked as a technical operator on studio camera and sound crews at the BBC; Steve Herman who wrote and edited a number of reports on the use of video;⁶² and Australian John Kirk who went on to found community video and cable TV group Bush Video in New South Wales, along with a number of others ‘who plugged in from time to time, contributing ideas, energy and money.’⁶³

⁶¹ Transcript of Interview with Sue Hall & John Hopkins: London, Feb 7th, 2005. Interview by Chris Meigh Andrews. [Http://www.meigh-andrews.com](http://www.meigh-andrews.com). Accessed 6th Nov. <http://www.meigh-andrews.com/writings/interviews/sue-hall-john-hopkins>

⁶² Herman, Steve. ‘The Broadcasting of Low Gauge Video: A Research Report.’ Rep. 2nd ed. London: Centre for Advanced Television Studies, 1981

⁶³ Hopkins, John. ‘Arts Lab London’ *Friends*, London March (1970) accessed on Nov. 06 2014 http://www.rewind.ac.uk/database/searchrewind.php?table_name=REWINDArtistDetails&function=details&where_field=Artist_Name&where_value=Sue%20Hall/John%20Hopkins&Section=Documents&Name=Sue%20Hall/John%20Hopkins SHJH010 pdf

The aim of the video workshop was to find new audiences and contexts for their experiments with video. This included the desire to make and screen videos in spaces outside of and opposed to established institutions, as well as a number of attempts to infiltrate organisations that continued to ignore or misrepresent their experiences and point of view. The work of TVX is illustrative of the suspicion that many activist groups had of broadcast television. Their subsequent involvement represents a widely expressed desire to take control of it, while their experience of it, as will be made clear, was always limited by the preexisting rules and expectations of the dominant institution.

Cybernetics:

The decentralized, open-access nature of the Arts Labs is representative of a shift within the broader underground movement to link political practices with technological and media theory. The development by the Arts Labs of connected and networked methods of organization is exemplary of the parallel growth of 'cybernetics' that influenced how community video would later be understood and practiced. Cybernetics was a term first used in the 1940s to theorize the technological control of a system that incorporates a 'closed signaling loop,' where a change in the system generates a further change, the effect of which is fed back into the system. Cybernetic theory provided a framework for community activists in the 1970s to use newly available portable video recording technology in opposition to the one-directional flow of information transmitted by broadcasters and authorities such as local councils. Instead, community video activists proposed systems of communication with specific goals that worked in a circular direction, where an

action could be understood and improved by its initial effect and then modified and repeated accordingly.

As an activist and early-adopter of video, Hopkins adapted his understanding of cybernetics for his own work in order to develop his concepts of the 'Social Matrix' and the 'Interface'. He describes these as 'concepts applicable to the study of communication and organization in society,'⁶⁴ whereby an explicit understanding of the 'mechanism of social communication processes and the organization of groups in society'⁶⁵ is required by the initiator of a community video project. In order to do this, Hopkins focused on playback and feedback loops, through the recording, transmission and reception of information. Thus he was able to analyse the ways groups are formed and engage with one another through a communications interface in a variety of patterns, dependent on the context of the groups and the use of the interface.

Hopkins describes the 'Social Matrix' as being comprised of groups (G) of people (P) who are able to communicate within the group (P <> P) in the form of a conversation or discussion (P <> G), for example a conference or election. His model schematizes communications patterns found between groups called 'Social Matrices' (M) where communication occurs group to group (G <> G) and information is exchanged between groups, for example to coordinate shared activities or pool information. The use of communications interfaces such as video allow for groups to communicate to the Matrix (G <> M) via playback and in doing so are, in the words of Hopkins, 'able to increase the flow of information across the interface.'⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Hopkins, John et al. *Video in Community Development*. London (22 Gray's Inn Rd., W.C.1): Ovum, 1973, p.107

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.107

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.108

Television, from Invaders to Invited:

In a survey of video as a reflexive medium, cultural historian Yvonne Spielmann describes the changing media landscape that followed a combination of increased access to new video recording technology with the ‘burgeoning protests and violent confrontations between organs of state, the democratic movements and oppositional and militant forces.’⁶⁷ Spielmann explains how this rift was made evident in the different ways these events and conflicts were represented on television and by the video activists themselves: ‘The early television debate emphasised video’s freedom of expression compared to television as an institution of control.’⁶⁸ Reflecting on the increasing control and power of broadcast news and information, media historian Roy Armes describes the appeal of video technology at this time:

Broadcast news and information are far more tightly controlled by politicians than are newspapers or journals: radio and television have for this reason to be seen as new forms of social control. Battles for freedom of expression and against ever-encroaching censorship have to be fought afresh... In the struggles for understanding of and control over the new media a particular importance attaches to those systems - still cameras, sound and video recorders - which allow us to act as producers as well as consumers and to create our own forms of sound and image expression.⁶⁹

The conflict in Vietnam was the first to be televised on a nightly basis. Much of the reporting by network news outlets and national newspapers served to highlight the ways that the media could be used to misinform the general public. Opposition to the war and the resulting draft of Americans to fight in Southeast Asia led to many leaving the United States for other countries including the UK. Sue Hall, who went on to found *Graft-on!*, an early community video group, later recalled: ‘With these people came a sort of large social and cultural diaspora. There were really a large

⁶⁷ Spielmann, Yvonne. *Video: The Reflexive Medium*. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2008. p.80

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.81

⁶⁹ Armes, Roy. *On Video*. Routledge, 1988 p.7-8

number of young Americans living in London for the first time since the Second World War.⁷⁰ These Americans brought with them the experience of left politics there, from confrontations with riot police to ways of working with communities taken from the civil rights movement.⁷¹

A similar precedent had been set in the UK with the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), the Anti-Apartheid movement and other New Left political priorities. For example, the early Aldermaston marches in the 1950s⁷² saw thousands of CND supporters march from London's Trafalgar Square to the Aldermaston nuclear weapons research facility in Berkshire. These campaigns were cited by Brian Groombridge in his survey of participatory television practices as advancing the process of redefining democracy.⁷³ Although such a direct effect is hard to measure, the contribution of the marches themselves to the ideals of participatory and collaborative democratic practices are clear. They were not just demonstrations against the bomb they were demonstrations of demonstration, in itself a political technique and one suited to the age of television. As Groombridge suggests:

Petitions and letters to MPs, however numerous and passionate, compare poorly, from the camera's point of view, with a long line of colourful protestors, waving their banners, singing their songs and pushing their prams. The marchers were teaching everyone to say to those with power: we the governed are affected by everything you do and decide. We are not remote correlates to your statistics, we are people and these are our children.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Transcript of Interview with Sue Hall & John Hopkins: London, Feb 7th, 2005. Interview by Chris Meigh Andrews. [Http://www.meigh-andrews.com](http://www.meigh-andrews.com). Accessed 6th Nov. <http://www.meigh-andrews.com/writings/interviews/sue-hall-john-hopkins>

⁷¹ Dickinson, Margaret. *Rogue Reels: Oppositional Film Making in Britain, 1945-90*. London: British Film Institute, 1999. . p. 38

⁷² Depicted in the widely seen documentary *March to Aldermaston* which documents the four-day fifty-mile March in 1958 (The Film and T.V. Committee for Nuclear Disarmament, 1959)

⁷³ Groombridge, Brian. *Television and the People a Programme for Democratic Participation*. Penguin Books, 1972 p.35

⁷⁴ Ibid.

He goes on to say; ‘The right to participate is not only won by forcing those in power in existing institutions to listen, it is also exercised by creating new institutions, new channels through which to achieve results outside the established and familiar structures.’⁷⁵

As an example of how the above might have been made possible, in 1970, members of TVX were invited by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) to build on their previous experience producing happenings at the original Arts Lab and to organise something similar in one of the BBC’s TV studios. They saw this as a chance for them to infiltrate the BBC on their own terms. What resulted was an eighteen and a half minute piece titled *Video Space* (1970). John Hopkins recalled the production process and its experimental combination of media as follows:

We did quite a lot of preparation for it in assembling source material, but if you can imagine, in those days to run Super-8 film and 16mm film and 2-inch video and a light show and a dancer and some musicians, all mixed up with bits of dialogue because there were conversations going on at the time, it was something that no one had seen before, especially on this side of the Atlantic, which was a way to try and use the medium of broadcast TV...in a way which conformed more to art than to documentary or conventional programming.⁷⁶

In an interview in 2015, Hopkins claims that *Video Space* wasn't broadcast but that it did lead to the commissioning of a number of shorter pieces that were made and broadcast in October 1970.⁷⁷ The pieces they made used similar production techniques to *Video Space* and Hopkins has since compared their form to that of music videos, each running the length of a typical single recording (approximately three and a half minutes). An article published in the newspaper *Friends* in October

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Transcript of Interview with John Hopkin by Heinz Nigg and Andy Porter, UK, 2015, www.the-lcva.co.uk, accessed August 2017

⁷⁷ Ibid.

1970 describes the broadcast of one of the commissions and draws attention to the experimental use of new video technology and the collaborative nature of their production:

BBC to Broadcast Video Cassette Material in Pop Programme: A four minute sampler of TV in the future will be broadcast as part of Disco 2 on Saturday 24th October at 7.30pm. Called the 'Electric Newspaper', it is videotape by TVX of a track from the LP by the American group 'Area Code 615'. Cliff Evans of TVX describes cassette material: 'It will have the information density of 30-100 times that of existing studio-made TV. Creating it in the first place requires concentration and skill similar to that of a pop group making an LP. We are pioneering these techniques in TV, with a little help from our friends and working five years ahead of the market which is planned for 1975-1976'.⁷⁸

The other piece they made was called *Do You Love Me* and was also commissioned by the BBC and broadcast in 1970. It was three minutes long, recorded on 2-inch video and described as a 'Visualisation of a track by Frank Zappa and Band.'⁷⁹ This piece garnered a complaint from Mary Whitehouse due to the inclusion of imagery that referenced the White Panthers anti-racist activists, and resulted in the BBC terminating the contract.

Hopkins later reflected, with some regret, on the outcome of TVX's short-lived relationship with broadcast television. In doing so, he draws attention to the compromise that would have been necessary in order to be taken seriously by the BBC:

We were rather brash and I think rather stupid at the time, because there was the possibility of opening that crack in the wall of the establishment, to get more high-quality broadcast TV done from an artistic basis, and I think in retrospect if we'd behaved differently and not so aggressively, we might have got further with the BBC.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ 'Video – BBC to Broadcast Video Cassette as Part of Disco 2,' *Friends*. London. Oct. 1970. p.9

⁷⁹ *ibid.* p.9

⁸⁰ Transcript of Interview with John Hopkin by Heinz Nigg and Andy Porter, UK, 2015, www.the-lcva.co.uk, accessed August 2017

In November 1970, a live broadcast of David Frost interviewing American Yippie (The Youth International Party)⁸¹ activists including Jerry Rubin on ITV was invaded by Rubin's comrades. This action, carried out by members of TVX, is illustrative of their defiance of the expectations of national broadcast television. Following their occupation of the stage, the invaders then invited audience members to join them in front of the cameras as they passed what looked like a joint around and heckled the audience, programme crew and presenter David Frost. John Kirk of TVX was in the audience with a Sony Portapak and videoed the whole episode, first from the audience and then from in front of the studio cameras.⁸² An article that featured in the alternative newspaper *Friends* highlights their mistrust of the media and explains their motivations as follows:

Our interests and life-style are being misrepresented both in media and in Government... We are people who know what we want and we will disrupt any attempt to block or misrepresent our views. What we want is media time proportional to our population density, to use the way we decide. Time in the TV studios open to any group wishing to participate. If there aren't enough stations with enough time, amend the broadcastings acts to allow for the setting up of local community TV stations using both cable and broadcast... We want to do one thing, politicise our people by informing them about the life-style they are part of and by polarising at public points the conflict in the capitalist society. We are going to do this two ways: by providing truthful information and tactically combating false information. With the White Panthers we showed live broadcast TV for the sham it is. Now we are getting the equipment so that the next time we get our time we will be able to plug our own programme directly into the transmitter... You know our tactics, so you know what that means.⁸³

⁸¹ The Youth International Party was a self-organized, counter cultural radical group founded in the USA, Krassner, Paul. *Confessions of a Raving, Unconfined Nut: Misadventures in the Counter-culture*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1993. p.156

⁸² Footage can be found here of the invasion from the BBC <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WxjnfDTtoQmA> and from John Kirk <https://vimeo.com/87537287>

⁸³ 'Video - the Frost Hijack' *Friends*, London, 11 Dec. 1970, 20th ed, p.10.

The published statement describes the merging of TVX with a group called Paradise Productions to form a new TV programming collective called 'Vision' whose objectives were later outlined as follows:

1. To create programming appropriate to today's social and political climate, with special attention to the needs of minorities unrepresented both in Parliament and in Media Programming. To exert maximum pressure to get these programmes broadcast.
2. To support the international Alternative Television Movement in association with co-workers in all five continents.
3. To research technological developments and their applications to accelerated social improvement, with special reference to the development of Community Television Services.
4. To create programmes specifically for the video cassette market, which will be fully operative in five years time.⁸⁴

The actions of the Yippies and the resultant statement published by TVX provide examples of the tense and oppositional relationship between national, broadcast television and the self described 'alternative television movement', which was encouraged by what it saw as the social and political potential of technological developments in video and 'community television services'.

The utopian propositions expressed in the statement above had some chance of coming to fruition in 1972, when the BBC began making forays into more community-centred programming and the Conservative government established local cable television networks. This new initiative advocated 'citizen's television,' proposing locally produced and networked video as a means to counter traditional program structures and 'aesthetically homogenized offerings.'⁸⁵ However, the social and political aims of these developments were bound up in wider governmental policies relating to the commercialisation and continued control of the airwaves. As

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Spielmann, Yvonne. *Video: the Reflexive Medium*. MIT Press, 2008. p.81

will be made clear, the co-option of this radical work with video by these top-down organisations evidenced a shift away from something that was disruptive and oppositional to something pacifying and essentially unsatisfying.

In 1972, the BBC's director of programming, David Attenborough wrote a note to the BBC's board of management, in which he outlined a possible solution to the demands of TVX:

'Access' or 'community' programmes, which are spoken of so frequently in the current debates about broadcasting, are taken to be programmes which are made by viewers who have applied for airtime, and for which professional broadcasters supply the technical facilities necessary for production and transmission, but play only a minimal part in editorial decisions. Two of the elements that such programmes can bring to a network are believed to be – (i) voices, attitudes and opinions, that, for one reason or another have been unheard or seriously neglected by mainstream programmes; - (ii) stylistic innovations, new ways of handling film or videotape which professional broadcasters have either ignored or rejected; new editorial attitudes that do not derive from the assumptions of the university educated elite who are commonly believed to dominate television production.⁸⁶

At Attenborough's suggestion, the BBC's Community Programme Unit (CPU) was established to make ten new programmes as part of the newly launched *Open Door* strand on BBC2. This was described in the *Radio Times* as a slot 'where people and groups are given a chance to have their own say, in their own way.'⁸⁷ As with open cable networks, there was a focus on access and the application of newly developing portable video technology. Initially, programmes made for *Open Door* were live studio broadcasts. These subsequently progressed to include on-location and pre-recorded material. Each programme was approximately 30 minutes in length and attempted to represent the position or point of view of a specific community group,

⁸⁶ Quoted from Paul Bonner, 'Broadcast access television and its future development,' British Broadcasting Corporation mimeo (London: BBC, 1976), pp.1-2

⁸⁷ Oakley, Giles, 'Opening Up the Box', in Janet Willis & Tana Wollen (Eds.), *The Neglected Audience* (The Broadcasting Debate, No. 5), British Film Institute, London, 1990, p.16

covering issues relating to contemporaneous identity or social politics. In this way, the CPU began to operate like a community video facilitator, approaching potential groups and receiving applications to make a programme. Successful groups would then be allotted a producer and assistant as well as use of the research capabilities of the BBC. Editorial control was enabled for the 'accessesee' through every stage of production from planning, scripting, filming and editing.⁸⁸ Projects produced by and for *Open Door* and screened in 1973 ranged from black teachers discussing the effect of the English education system on black children, the Transex Liberation Group presenting a discussion around Transsexualism, the Bootstrap Union (a group of teachers and parents) discussing problems in schools in deprived areas and a meeting of the Gypsy Council with friends and non-sympathisers for discussion, ceremonies, songs and dancing. One community film and video group, Liberation Films, whose work I will go on to discuss, was also given a slot on *Open Door* in order to broadcast *Starting to Happen* (1974, Liberation Films) a documentary it made with a community action group in Balham, South London. The documentary is about the burgeoning use of portable video recording technology as a means to activate community action. When it was broadcast, it was followed by a discussion with some of its participants in the television studio.

Starting to Happen included footage of screenings carried out in the neighbourhoods where members of Liberation Films were working. The audiences at these events are shown to be actively engaged in how they were represented. However, the context of the television studio worked against this and the hierarchical structure of the post-film discussion, with a presenter and a fixed panel, allowed for little critical feedback.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p.18

Instead, the participants appear to pay lip-service to the desired outcomes of *Open Door*. Furthermore, when the community groups agreed to be involved with the BBC, they were accused of attempting to legitimise a pervasively undemocratic and misrepresentative system. An article reflecting on this criticism illustrates the tension felt at the time between the board at the BBC and the CPU staff:

The BBC Board of Governors besieged Attenborough claiming producers were a guerrilla unit using the BBC to promote their own left-wing ideology. Critics from the left denounced the project as a plot to make the BBC more legitimate, attacking even those groups who were given access.⁸⁹

The example of *Open Door* is illustrative of the wider problem of the limits of an overarching structure imposed by a television network. Watching *Starting to happen* reveals that when Liberation Films were running their community video project they were able to create a space that was sympathetic to the needs and positions of the participants. Once they entered the hallowed space of the television studio, the community groups involved were unable to represent themselves on their own terms and were instead forced into a pre-existing format set by the broadcaster.

As will be made clear in the following chapter, one of the defining characteristics of community video projects is the participants' control over the distribution of their videos, which was not taken into consideration when community groups attempted to infiltrate broadcast television. There were of course some exceptions. For example, groups who previously felt ignored or misrepresented by the BBC took part in *Open Door*. However, engaging with a large controlling institution undermined much of the new and liberatory potential of community video projects.

⁸⁹ Johnson, Fred. 'Vox Pops - The BBC's Community Programme Unit.' *The Independent* [Cambridge, MA, USA] June 1990 p.30-34.

Conservatives, Cable and Community:

In 1972, due to new licensing laws brought in by the Conservative Government, six local cable television networks were established and brought with them similar concerns and complications about what happens when community groups were given access to broadcast television. The first of the four networks granted permission in 1972 was Greenwich Cablevision in South-East London. This was followed by local television networks in Bristol, Sheffield, Swindon, Wellingborough and Milton Keynes.

A leaflet published by the cable TV network in Milton Keynes, Channel 40, outlines their goals and provides a sense of what they were hoping to achieve. It suggests that access to the means of production would be enough to engage the local community in producing their own television:

The first time in the UK that an experiment in community use of cable television has been set up on an entirely independent and non-commercial basis. Starting in December 1976 we will be transmitting to all new city homes a few hours each week of locally produced programmes made by, with and for people living in Milton Keynes. The Purpose of Channel 40 is to provide people living in the new city with:

- An additional means of access to information about Milton Keynes.
- Access to a means of expression, to enable individuals and groups in Milton Keynes to share their interests and points of view with others in the new city.⁹⁰

Two years after this announcement, the Milton Keynes Development Board invited community artist Carry Gorney to make use of the community video techniques she

⁹⁰ Nigg, Heinz, and Graham Wade. *Community Media: Community Communication in the UK: Video, Local TV, Film, and Photography*. Regenbogen-Verl, 1980 p.100–101

had been developing with her work at community arts organisation Inter-Action. It was the intention of the cable network to develop a support structure that would allow for community members to become more actively involved in the production of their own television. In an interview in 2017, Gorney described the imbalance between the network's proposal and the reality of the way that a community video project might function.

I had a lot of arguments with people at Channel 40 because you know their policy was open door, which meant that anybody could come in, pick up a camera and make a programme. It was this open access philosophy and it drove me mad for the two years I watched it before I was invited in. There were boring old farts coming in and talking about their pigeon fancying or you know, it was people who were either articulate or confident or obsessed about a hobby who would come in and make a programme and that was it. I said, to create a real community channel, you had to have 'freedom within a framework', you had to set up a framework in which people would feel excited and then could do something... because you need to do some community animation.⁹¹

The staff that ran the networks in both Bristol and Swindon experienced similar problems when attempting to redirect and distribute the potential participatory power of this new medium. One report written in 1980 on the impact and development of cable television notes that 'these attitudes were very much dictated by who was put in day-to-day charge of running the individual stations.'⁹² The report goes on to discuss the conflict of interest that went on at management level: 'Many conflicts arose between these different sets of interests... most of them were to do with the workers, either individually or collectively, wishing to democratise the television service more and the management resisting these developments.'⁹³ In spite of this disconnect, two key factors continued to link the growth and development of community video with local cable network television those of access to and the funding of low gauge,

⁹¹ Interview with Carry Gorney, www.the-lcva.co.uk, accessed September 2017

⁹² Nigg, Heinz, and Graham Wade. *Community Media: Community Communication in the UK: Video, Local TV, Film, and Photography*. Regenbogen-Verl, 1980 p. 27

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.28

portable video technology: 'Cable stations had much more money spent on them than any other sphere of low-gauge video activity – approximately £100,000 between 1972-1978.'⁹⁴

Unlike community video, which came from a bottom-up model of supply and demand from within the community it sought to serve, cable television in the UK developed out of the ideas and intentions of the state and was based largely on the models of commercial corporations. Over the course of their existence, it became clear that their priorities were largely antithetical to those of community video groups; they were run like businesses and less interested in the democratic control of the airwaves by 'the people'. Community artist Su Braden notes in her assessment of increased access to television production:

In 1976, those who make use of access television, far from enjoying the anonymity of technical production, are guided to make programmes look as much as possible like their 'professional' counterparts. There is no thought of simplifying the technology to enable participants to have fuller control of the form of their contribution.⁹⁵

Through what appeared to be tokenism and a process of instrumentalisation, the co-option of community video by both the BBC and local cable television companies largely resulted in the depoliticisation of the activism that was central to the original practice. On entering these large institutions, community video groups gave up their editorial control and risked losing their power of self-representation. Neither the Conservative government, who established the cable networks, nor the majority of staff at the BBC were making significant efforts to permanently alter the structure of the media.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Braden, Su. *Artists and People*. London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1978. p.151

It was this tension that prompted many community video groups to think differently about forms and modes of self-representation. Some practitioners believed that only through the acceptance of established organisations, such as the BBC, validation could occur and real progress be made. Others felt that once drawn into the hierarchical and bureaucratic sphere of editorial boards and control by committee, the radical potential of the work carried out would be lost. In a 2017 interview, community video practitioner Tony Dowmunt described how he understood the relationship between community video and television in the 1970s; 'Television was viewed by many of us as a monolithic medium, we were reacting to its exclusivity.' He continues 'TV was the preserve of a very small group of people and was highly unionised, we wanted to provide an alternative to it, not be on it!'⁹⁶

From the moment portable video recording technology was available, it provided an outlet and aesthetic for artists and activists to experiment with the production and screening of new moving image work. This approach was distinct from pre-existing modes of filmmaking and broadcast television. Informal spaces, outside of traditional arts organizations, offered the opportunity to construct alternative and autonomous modes of representation and challenge the misrepresentation of specific groups and concerns in the mainstream media. What followed these early experiments was the development of three different approaches: those groups hoping to infiltrate and disrupt broadcast television, characterised by the work of TVX; the co-option and assimilation of these early experiments by broadcast and cable television; and finally those groups working towards an alternative to broadcast television, which will be illustrated by the work of West London Media Workshop in the following chapter.

⁹⁶ Interview with Tony Dowmunt by Ed Webb-Ingall, unpublished, July, 2017

Chapter Two: Insiders and Outsiders

This chapter will focus on two community video groups, each of whom provide examples of two distinct approaches to the initiation of a community video project. Firstly, West London Media Workshop (WLMW, who began as Community Action Centre, CAC) will illustrate what I describe as the ‘insider’ approach. Secondly, the work of community film and video group Liberation Films will evidence the ‘outsider’ approach to initiating a community video project.⁹⁷ The initiators of CAC/WLMW directed their attention towards the neighbourhood where they lived, unlike Liberation Films whose members worked peripatetically with different community groups and across numerous neighbourhoods.

CAC were based in a single area and focused their energy on setting up a permanent, long-term video resource for local residents. A resistance to the state motivated its members, and their work was based on an interest in the role of cultural production as a form of social development and activism. The formation of this group was as a result of a number of social and political factors that were directly affecting the neighbourhood where its founding members lived and worked. It was a familiarity and first-hand experience of these factors that shaped the way in which they were able to make use of video for the benefit of their community. Liberation films were influenced by the work of political filmmakers in the USA and video activists working in Canada. Their approach to initiating community video projects combined elements of each of these organisations and exemplifies their influence on moving image production in the UK.

⁹⁷ I will explore the distinction between ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ community video practices in more detail in the following methodology section.

Community Action Centre and West London Media Workshop:

As well as providing an example of ‘insider’ community video practices, the methods employed by Community Action Centre (CAC) are also illustrative of the way in which long-term access to newly available video technology, at a grass roots level, encouraged and enabled the development of a number of community video projects throughout the 1970s. It also provides an example of the way one group attempted to develop an autonomous alternative to broadcast television.

By the late 1960s, in the West London district of North Kensington, there was a palpable dissatisfaction with party politics, particularly those of the Labour Party. In her book *The Politics of Community Action*, published in 1977 Jan O’Malley, an active resident of Notting Hill, traces the way in which changes in the housing, employment, policing and education policies of the Labour Party, and the policies of local councillors, led to the formation of a number of community action groups, including the Community Action Centre. O’Malley relates Labour’s ineffectual governance of North Kensington to its misplaced emphasis on ‘electioneering’ and the ‘discrediting of any groups which challenged the Party’s position as sole representative of the working class.’⁹⁸ The latter meant that when discontent in the community reached a critical point there was no effective organisation through which local people could express their needs: ‘because of the nature of the local Labour

⁹⁸ O’Malley, Jan. *The Politics of Community Action: A Decade of Struggle in Notting Hill*. Nottingham: Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation for Spokesman, 1977, p.23

Party a political vacuum existed on the Left which was filled in the years after 1966 by new groups which developed outside the structure of the Labour Party.’⁹⁹

Starting in 1966, several organisations in North Kensington set a precedent for a subsequent rise in the number of activist groups in the area. Firstly, the actions of private tenants affected by housing issues led to the formation of groups such as the North and South Kensington Tenants Association and the West London Rent Bill Action Committee. In 1958, Notting Hill became the site of Britain’s first post-war race riot provoked by Oswald Mosely’s fascist Union Movement, who held street meetings urging people to ‘Keep Britain White’. Following the riot, the West London Anti-Fascist Youth Committee was founded, along with The Coloured People’s Progressive Association. In 1959, the Powis and Colville Residents Association and the St. Stephens Gardens Tenants Association were formed. In addition to housing campaigns and anti-fascist resistance, these groups worked to improve the general quality of life for the residents with better street lighting and improved rubbish collection, as well as a campaign to open up local private garden squares to provide safe play space for children and community organising. A number of these groups coalesced as part of The Notting Hill Workshop, which formed in 1966 and later became the Notting Hill People’s Association in 1967. The formation of these groups provided a context for the development of other similar self-organised, community initiatives that ran counter to those run by and for the state.

A driving force for the continued growth of grass roots organising in this neighbourhood was the arrival of the London Free School in 1966. It was made up of

⁹⁹ Ibid., p.24

members who were previously involved in the Communist party, trade unions, the Racial Adjustment Action Society and the Powis and Colville Residents Association. Newer members included a group of students from the London School of Economics, John 'Hoppy' Hopkins and Rhaune Laslett, who went onto co-found what would become the Notting Hill Carnival. The Free School was influenced by the Free University movement in the United States, which aimed to develop self-organised educational programs for adults. Members ran classes on subjects including basic English, housing, immigration, trade unions and music. Although the Free School itself disbanded within a year, a number of related groups continued in various forms. For example, what had served as a temporary childcare facility became the 'playcare group', which provided informal childcare and campaigned for safe playgrounds for local children. A neighbourhood service centre continued to offer legal advice and support.

Importantly for the development of the localised use of video, the Free School also stimulated the production of a local newspaper called *The Grove*. The development of similar short-lived publications took advantage of the formation of local workshops that provided offset lithograph printing, silkscreen printing and photography dark rooms. Much like the community video projects that followed, the self-directed production of localised media enabled 'many local groups to see printed material as something they could control and use to counter the mass of printed materials normally controlled by the authorities.'¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p.72

One example of this way of working was the Notting Hill Press, which was set up by two members of The People's Centre in 1968, Beryl Foster and Linda Gane. After learning how to print on an offset lithograph machine with the aim to make good quality printing accessible to local groups, they agreed to publish the weekly newsletter *People's News*:

From January 1969 through to the middle of 1973 *People's News* came out weekly... Every Sunday night people would get together and pool the actions for the week, write and type out stores ready for printing and distribution first thing on a Monday morning... it provided an immediate and simple way of introducing people new to the centres to the kind of activities going on.¹⁰¹

In 1967, The Notting Hill People's Association had widened its interests to become The People's Centre. By the end of that summer it had a permanent venue that hosted regular weekly meetings, providing a forum for discussion and the planning of local action by the eleven working groups that formed over the next three years. In 1970, due to the sheer number of groups meeting at The People's Centre, the structure became formalised with five central working groups, one for each of the following issues: 'Housing, Playgroups, Education and Youth, Claimants Union and Police.'¹⁰²

The aims laid out by the Notting Hill People's Association in O'Malley's book anticipated much of the content and motivation for the production of the community videos that followed. Combined with the issues covered by the five groups described above, they also provide an understanding of the context in which its members were living and working:

- To improve the living conditions of all tenants and to see fair play with both the landlords and the authorities.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p.70

¹⁰² Ibid., p.63

- To fight exploitation of and discrimination against people in the area wherever it may occur.
- To work for the adequate provision of play space and recreational facilities for children
- To make Notting Hill a better place to live.¹⁰³

Two years earlier in 1968, Andy Porter, a founding member of what came to be West London Media Workshop, arrived in Notting Hill aged 23. Porter's subsequent adoption of portable video technology exemplifies the combination of personal politics and community action central to the development of community video. The way Porter and his neighbours mobilised portable video technology to develop their own forms of localised, collective self-representation can be understood as an act of resistance to the state. Following his arrival, Porter was drawn into activism around housing and play. Between 1969 and 1970, he worked as a play leader and a detached youth worker. In their small, top-floor flat, he and his partner set up an informal discussion club for local teenagers. However, it was the production of their own newspaper called *Crunch* that got Porter thinking about what it meant to 'put the control of media in the hands of those it was seeking to represent.'¹⁰⁴

By 1974, the former People's Centre and the Notting Hill Association had become a mass of thirty groups who formed the Community Action Centre. Together they campaigned to convert a disused church, the Talbot Tabernacle, into a community centre. From 1972 to 1974, Porter studied community work at Goldsmiths College in London. With five other local residents he set up a community video group alongside the existing Notting Hill Press and a community darkroom. The five members included Ken Lynam, who had worked with video on a project with pensioners in

¹⁰³ Ibid., p.35

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Andy Porter by Ed Webb-Ingall, July 2017, unpublished

west London; Siobhan Lennon, who was part of the West London Theatre Workshop; David Head, a lecturer at the North Kensington Evening Institute; Angie Price, an ILEA tutor and Alfonso Santana, who had previously met Andy when he attended the youth group. Porter was keen to develop an understanding of community-led, activist video production:

I felt in a very general way – as a reaction to power of the mass media, and in line with the political ideology behind my involvement in community action; the need for people to take more control of the forces governing their lives, and therefore the control of their own information about themselves.¹⁰⁵

Intending to use video as an organising tool, the group initiated a six-month pilot scheme to investigate its potential in the Community Action Centre. Porter distinguishes the work they sought to carry out as distinct from the application of video by groups such as Challenge for Change in Canada and Inter-Action and Liberation Films in the UK. Instead of developing short-term projects with numerous communities, Community Action Centre chose to work over a prolonged period of time within one particular community, their own.

By the mid-1970s, West London Media Workshop had been using video to produce projects largely for the benefit of existing community groups. In 1976/77, they initiated a long-term community video project called ‘News at West 10’ (West 10 was the local post code, a reference to the ‘local’ focus of the group). The ‘News at West 10’ experiment was based on the idea of involving the wider community in its own process of video production and self-representation. One participant describes their

¹⁰⁵ Nigg, Heinz, and Graham Wade. *Community Media: Community Communication in the UK: Video, Local TV, Film, and Photography*. Zürich: Regenbogen-Verlag, 1980, p.38

understanding of the context and how the project they were proposing would be of benefit:

The video group members had established good contacts in the area through a number of video projects... The character of the area seems to be of special relevance for a community communication experiment. It is an area of unrelated tower blocks and estates, blighted industrial development and empty of any social or cultural amenities... The situation was creating a racial tension as well as distrust between old people, worrying about peace and safety, and hundreds of kids feeling trapped in a concrete cage with no space to play... the area provided an ideal situation to see whether a video news service could stimulate any discussion about the neighbourhood at the few existing meeting points in the community.¹⁰⁶

Unfortunately, none of the original tapes from *News at West 10* survive. In a report written at the time about the project by its coordinators, they explain how they produced four news programmes over a six-month period.¹⁰⁷ Each tape lasted between ten and twenty minutes and covered issues and activities relevant to the neighbourhood. The initiation of the project was also a means to recruit new participants from the local neighbourhood. The report explains how the screening of the videos was as integral to the project as their production. The venues that were selected for playback were various and highlight the potential for such a project to bring different audiences into contact with one another. They included pensioners clubs, adventure playgrounds, the health centre, crèches and the streets, where videos were replayed from the back of a van. The subjects covered included the cuts to the boroughs' public services, a lack of support for child minders, the opening of a drop-in club for mothers with new babies and a strike following the sacking of a local play leader.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p.60

¹⁰⁷ Published in 1980 *Community Media: Community Communication in the UK: Video, Local TV, Film, and Photography* (Nigg and Wade, Zürich: Regenbogen-Verlag, 1980), is a research report compiled from pamphlets, articles, grant applications and interviews with community media practitioners working in the 1970s. The chapter on West London Media Workshop provides an in-depth case study of the group's development over a three year period.

As permanent residents, the members of West London Media Workshop were able to make the means of production available for their neighbourhood in a way that was responsive and adaptable. Their measure of success was not simply the resolution of a neighbourhood issue, but the creation of a stimulus for community involvement in front of and behind the camera and for the audience at the screenings of the finished news programmes. Echoing Enzenberger's proposition about communications technology, the report on the project proposes that its role was to create a two-way exchange of information, as well as highlight the participants' lack of media representation at the time:

The importance of community/alternative TV to us is twofold, Firstly it is a means of making this medium available to ordinary people, to people who have no access to this language – a language which is immediate and powerful, yet with the development of portable equipment, fairly simple to use. And secondly, in doing so, it begins to develop new communications processes in society, releasing information from new sources in a variety of directions; it frees the medium for use as a tool for exchanging ideas, explaining the world, for dialogue in an open and direct way.¹⁰⁸

Unlike the projects developed by the BBC and local cable television networks, the work of West London Community Workshop was initiated by, for and about the neighbourhood it originated from. Because of this, the facilitators were able to develop the project in response to the specific politics and needs of the community, which they saw themselves as being part of. The following community video group, Liberation Films, illustrates the way in which those groups who were not based in the neighbourhood where the projects took place initiated similar projects.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p.64

The Influence of North America: Liberation Films, Challenge for Change and The Newsreel Collective

Liberation Films had indeed heard of Challenge for Change, and I would say that we were probably the group in the UK that was most inspired and influenced by them... We loved their idea of using film as a catalyst and I think they were the inspiration for our 'Trigger Films' and for our method of using video in the community - making little films with local people in an area and then showing them back to get people talking and hopefully acting together.¹⁰⁹

As well as the local social and political factors I have so far described, many community video groups were also influenced by the work of community-led film and video initiatives taking place further afield, particularly in North America. One of these groups was Liberation Films, a London-based, community film and video group, whose working methods will provide an example of how 'outsider' community video projects functioned. An analysis of their application of film and video production in community contexts will also illustrate the influence of two politically engaged film and video organisations from Canada and the USA. These were the Canadian project, Challenge for Change, established in 1966 by the National Film Board (NFB) of Canada and, from the United States, the Newsreel Collective, formed in 1967 to produce and distribute political films. Each of these initiatives set a precedent and provided an approach that was later emulated by a number of community video groups in the UK.

The Challenge for Change project was established in 1966 to 'encourage dialogue and promote social change,'¹¹⁰ primarily around issues of poverty. Following the

¹⁰⁹ Email interview between Ed Webb-Ingall and Caroline Goldie, a member of Liberation Films, September 2014

¹¹⁰ Marchessault, Janine. *Mirror Machine: Video and Identity*. YYZ Books, 1995 p.13

production and critical reception of Challenge for Change's pilot documentary, *The Things I Cannot Change* (1966, Tanya Ballantyne), they were forced to rethink the ethical dimensions of documentary practices and offer an alternative to the pre-existing 'paternalistic and authoritarian mandate'¹¹¹ of the NFB. Ballantyne's 52-minute, black and white, cinema vérité film, set out to portray the intimate life of a working class family in Montreal. What resulted was 'one of the most controversial films ever released by the National Film Board.'¹¹² Following its broadcast on national television, 'the children became the butts of jokes. The family began to see themselves as other people saw them – as poor people without dignity...and they literally had to move.'¹¹³ According to the Canadian film historian Thomas Waugh, the response to the film by the family it portrayed and of the general public, taught the NFB 'an object lesson in problematical ethics.'¹¹⁴ This led them to drastically reconsider the way in which they might involve the subjects of films as active participants in the construction of their representation.

In order to address the problems encountered as a result of *The Things I Cannot Change*, future projects that were funded and initiated as part of Challenge for Change served to make films *with* rather than *about* disadvantaged groups and 'improve communications, create greater understanding, promote new ideas and provoke social change.'¹¹⁵ Two subsequent projects were *The Fogo Island Experiment* (1967, Colin Low,) and *VTR St-Jacques* (1969, Bonnie Sherr Klein), both of which have been cited as being influential to the work carried out by community

¹¹¹ Ibid., p.15

¹¹² Ibid., p.149

¹¹³ Ibid.; p.151

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Waugh, Thomas, et al. Challenge for Change: Activist Documentary at the National Film Board of Canada. MQUP, 2014 p.343

video groups in the UK, including Liberation Films.¹¹⁶ The intention of each of these was to develop new forms of non-fiction moving image production that would benefit marginalised and oppressed sectors of society through their involvement in the production of their own films and videos.

The Fogo Island Experiment was the first example of this new attempt to replace the control of an authorial filmmaker with that of a social group. The project was structured around the involvement of the residents of a small, economically depressed fishing community based off the coast of Canada. They collectively contributed to the production of a series of short films about their experience of living on the island. The intention was for the participants of the project to find common ground, develop a shared understanding of their individual situations and create a space to confront the dire economic situation they found themselves in.

Community participation in film production became synonymous with a rejection of a specific aesthetic or style, instead prioritizing the ‘authenticity’ of democratically produced and community-led direct speech acts. However, the processes used on Fogo did produce a particular aesthetic, elements of which have remained in community films and videos produced subsequently. The main filmmaker on the Fogo project, Colin Low, described the twenty-eight films made on Fogo Island as ‘vertical films.’¹¹⁷ These were typically short, home-movie style snapshots of different scenes gathered from daily life, with minimal editing, and intercutting between different subjects was removed entirely. Showing unedited rushes to

¹¹⁶ Nigg, Heinz, and Graham Wade. *Community Media: Community Communication in the UK: Video, Local TV, Film, and Photography*. Regenbogen-Verlag, 1980 p.161

¹¹⁷ White, Shirley A. *Participatory Video: Images That Transform and Empower*. Sage Publications, 2003 p.129

participants was integral to the production process and facilitated a level of trust and engagement, which also allowed for the presentation of a various and mixed expression of the island community. The Canadian film theorist Janine Marchessault has since described the dominant aesthetic of the Fogo films as ‘an anti-aesthetic’ defined by the self-expression of the participants rather than the filmmaker. As I will propose in part two of this thesis, this continues to be a defining facet of community video practices.

The use of film required a skilled crew, a lot of time and significant cost. However, the next project initiated as part of Challenge for Change took advantage of the availability of affordable, portable video recording equipment and, as Marchessault writes, ‘video redefined the film director’s role.’¹¹⁸ As part of the Challenge for Change project, a number of ‘video access centres’ were subsequently set up in cities across Canada to encourage a culture of community communication and provide technical training.

VTR St-Jacques (1969) is a 16mm film produced by George Stoney that documents the use of video technology for one of the first community-made video projects that originated from one of these centres. This short film documents an experiment between a newly formed citizen's committee and a community worker, who use video recordings and closed circuit television to stimulate ‘better communication’ and social action in a poor Montreal neighbourhood. The committee made video recordings of the concerns raised by inhabitants of the neighbourhood and then played back the tapes for the community to watch. As with the Fogo Island project, upon recognizing

¹¹⁸ Marchessault, Janine. *Mirror Machine: Video and Identity*. YYZ Books, 1995 p.17

their common problems, the audience began to discuss and share possible solutions. It proved an important and effective method of promoting social change. Dorothy Todd Hénaut, a central figure in the National Film Board of Canada's video initiative, described this project in the fourth issue of the Challenge for Change Newsletter:

The videotape recording project in St-Jacques is an attempt to extend to its logical conclusion the conviction that people should participate in shaping their own lives, which means among other things directing and manipulating the tools of modern communication necessary to gaining and exercising that participation.¹¹⁹

The production and distribution of video in this way, as well as its aesthetic and subject matter, typify the majority of video projects produced during this period. Like many community videos produced at the time in Canada, and subsequently in the UK, the finished video is made up of footage of large and small discussions and meetings, and people watching themselves, and others like them, share their experiences and opinions on monitors, in halls and domestic spaces. The result gives the impression of a production process where the subjects are the makers of their own image.

Shattering the traditional hierarchies of power implemented by the interview as a formal structure, community members could employ video to interview themselves. Group discussions were to become the dominant representational paradigm for the democratic communication enabled by video – the disembodied authority behind the camera seemingly absent from the process.¹²⁰

This video and others like it provided examples for video activists in the UK of how this medium could be understood in relation to community development. The lessons learned by the National Film Board of Canada and the projects carried out as part of Challenge for Change went on to have a notable impact on many community video

¹¹⁹ *VTR St-Jacques*. www.nfb.ca, www.nfb.ca/film/vtr_st_jacques/. Accessed February 20th, 2018

¹²⁰ Marchessault, Janine. *Mirror Machine: Video and Identity*. YYY Books, 1995 p.18

groups in London, not only Liberation Films. In 1972, John Hopkins and the Centre for Alternative Technology published detailed reports on a number of Challenge for Change projects in their publication *Video in Community Development* (1972). (The influence of this publication will be covered in the methodology section of this dissertation.) Tony Downmunt, who went on to run community video projects at Walworth and Aylesbury Community Arts Trust (WACAT) and Albany Video, was one of a number of UK-based community video practitioners who had an early influential encounter with the work with video taking place in North America. This included George Stoney's writing on the use of portable video in the Challenge for Change project in Canada and the Alternate Media Centre and the Videofreex in New York.¹²¹

The Challenge for Change model offered an influential, anti-authorial methodology for the collective production of videos. However, the key difference between the activities with video carried out by community groups and activist film makers in the UK and those of Challenge for Change is that the latter was initiated by the state for 'the people.' As such, it has since been criticized for offering 'access without agency,'¹²² which, rather than transforming institutional power dynamics and alienation, proposed a form of community self-surveillance that risked mollifying the public it was intended to activate. This chapter will highlight the elements of the Challenge for Change project that influenced the processes used by community video practitioners in the UK, which did not originate from encouragement by the state.

¹²¹ Interview with Tony Downmunt by Ed Webb-Ingall, unpublished, July, 2017

¹²² Marchessault, Janine. *Mirror Machine: Video and Identity*. YYZ Books, 1995, p.19

The Newsreel Collective are the other North American film making organisation that had a direct influence on the work of community film and video group Liberation Films. The Newsreel Collective was a network of independent, political filmmaking and distribution groups located across the USA, founded in 1967, following a demonstration at the Pentagon against the Vietnam War. Newsreel went on to make over sixty documentaries in conjunction with grass-roots organisers. The focus of their films was subjects relevant to specific communities and workplaces, which could serve as a catalyst for social change. The organisation's distribution catalogue describes this as follows: 'In Newsreel films it is the people who speak out, and they speak out strongly against economic exploitation, racism, sexism, and U.S. military aggression in Southeast Asia.'¹²³

A number of films made by the Newsreel Collective were first screened in London as part of the Angry Arts festival, organised by the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign (VSC) in 1967. Alongside film screenings, the weeklong event included screen-printing posters and leaflets and staging theatre performances opposed to the war. Formed in the UK in 1966 in order to consolidate action against the war, the VSC held their first mass demonstration of 20,000 people in London in October 1967 (this was the subject of the first film made by Liberation Films, *End of a Tactic*, made in 1968). In her history of oppositional film in the UK, Margaret Dickinson describes how the VSC contributed to the development of a specific form of activism that went on to influence the work of community video groups:

The VSC was not very different from earlier single-issue movements, based on a mass following with an executive committed to organising rallies and marches. Many of the individual supporters, however, became more interested

¹²³ 'NEWSREEL Distribution Catalogue 1972,' *Arsenal: Films from the Newsreel Collective*. Accessed on 06 Nov. 2014 <http://www.arsenal-berlin.de/en/living-archive/news/single/article/3873/3082.html>

in community action and the Women's Movement, in consciousness raising, in revolutionising personal relationships, in the idea of taking politics into the home, the neighbourhood and the workplace. These concerns found expression in the establishment of small magazines, organising street theatre and festivals, mural painting, discussion groups and film shows.¹²⁴

Preceding Angry Arts Week, the Angry Arts Film Society was formed, launching their first season of four programmes in London in the spring of 1968 and becoming the UK distributor for the Newsreel Collective.

The film shows organised by the Angry Arts Film Society emulated the US 'discussion-screening' format. In order to foster dialogue among audience members at screenings, 'the structure of the screening had as much priority as the structure of the film.'¹²⁵ These screenings of alternative news broadcasts enabled a point of critical reflection on the role and position of mainstream news outlets and the way news was both made and received. Sue Crockford, a founder member of Angry Arts and later Liberation Films, describes the first time she saw these films in a commune in North London and the effect they had on her relationship to the depiction of the news and current affairs by mainstream media:

We wanted to share the awakening these films had given us... These films were so real, so unlike anything on the BBC news – above all with a point of view which thought it was important to ask questions about why a strike or demonstration was happening in the first place – that we weren't surprised people wanted to see them... A strong part of our philosophy was wanting films to be a spark or trigger for interaction between people.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Dickinson, Margaret. *Rogue Reels: Oppositional Film Making in Britain, 1945-90*. London: British Film Institute, 1999, p.38-39

¹²⁵ Nichols, Bill in Waugh, Thomas. *Show Us Life: Toward a History and Aesthetics of the Committed Documentary*. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1984, p.138

¹²⁶ Dickinson, Margaret. *Rogue Reels: Oppositional Film Making in Britain, 1945-90*. London: British Film Institute, 1999, p.229

Motivated by what they had seen produced in the USA and the effect it had on audiences in the UK, members of the Angry Arts Film Society went on to form Liberation Films in the late 1960s.¹²⁷ Alongside the distribution and screening of radical and political films, they also began producing their own films, initially using 16mm film and subsequently video, as the medium became more widely available. The first two of which, *End of a Tactic* (1968) and *A Woman's Place* (1971), are representative of the themes they would address and the production methods and aesthetic they would use to address them.

End of a Tactic (1968, Liberation Films), was filmed in collaboration with the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign. Shot on 16mm, black and white film, it is a 15-minute documentary about a series of demonstrations held in London, in 1968. It was made to explore the role of mass demonstrations as a tactic for social and political change and attempts to account for the reasons why they were not instituting the changes they sought. The film combines interviews with participants and organisers with observational footage of the demonstrations themselves. It begins by describing how, in October 1968, 100,000 people marched through the streets of London in demonstration against the war in Vietnam and then six months later, only 4,000 people were present. The first shots are comprised of still photographs of banners, flyers and posters, with a measured male voice over, suggestive of the didactic and rigid nature of outdated modes of protest. It then transitions into footage of people marching together as one mass and the male voiceover is undercut by a female voice, each describing the different roles of protests and rallies. The woman's voiceover

¹²⁷ The exact year of the establishment of Liberation Films is unknown, but it is most likely between 1969 (when they made their first film) and 1972 when the name was used in the credits of their first full length production with video, *Starting to Happen* (1972)

states, 'The march isn't the end of the activity, but that we reach people after the march.'

The aesthetic of the film is representative of the themes it seeks to cover: the editing combines fast cuts of chaotic, disorienting scenes of marchers and protests. At one point the camera is physically pulled in various directions by the people on the march. The constantly changing, disembodied voiceover gives no clear message as to what the film is hoping to achieve, creating a sense of confusion and inconsistency in dictating what the viewer should think or feel. A participant of the march is asked, 'Who do you expect to do anything as a result of the protest?' He answers hesitantly, 'I don't think I expect anyone to do anything as a result of the protest.' By the end of the film, the voiceover suggests the need to develop new approaches to political protest. From the noise of protestors we are able to pick out various statements and voices:

I think we've just done the same process that we've done for years and years... What is needed is some long-term processes... We are not changing the context of leftist activity... to take the struggle beyond the realm of protest we've got to change the environment in which we exist.

The finished film was intended to generate discussion and develop new modes of protest and activism. It encouraged the filmmakers to make films that were more relevant to their lives, interests and experiences than the films they had previously been screening from North America, which offered a less local and useful perspective.

Similar to *End of a Tactic, A Woman's Place* (1971, Liberation Films) takes as its focus the emerging Women's Liberation movement. Filmed at the Oxford Women's

Liberation conference in 1970 and the Women's Liberation March in 1971, it addresses gender and place by challenging the stereotypical portrayal of female silence, domesticity and disorganisation. This is achieved by showing women of varied ages, races and backgrounds coming together to talk openly, sharing mixed opinions and experiences, and then moving from the private, female only space of the conference hall to the public space of a march on the streets of London. The women's movement provided an essential influence for community video groups engaging with new ideas of collectivity and self-representation. *A Woman's Place* provides an example of a community film project that saw Liberation Films working closely within and for a community, this time bound by identity rather than locality, which would become commonplace by the end of the 1970s. The combination of producing and screening films of a political nature led the group to work more closely with the 'growing grassroots movement in the community.'¹²⁸ They wanted to combine what they understood from Challenge for Change about the collective production of a moving image project with their experience organising discussion screening events based on the work of the Newsreel group. This provided a method to activate discussions and identify areas of concern, with the intention of 'encouraging participation towards social change.'¹²⁹

Liberation Films member Tony Wickert describes the motivation for what became the 'community film shows' as follows:

We tried to get the people who came along to talk to each other. Our concern with the community film shows was to see whether we could get people to change their positions by dispelling prejudice and by letting them share opinions with other people. We made the audience form into groups and we,

¹²⁸ Nigg, Heinz, and Graham Wade. *Community Media: Community Communication in the UK: Video, Local TV, Film, and Photography*. Zürich: Regenbogen-Verlag, 1980. p.138

¹²⁹ Ibid.

the organisers would assign ourselves to different groups and elaborate and develop views in that way.¹³⁰

Prior to using video to encourage and facilitate audience participation, the group initially created slide-tape presentations.¹³¹ A series of photographs taken by Liberation Films would be shown as a slide presentation accompanied by a soundtrack recorded the week before of local people, many of whom would be in the audience, describing the area they live and what they would like to change. In 1972, Liberation Films decided to make their first film specifically on community action. *All You Need's an Excuse* (1972, Liberation Films) is a ten-minute, black and white and colour 16mm film, with the primary aim of encouraging discussion. The film begins with a series of black and white still images of a woman who appears stuck at home with her children for fear of traffic and unsafe play areas. She describes her inability to involve herself in community activities because of shyness and lack of contact with her neighbors and states: 'You can't, without some reason, attempt to get close to somebody. You need an excuse.' Her isolation is contrasted with colour footage of a group of parents who have occupied a disused piece of land to create a playground for local children. A soundtrack of them describing the friendships that they have formed and their shared enthusiasm for improving the neighbourhood accompanies a montage of them working together. The introduction to the Liberation Films' distribution catalogue describes this project and echoes the language and ideas of the Challenge for Change project:

This is the sort of film which broke with traditional documentary, mainly in its potential for provoking discussion within a community situation... the

¹³⁰ Ibid., p.139

¹³¹ Slide-tape involved a series of projected photographic slides with a synchronized audiotape soundtrack. It was taken up by a number of artists (including Tina Keane and Black Audio Film Collective) for a brief period in the 1970s-80s before the popularity of video.

experience of showing *All You Need* in the context of community discussions, led to the development of a style which incorporated the participants more actively in the structure of the film itself.¹³²

Liberation Films developed their own practice of ‘discussion screenings’, adapted from the American Newsreel Collective. These discussions were triggered by watching a film or video produced by a group who had something in common with the audience. The films and videos they shared avoided didacticism and simple resolutions; instead, they were chosen in order to encourage audiences to engage in open discussions about their themes and issues. Following the example of *Challenge for Change*, portable video recording technology was then introduced so that audience members could record their responses, produce their own videos and playback and watch the footage that they recorded together.

In 1973, Liberation Films launched Project Octopus, their first project that placed the use of video at its centre. This was an eight-stage process that resulted in the production of a 40-minute documentary called *Starting to Happen* (1974), which combined observational footage of the project, filmed by members of Liberation Films, with video footage recorded by the participants. This film was later shown on BBC2 as part of the Open Door series, followed by a panel discussion with members of Liberation Films and the participants of the project. The project adapted elements of the *Fogo Film* project and *VTR St-Jacques* by combining the production and repeated screening of a video made by, for and about the residents of a specific community. I will explore the processes used to produce this video in more detail in the methodology section. Both of these approaches became integral elements of many

¹³² Coward, Rosalind. *Liberation Films Distribution Catalogue*. London: Liberation Films, 1978, p.3

community video projects and, as such, shaped my contemporary reactivation of 1970s community video practices.

West London Media Workshop and Liberation Films both worked with community groups to produce films and videos about their shared experiences and concerns. The facilitators and participants of West London Media Workshop drew on the grass roots political movement emerging from within the neighbourhood where they were based. In doing so, they were able to develop long term, sustainable projects, dictated by the specific needs of the community. Liberation Films looked further afield to social experiments with video in Canada and political filmmaking and distribution in the USA to develop a peripatetic approach to initiating community video projects. Their production methods were adapted each time they started working with a new group or subject matter. These projects were always contingent on the context in which the group were working and in relation to the themes of the video that was being made. What follows is an analysis of the institutional context from which community video continued to develop.

Chapter Three: The Arts Council, Community Art and Community Video (1969-1980)

Community video and community arts were established at the same time and shared a similar understanding of the potential for art to liberate, affect change and create new forms of self-representation for marginalised groups. It has been the intention of the first part of this thesis to understand community video as a non-fiction, moving image practice that is distinct from community arts and video art. However, this next chapter provides an historical context to frame the complex relationship between art and activism, which surrounded the use of video since its arrival in the UK in the early 1970s. The parallel development of community art and community video groups was shaped by the involvement of the Arts Council and resulted in complications and opposition as well as benefits and support. What resulted was a change in how community video practitioners were recognized and how their work was understood.

The interest of arts and film institutions and the subsequent availability of public funding caused the transformation and eventual institutionalisation of many community art and community video projects. The Arts Council, through its funding structures and influence, shaped community video from the middle of the 1970s onwards. In a survey of community art in the UK in the 1970s, Owen Kelly analyses its development from its political and cultural context. He criticises the impact of organizations such as the Arts Council on what were once radical and urgent political positions:

With the advent of such groups as Inter-Action... whose concerns were as much to do with the alternative society, as they were to do with art...

Institutions served to direct and constrain the subsequent growth of the community arts movement.¹³³

At the same time, artists working with video began to differentiate themselves from community video practitioners, conceptualising their work in a similar way to those artists working with film, such as the London Film Makers Co-operative. This distinction, combined with its relative newness, meant that work produced on video by community groups began to occupy a precarious position. As will be made clear, support for video production became sought on behalf of art *or* politics, with art articulated in aesthetic terms and politics largely understood in relation to process.

As early as February 1965, the Arts Council published the white paper 'A Policy for the Arts,' which proposed an increase in funding from £10,000 to £50,000 to assist specifically young and innovative artists, which began a 'revolution of rising expectations in support of new experimental work.'¹³⁴ This resulted in increased applications to fund projects outside of its existing categories, challenging the traditional expectations of what the role of 'art' was. Newly established Arts Labs up and down the country, as well as community theatre groups and art-led programmes for young people, all vied for support. Groups that evaded the production of a clearly tangible outcome or object became particularly hard to categorise. Most notably, these originated from mixed media events that included performance art and later community arts and community video; projects that prioritised the creative process and the experience of the participants. With these 'new activities' the following conflict for the Arts Council became apparent:

¹³³ Kelly, Owen. *Community, Art, and the State: Storming the Citadels*. London: Comedia Pub. Group in Association with Marion Boyars, 1984. p.11/17

¹³⁴ Hutchison, Robert. *The Politics of the Arts Council*. Browne, 1982, p.105

Its past had caught up with it: there had been relative neglect of the regions, of young people and of experimental work... At the end of the 1960s large sections of the educated young were no longer willing to be compliant.¹³⁵

The Conservative MP Sir Edward Boyle was tasked with advising the Council on how best to proceed. Acting on Boyle's recommendation, the Arts Council formed the New Activities Committee in July 1969, chaired by Michael Astor, in order to consider these new applications. The establishment of this committee represented the acknowledgement of process and participation as valid outcomes and the specific use of video. In a speech to the House of Commons debating 'Grants to the Arts' in 1970, Boyle discussed the complexity of community arts, offering an influential definition, which remains useful for understanding the subsequent position of community video:

Many of these new activities and some others are ephemeral and there is not a conventional end product... It is work which its practitioners feel enhances the quality of life and may provide a real sense of group therapy but it is not meant to be lasting... many of these activities cross new frontiers between different kinds of art and most of those people who are interested in these new activities are particularly concerned with participation.¹³⁶

The involvement of the Arts Council, even at this early stage, drew the attention of community activists already using video. Their response demonstrates the changing nature of their understanding of the use of video by community groups. In December 1969, John Hopkins wrote a memorandum to the New Activities Committee describing his work at the Institute for Research in Art and Technology (IRAT). He explains that he had been using a portable video camera to make a 'visual

¹³⁵ Ibid., p.107 Between 1961 and 1969 twenty-two universities were founded in the UK.

¹³⁶ Boyle, E. 1970. 'Speech to the House of Commons. Debate on Grants to the Arts.' [Archive] Newspaper, source unknown, FACOP and New Activities File. Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design: British Artists' Film and Video Study Collection.

record of events.’¹³⁷ The committee subsequently invited Hopkins to attend a meeting with them in order to explain the use of this new video recording technology and secondly for the committee to consider ‘the financing of audio-visual recording of activities in connection with the report to the Council.’¹³⁸

Support for these ‘New Activities’ was not wholly unanimous as indicated by a particularly revealing comment from the Arts Council’s assistant secretary on the New Activities Committee: ‘One wondered whether the Crazy Gang had broken into the committee room at 105 Piccadilly.’¹³⁹ In the committee’s annual report, it was noted that the press had asked the following:

Have you subsidised a collection of weirdly attired, hirsute bohemians... Why are you stirring up anarchy in St. Ives and communism in Cullompton?¹⁴⁰

Arts Council historian Bart Moore-Gilbert proposes that this disquiet was also reflected in the conservative reaction within the Arts Council.

This return to a traditional way of declaring certain activities ‘not art’ (or even ‘culture’) prefigured one the major cultural battlegrounds of the 1970s – the issue of who should fund community arts.¹⁴¹

In an assessment of the Arts Council, Robert Hutchinson observed that there was already a strong desire to ‘draw a sharp line between what was primarily social and what was primarily artistic.’¹⁴² ‘The New Activities Report’, published in April 1970, proposed the continuation and greater funding of the New Arts Committee and the

¹³⁷ John Hopkins, ‘Memorandum Re: Visual Record Of Events’ (London, 1969), John Hopkins [JH] / Sue Hall [SH] (TVX / CATS / Fantasy Factory), *British Artists’ Film and Video Study Collection*.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ White, Eric Walter. *The Arts Council of Great Britain*. Davis-Poynter, 1975., p.255

¹⁴⁰ ‘Arts Council Annual Report 1969-1970’, London, Arts Council, 1970, Held at Victoria and Albert Archives, London, Accessed March 2015. p.6

¹⁴¹ Hutchison, Robert. *The Politics of the Arts Council*. Sinclair Browne, 1982 p.110

¹⁴² Ibid., p.108-109

establishment of a Multi-Media Committee.¹⁴³ However, a minority report issued at the same time argued that the new activities had been shown to not be ‘of a sufficiently high standard, sufficiently national in concept and sufficiently responsibly envisaged in a professional sense.’¹⁴⁴ It went on to suggest that these should be the responsibility of regional arts associations as they would be better suited to understanding the ‘likely benefit to the artistic life of the community of activities that may be essentially non cultural in content and largely amateur in execution.’¹⁴⁵ At the same time, an Experimental Projects Committee was set up as a response to the chief regional adviser at the Arts Council Nigel Abercrombie’s concern that ‘genuine new activities of the more orthodox and professional variety may unfairly come to be tarred with the same anti-cultural brush.’¹⁴⁶

Following this concern, the Experimental Projects Committee recognised two distinct approaches to the ‘New Activities’ taking place and divided applications for funding into performance art and community art. At this point, those practitioners whose work was recognized as Performance Art became the responsibility of the Art Panel at the Arts Council. However, community arts required more work to determine what it was and whether the Arts Council should be funding it, so it became the concern of a newly established ‘Community Arts Working Group’ chaired by Professor Harold Baldry. This panel was established in order to understand the proliferation of work by artists and activist groups that evaded the pre-existing categories of artistic practice recognized by the Arts Council. This included playwrights and actors making street theatre performances, forming groups such as Full Moon; filmmakers and

¹⁴³ Moore-Gilbert, Bart, and John Seed. *Cultural Revolution: the Challenge of the Arts in the 1960s*. Routledge, 1992 p.83

¹⁴⁴ Hutchison, Robert. *The Politics of the Arts Council*. Browne, 1982, p.110

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

photographers establishing community film and photography workshops such as Tower Hamlets Arts Project and Blackfriars Photography Project; and writers and artists transferring their practice to public spaces with self-publishing and mural projects by organisations such as Freeform and Centerprise. Like community video makers, many of these community arts groups rejected object based art to focus on process.

The formation of the Community Arts Working Group marked the beginning of a debate, which would continue throughout the 1970s, about the role and definition of what might be considered ‘art’ and thus fundable and what was considered ‘political’ or ‘social work’ and thus outside the funding remit of the Arts Council. This distinction was brought to the fore with the parallel emergence of video art, whose proponents were also seeking funding and support from similar places to community artists and community video practitioners. As I will go on to explain, the relationship between video art and community video affected the way community video was understood and supported into the 1980s.

The working group published ‘The Report of the Community Arts Working Party’ in 1974, which subsequently led to the formation of the Community Arts Committee (CAC) in 1975.¹⁴⁷ The report confirms what I covered in chapter one of this section, that the emergence of community arts in the UK dates back to 1962 with the opening of the Traverse bookshop in Edinburgh, under the guidance of Jim Haynes, who went on to establish the first Arts Lab in London. Like the Arts Labs that followed, the

¹⁴⁷ Taken from a letter to the Arts Council regarding the establishment of the Community Arts Committee, April 1975. Held at Victoria and Albert Archives, London, Accessed March 2015

theatre expanded its activities to include a café and a performance area to present small-scale experimental theatre and mixed-media productions.¹⁴⁸

Community art was constituted by three interdependent components, which it shares with community video. Firstly, many artists began to work outside of galleries and instead moved into self-organised, alternative spaces. Like the Arts Labs and IRAT, these were collectively run organizations, often located in temporarily occupied buildings. They encouraged a multi-media and multi-discipline approach to art exhibition and sought to dissolve the boundary between the audience and the artist or art object. Secondly, there was the desire to generate new forms of expression, specific to the needs of marginalized and under represented groups including the young, the elderly, those on low or no income and later, with the development of ‘identity politics’, women and people of colour. Finally, there emerged, as the historian Owen Kelly describes in his analysis of the community arts movement, ‘a new kind of political activist who believed that creativity was an essential tool in any kind of radical struggle.’¹⁴⁹

As has been demonstrated so far in this section, different community groups using video identified with different disciplines or issues. For example, TVX and CATV identified as activists and artists, West London media workshop identified with the social and political work of local grass roots groups, Liberation Films identified largely as filmmakers. Inter-Action, whose practice encompassed theatre, playwork, printing, photography and video, identified as part of the emerging community arts

¹⁴⁸ ‘Community Arts: The Report of the Community Arts Working Party’, June 1974, London: Arts Council of Great Britain, Held at Victoria and Albert Archives, London, Accessed March 2015 p.36.

¹⁴⁹ Kelly, Owen. *Community, Art, and the State: Storming the Citadels*. London: Comedia Pub. Group in Association with Marion Boyars, 1984, p.17

movement. As such, they were able to take advantage of these changes within the Arts Council.

In 1962, Inter-Action founder ED Berman arrived in the UK from the USA on a Rhodes scholarship to study at Oxford University. He did not complete his studies; instead, following travel to Istanbul and the Middle East, he moved to London and in 1967 took up the post of resident dramatist at the Mercury Theatre in Notting Hill. Berman spent his time at Mercury exploring ideas around 'space, the environment, media and the relationship to the audience'¹⁵⁰ and using theatre to enable members of the community to create their own plays. These were ideas he would later adapt in order to produce video projects. Berman's first encounter with video happened in 1967 when he was developing a version of *Beowulf* with a group of young people from Beauchamp Lodge Settlement House in Paddington, London. During this project he invited a friend of his, who was working at the TV production company Rediffusion, to video the process. It was at this point that Berman began to see the potential of video's capacity for instant feedback: 'I realized then the power of the immediacy of television, but also of portable television, but it had to be more portable than these big kits that Rediffusion was using with 3 or 4 staff and all the stuff.'¹⁵¹

Soon after this experience, and drawn by the promise of unoccupied space, Berman, along with some of his colleagues, left the Mercury Theatre for North London, to form what became Inter-Action. Their first location was a warehouse in the Chalk Farm district of Camden, not far from IRAT. The establishment of Inter-Action allowed Berman to draw on his previous experiences in theatre, where he collaborated

¹⁵⁰ Interview with ED Berman by Heinz Nigg and Andy Porter, 2014 www.the-lcva.co.uk

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

with young people, actors and community groups. Berman was interested in developing theories and practices that revolved around the application of what he referred to as the ‘interactive games method.’¹⁵² This process involved developing simple interactive and collaborative games often used during childhood, such as peek-a-boo and hide-and-seek, in order to build groups and create shared experiences between participants. Inter-Action went on to develop from a street theatre group to an interdisciplinary community arts organization, which included a community centre, a film and video department and a community art bus.

One of the first projects that Inter-Action ran in their location was a Super 8 film club with a group of teenagers from the local neighbourhood. Following this, seeking something ‘more serious than super 8 but more portable and accessible than 16mm,’¹⁵³ in 1970, Inter-Action began using video under the name Infilms (Inter-Action Films). Taking some portable video equipment along to an ‘almost catatonic’ group he was working with from the mental health charity Mind, he noticed the following about how the participants engaged with this new technology as though it was a filter between themselves and the subject’:¹⁵⁴

It’s an amazing irony, because it’s all about focus, but when they got behind the camera, or in front of the camera, they were freed up from the various afflictions that they had, and I postulated that one of them could hold a microphone... and one of them could talk fairly clearly, and one of them could press buttons, and see through a camera, and one of them could walk. So they had 4 different afflictions, but together they made up a team that could make videos.¹⁵⁵

Berman subsequently carried out a similar project with autistic children using video technology, often starting with a live feed between the camera and the monitor so that

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

participants could instantly see themselves ‘on TV’. He believed that this process enabled the ‘freeing up of the mind that had previously been unwilling to communicate.’¹⁵⁶ He went on to explain that after the participants had used the technology themselves ‘they would be willing to be the subject of a video – to see themselves.’¹⁵⁷

Though not recorded on video, the production of *The Amazing Story of Talacre* (1971, InFilms), shot on 16mm film by Inter-Action is similar to *All you need’s an excuse* and *Starting to Happen* made by Liberation Films. Each of these films documents a process of collective action by a community group and each seeks to instruct the audience and encourage them to emulate what they have seen. *The Amazing Story of Talacre* is best described as a documentary. It was made by members of Inter-Action and follows the events that unfolded as the result of a six-week summer project on a disused site in North London. The film follows the Talacre Action Group, formed of local residents and members of Inter-Action, working together to protest the building of houses on what was being used as the site of the summer project and had already been designated as open public space. The struggles and actions of the residents in the film and subsequent screenings of it eventually resulted in Camden Council agreeing that they would keep the space open. It eventually became the site of Talacre Community Centre, the first purpose built community arts resource centre in Europe. Commissioned by Inter-Action in association with Camden Council, the centre was also the site of the first City Farm in the UK.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

At this point, rather than relying on volunteers, donations and small amounts of funding from the local council, Inter-Action began looking for more sustainable ways of running their various projects. This included applying to the Arts Council for funding and support. In 1972 Inter-Action successfully applied to them for funding to set up a Community Media bus, which combined theatre, film and video.

A large Mercedes vehicle – you could do theatre on the roof, and you could do back-projection films through the back, you could do video out the side, and we had portable video equipment to roam around... The Media Van was a much more compact and more cost-effective way of going into communities, getting them to use video, to see things that they hadn't seen before perhaps.¹⁵⁸

Soon more funding began to be sought for interdisciplinary, process-based, community-led projects:

They gave us a grant for what was called 'Community Arts,' which included community video, community theatre, community art etc., they couldn't, because of the principle of fairness, deny anyone... And there were a lot of groups who were practising these various community arts things, so they all were able to pile into the Arts Council, who set up a separate panel for community arts.¹⁵⁹

Inevitably with the funding came criticism about how it was being administered and community art defined. As a response, a number of groups were established to campaign on behalf of artists working with community groups. Although helpful in providing solidarity and support, these groups began to adopt the behavior of the institutions they had originally opposed.

In 1974, a two-day seminar was held at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London, 'the first national meeting of those people who had begun calling themselves

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

community artists.’¹⁶⁰ As a result, the Association of Community Artists (ACA) was formed. Among its founders was the community filmmaker and Maggie Pinhorn, a member of the Tower Hamlets Arts Project (THAP), who had experience of working in broadcast television and community video.¹⁶¹ To increase awareness of the community arts movement they started liaison with the funding bodies to encourage a debate about how community art was understood.

By the mid-1970s, community video had become part of the wider community arts movement, positioned alongside theatre, print and youth workshops. A report published by the Arts Council in 1974, explains how they understood work being carried out in this way:

The key element in this picture is an individual or group of individuals, perhaps best describable as *animateurs*. They are likely to form themselves into an organization with a name and sometimes even with a constitution. They are also likely to have a place which they use as a base for their activities and which may be called an ‘arts centre’ or ‘resource centre’... To a greater or lesser degree they carry their work into the environment of the community itself – streets, pubs, etc. What matters most is not an organisational form, nor bricks and mortar, but the commitment and dedication of the individuals involved.¹⁶²

This could be describing the work of Liberation Films, West London Media Workshop and many other community video groups. The report goes on to state that community artists are not necessarily distinguishable by the techniques they use,

¹⁶⁰ Kelly, Owen. *Community, Art, and the State: Storming the Citadels*. London: Comedia Pub. Group in Association with Marion Boyars, 1984. p.12

¹⁶¹ Pinhorn, who went on to be the national secretary of the ACA, moved from a professional filmmaking background to use film and video in community led projects. THAP was part of the Basement Project, an East End community arts venture. It began in 1971, growing out of a demand by local groups for specific creative activities including drama, music, poetry, photography, woodwork and screen printing. The film and video group was the first to be started and by December 1974 it included several groups meeting each week. At one of their festivals, The Big Show, the Basement Project offered the chance for anyone to learn how to make their own tape. A pamphlet printed by The Basement Project describes the position of video in relation to their community and outreach work as a valuable tool for community expression.

¹⁶² Buston, John. ‘The Report of the Community Arts Working Party’. Rep. London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1974. Held at Victoria and Albert Archives, London, Accessed March 2015, p.3

although media such as video are mentioned. It also highlights the prioritization of process over the completion of a finished art object:

Their primary aim is to bring about change – psychological, social or political – in a community; and in doing so they hope to widen and deepen its sensibilities and to enrich its otherwise barren existence... they seek to do this by involving the community in the activities they promote... their main concern is therefore a creative process rather than a finished product in which the ‘artistic’ element is variable and not clearly distinguishable from the rest... The ‘community’ with which they are concerned is usually, but not necessarily, the population of a limited geographical area or neighborhood.¹⁶³

Following this period of research and consultation, the benefit to the communities involved in community art and community video projects began to be articulated in funding applications and project evaluations. It was at this time that the Community Arts Committee at the Arts Council looked favourably on a number of projects that employed the use of video in community contexts.

Two examples of successful funding applications were those submitted by Walworth and Aylesbury Community Arts Trust (WACAT) and Albany Video. Albany Video received funding in 1975 and 1976 for their video work with a number of different groups in South East London, where they were based. They also received increased funding to employ a member of staff dedicated to community video projects. Similar funding was given to WACAT in 1976, when they were working on a large council estate in South East London. In their application, they compare their use of video to the pre-existing community print shop. This alliance with other, longstanding, community arts practices, paired with an emphasis on training, is indicative of the way in which some community video projects would begin to position themselves.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

The development of videotape resources on the estate is seen like the print shop, as an open access communication centre for local residents and community groups. Here too, there is a dual emphasis:

A) On taped programmes with a planned outlet – which can be used to explain, campaign or simply entertain.

B) Workshops and training facilities for residents and local workers to become familiar with the media and explore its uses.¹⁶⁴

The language used in these applications is reflective of the way that community arts and video practitioners began to co-opt and assimilate the language of funding bodies throughout the decade in order to gain increasing attention and support. By the end of the 1970s these gains came with increasing conditions and compromises.

Recognition and Rifts: Community Video and Video Art:

In the mid-1970s, videos being made by community art and video groups began to receive recognition from the larger organisations and institutions that they previously worked outside of. This was evidenced by exhibitions at The Serpentine Gallery in 1975 and the Tate Gallery in 1976.¹⁶⁵ ‘The Video Show: a festival of independent video’, which ran from the 1-26 May at the Serpentine Gallery, was co-organised by the Arts Council.¹⁶⁶ It is widely recognized as the first time videos made by national

¹⁶⁴ ‘Walworth and Aylesbury Community Arts Trust,’ 1976, Arts Council of Great Britain, Held at Victoria and Albert Archives, London, Accessed March 2015

¹⁶⁵ Following the Serpentine show, in 1976 the Tate Gallery in London presented its first video show. The increased attention given to video by arts institutions suggests that support for this new medium was beginning to grow. However, a counter argument raised by writer and historian Richard Cork challenges this assumption. He describes how the exhibition at the Tate Gallery was particularly small and hard to find and explains that rather than representing a commitment to video art by the gallery’s curatorial team, it was programmed by the Education Department and granted the status of a ‘slide-show’. Cork goes on to emphasize the irony of an exhibition that required the participation of the general public located down some stairs and in a Lecture theatre at the back of the building (Cork, Richard. *Everything Seemed Possible: Art in the 1970s*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2003, p. 149)

¹⁶⁶ For more information on ‘The Video Show: a festival of independent video’ and the events that followed this exhibition, which provide an historical context to consider the ongoing and complex relationship between art and activism that surrounded the use of video since its arrival in the UK in the early 1970s, please see the following article: Webb-Ingall, Ed. ‘The Video Show: A Festival of

and international artists, activists and community groups were presented together by an arts institution in the UK.¹⁶⁷ It represented a unique moment in the history of UK video culture when diverse approaches to newly available portable video recording technology converged. The exhibition and the events that followed illustrate how artists and activists from the mid to late 1970s understood community video and offer a context for considering the difficulty of articulating the specific aesthetics of community videos, a problem that this thesis addresses in section two.

Two works on show at the exhibition exemplify a key distinction between two types of video practice at the time: videos made with, by and for community groups to encourage activism through self-representation, and work that came to be understood as ‘video art.’ Firstly, Inter-Action used their ‘community media van’ to facilitate ‘participatory video games’ and demonstrate video’s capacity for live playback and audience participation. This involved the audience taking part in physical exercises that invited them to engage with the portable video technology in order to see footage of themselves played back on monitors attached to the converted van. While Inter-Action demonstrated the social and collective potential of video, involving participants in an act of collaborative self-representation, video artist Brian Hoey, who presented ‘VIDEVENT,’ focused on the individual by constructing a reflective relationship between the audience and the video technology. His work took advantage of a closed circuit participatory video system in the gallery. This positioned video, in his words, as a ‘medium which links the behaviour of the artefact to that of its

Independent Video.’ *The Moving Image Review & Art Journal* (MIRAJ), vol. 6, no. 1, 2017, pp. 52–66., doi:10.1386/miraj.6.1-2.52_1.

¹⁶⁷ Britain’s first video-centred event was most likely the 24-hour ‘Drama in a Wide Media Context’, screened at London’s Arts Lab in 1968. A year later a one off video event was organized in 1969 as part of the Camden Arts Festival. Like ‘The Video Show’, it included the screening of both European and British videotapes and the opportunity for visitors to experiment with newly available portable video recording technology.

audience, so producing an interactive system in which the behaviour of each of the constituent elements is largely dependent upon the others actions.’¹⁶⁸ This work focuses the attention of the audience/participant on their relationship to video as a technology that can instantly record and playback an image of themselves. The appearance and presentation of the subject can then be electronically modified in real time. The installation positions the audience/participant as an observed subject, whose image can be subsumed and manipulated. Hoey proposed that such technological interventions, made possible by video, function to ‘integrate the audience into the information.’¹⁶⁹

Video artists in the exhibition tended to focus on the medium of video itself. They made use of live playback on monitors to produce introspection and intimacy in the form of self-reflective, diaristic modes. Alternatively the audience were invited to activate their video installations. Community video practitioners also made use of the capacity to record and instantly playback moving images, but they used this to collaborate with visitors to the exhibition and encourage participants to develop their own modes of self-representation. Other community video practitioners included in the exhibition were Graft On!, Su Braden, Tony Dowmunt, TVX and Fantasy Factory.

Following the exhibition, several reviews were published, each of which sought to categorise the variety of work on show in relation to pre-existing notions of moving image, performance and installation work, as well as in opposition to broadcast television. This echoed the classification process being carried out by the Arts

¹⁶⁸ Hoey, Brian *The Video Show*. Exhibition Catalogue, London: Serpentine Gallery, 1975, np

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

Council at the same time. *The Evening Standard* suggested that the exhibition itself was responsible for establishing ‘a number of clearly defined working methods.’¹⁷⁰ One review published in *Time Out* describes the categories used by the curators to define the work on show in relation to its mode of presentation as ‘tapes, installations and live-action events.’¹⁷¹ The same article proposes to differentiate the different video projects in relation to the processes and characteristics of the producer. These range from ‘artists exploring the nature and processes of the medium to community groups using video to establish perspectives on local issues.’¹⁷² An article in *The Listener* alludes to the difficulty of understanding the range of work on show without a clearer understanding of why it was chosen and then offers its own, similar distinction: “‘video as process”, as used in the community, is fundamentally different from some of the video-art tapes, which exist as “consumable” objects.’¹⁷³

Following the brief convergence that this exhibition afforded between video art on the one hand and community video on the other, two new groups formalised the distinction between the two uses of video. These two groups were London Video Arts (LVA), established in 1976 to support artists working with video, and the Association of London Video Groups (ALIV) formed in 1974 and renamed the Association of Video Workers (AVW) in 1975, to support people working with video on a not-for-profit basis.

AVW was set up in 1975 by practitioners using video to work with community groups. In the words of art critic and historian A. L. Rees, they were established for

¹⁷⁰ Cork, Richard. ‘Every Man His Own TV Star.’ *The Evening Standard*, London, 3 May 1975, p.22

¹⁷¹ Rayns, Tony. ‘Scanning Video.’ *Time Out*, London, 9 May 1975, p.8

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Kidel, Mark, ‘The Video Show’, *The Listener*, London, 15 May 1975, p.46-47

‘the cause of community art, on the [John] Hopkins model, in the name of content rather than form.’¹⁷⁴ London Video Arts (LVA) was set up in 1976 by a group of artists who worked with video, many of whom met and were included in the Video Show at the Serpentine. Rees goes on to distinguish the work produced by members of LVA as ‘those making “artists’ video”, as David Hall dubbed it...using video as a rejection of traditional media’¹⁷⁵ and producing artworks that reflected on the medium specificity and capacity of video. Each group conceptualised their use of the medium in opposition to the other and others began to choose sides. In doing so they began to articulate their working methods and intentions, forming groups that, in turn, would compete for resources and recognition from funding bodies and film and art institutions.

ALIV saw early video pioneers and activists John Hopkins and Sue Hall join community video practitioners Maggie Pinhorn and Bruce Birchall in order to ‘provide a forum and organisation for people engaged in non-profit video work in Greater London.’¹⁷⁶ In June 1975, the journal *Film Video Extra* included a column signed by these four members. The article describes the relationship between the association and other larger institutions as follows:

Whilst the majority of video work is community video, other experimental work goes on too. All the work is not yet properly funded as regards hardware, software, wages and administration overheads. The aim of the Association is twofold – as a negotiating body with the DES, Arts Council, BFI etc – we have already met the Arts Council Working Party on Community Arts – and for contact and coherence between groups working in the field... In effect, we are trying to make the list of video groups come off the page and become a living force for improving our wages and conditions, and furthering the work.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ Rees, A. L. *A History of Experimental Film and Video*. London: BFI (British Film Institute), Pub.1998

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ *Film and Video Extra* no.4, The Arts Council of Great Britain, London, 1975, p.15

¹⁷⁷ *Film and Video Extra* no.2, The Arts Council of Great Britain, London, 1974, p.12

Below is an illustration taken from issue one of *Video Work*, published in 1976 by the Association of Video Workers. It further evidences the role the AVW wished to play in supporting those practitioners seeking funding and support for their work.



(Figure 04: Illustration taken from *Video Work*, The Association of Video Workers, UK, 1976)

Printed on the cover of the same magazine, this opening paragraph makes clear the adversarial position of the organisation:

AVW's campaign, for recognition of video as a genuine and valuable field of activity, and for decent video funding, has shown up the inadequacy of the system by which public funds for the arts are administered. In particular, the British Film Institute and Greater London Arts Association are revealed as having very low credibility.¹⁷⁸

In 1976, the Association of Video Workers (AVW) sent a telegram to the Minister for the Arts expressing their concerns about funding and criticising the BFI Production board and the Arts Council's Community Arts Committee for its lack of support. The telegram warns that without renewed support from such funding bodies much

¹⁷⁸ *Video Work*, The Association of Video Workers, UK, 1976, p.1

independent video work will cease production and many projects will struggle to maintain their obligations to the public.¹⁷⁹

LVA was established in 1976, by video artists who presented their work at *The Video Show*, including David Critchley, Stuart Marshall, Stephen Partridge, David Hall, Roger Barnard and Tamara Krikorian, in order to gain recognition and support for a particular strand of artist video production. It sought to develop a coherent conceptual language and a framework for the production, exhibition and distribution of artist video that replicated the existing model set up by the London Filmmakers' Co-op in 1966, which was already supported by both The Arts Council of Great Britain and the British Film Institute. In contrast, the social and political intentions of the groups initiating community video projects, particularly their focus on process over the production of finished video works, made it increasingly difficult for organisations such as The Arts Council of Great Britain and the British Film Institute to recognize and support their activities.

While video artists largely focused on the material qualities of video, community video practitioners concentrated on the politicization of production processes to make work that stimulated social and political action. In a review of *The Video Show*, video pioneer David Hall describes the difference between these two uses. In doing so, he highlights a distinction that would become the basis for the establishment of London Video Arts (LVA) and the complicated relationship between the aesthetics and politics of video production:

¹⁷⁹ Cork, Richard. *Everything Seemed Possible: Art in the 1970s*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2003, p.149

It is impossible for me to comment on all areas of Video used in the show, and although quite obviously there are many cases where a convergence takes place – thus inevitably arousing some contention – I feel most able to broadly consider the one popularly titled Video Art. Video Artists are, by inference, undoubtedly equally aware of the potential of the popular Medium as independent political and community organisations yet their methods and objectives are usually quite different.¹⁸⁰

Hall explains how the videos made by independent political and community organisations were about people and events not represented or misrepresented by mass media, but the following five pages of his article focus instead on explaining the ways that artists were using this new medium. This neglect would continue to define Hall's position in relation to community video.

In an article in *Studio International* published in 1976, Hall sought to defend ongoing access to funding and support from the BFI by proposing an aesthetic hierarchy. He positions videos made by community groups as having merely local relevance and those made by experimental video makers as 'equal to filmmakers.'¹⁸¹ Film historian Chris Meigh-Andrews makes clear that Hall's influence and the development of LVA would influence the way video production came to be understood:

Through a combination of polemical writing, teaching, the promotion of video art and his own work, Hall established a tradition of video that was pure, formal and rigorous... a rarity in the diversity of contemporary video culture, but it also produced work that could be extremely restrictive and predictable.¹⁸²

It was at this stage that the inclusive spirit reflected at *The Video Show* began to be threatened. The Artist Film Committee, based at the Arts Council, continued to consult with LVA. At the same time, in collaboration with the Community Arts

¹⁸⁰ Hall, David. 'The Video Show' *Art and Artists*, 1975, p.20

¹⁸¹ Hall, David. 'Video Report.' *Studio International*, Jan/Feb, 1976, p.62

¹⁸² Meigh-Andrews, Chris. *A History of Video Art: The Development of Form and Function*. Oxford: Berg, 2006, p.75

Committee, the Arts Council commissioned community video practitioners Sue Hall and John Hopkins to investigate the future of videotape distribution in the UK.

Hopkins' and Hall's report, delivered in May 1977, prioritised the provision of a single centralised resource very much in the spirit of community video, 'in order to offer open access to all non-commercial users.'¹⁸³ They recommended 'a single national mail order hire service and a national dubbing centre to provide non-commercial producers with distribution copies of their work.'¹⁸⁴

Countering their suggestions, David Hall claimed that community videos were only made for small and local audiences and dismissed the need for a distribution network of their own:

One of the crucial differences between community work and experimental tapemaking seems to be that the former is essentially self-sufficient from the need for separate viewing and distribution... tapes rarely have any significance outside their 'domestic' context. For the rest, it is becoming apparent that an independent distribution organization should be established in this country.¹⁸⁵

Meanwhile, LVA continued to reassure the Artist Film Committee that they would mirror the framework set up by the London Filmmakers Co-op, to 'benefit the maximum number of people' and 'accept any tapes offered to them for distribution, with no discrimination.'¹⁸⁶

While LVA were gathering support and lobbying the Arts Council Film Committee, John Hopkins and Sue Hall were pursuing other routes as part of their newly established video post-production and training centre Fantasy Factory. In 1976, they

¹⁸³ Knight, Julia, and Peter Thomas. *Reaching Audiences: Distribution and Promotion of Alternative Moving Image*. Bristol, UK: Intellect, 2011, p.105

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Hall, David. 'Video Report.' *Studio International*, Jan/Feb, 1976, p.62

¹⁸⁶ Knight, Julia, and Peter Thomas. *Reaching Audiences: Distribution and Promotion of Alternative Moving Image*. Bristol, UK: Intellect, 2011, p.105

submitted an application to the Art's Council's Community Arts Committee, to fund and expand Fantasy Factory's video editing and production resource.¹⁸⁷ This application draws attention to the need to provide low cost open-access video services in order to develop social and political video projects.

During this period, the British Film Institute Production Board carried out a period of consultation to understand the needs of the growing constituency using video technology. They consulted the following three groups: artists exhibiting work at the Serpentine exhibition; students graduating with film and television degrees, having trained and studied under the influence of this new technology; and members of the Association of Video Workers. The results were published in a report in 1976. A section in the report describes the BFI's support of video as 'a limited investment of finance and manpower made in a spirit of research and enquiry.'¹⁸⁸ The report compares video to other forms of media. In doing so, it draws a distinction between video art as fine art and community video as political:

Video practitioners are concerned with the medium as a component part of other activities; uses are as diverse as those that relate to the fine arts on the one hand and those which relate to social work and community politics on the other.¹⁸⁹

In the conclusion to the report, the BFI continues to define its position on video¹⁹⁰ in relation to its pre-existing understanding of moving image, as that which falls under

¹⁸⁷ Fantasy Factory also sought funding from the Gulbenkian Foundation and the British Film Institute production board. 'Minutes of the Community Arts Committee Meeting,' Arts Council of Great Britain, held at Victoria and Albert Archives, London, Accessed March, 2015.

¹⁸⁸ Sainsbury, Peter. *The Production Board and Video*. London: British Film Institute, 1976 p. 58-59

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Highlighting the lack of understanding of this new medium, in this same report, the BFI propose continuing to proceed with caution when considering the support and development of video production, which they refer to interchangeably as both 'television' and 'video.'

their existing remit of ‘art and entertainment’ and not with reference to the current uses of video as proposed by those practitioners actually using it.¹⁹¹

Whatever the Production Board does in the television field, it will be taking money from elsewhere, and one television project funded would effectively prevent the funding of others [...] criteria cannot emerge from the ad hoc, multifarious and random demands of outside bodies and individuals, but must emerge from the board’s own definition of what it is [...] For the sake of cogency and efficacy, the Board should ally itself with the aims of its parent body and define its purpose and methods of funding video activity accordingly.¹⁹²

The BFI’s conclusion would benefit video artists, like Hall and other members of LVA, who were able to take advantage of their positions as artists. It disavows the work of community video practitioners, whose work was understood to aim neither at recognizable artistic intentions or entertainment. In an article in *Studio International*, published in 1976, David Hall explains that the head of the BFI Production Board, Peter Sainsbury believed that ‘community groups’ should seek funding from the Department of the Environment and regional councils such as the Greater London Arts Association (GLAA).¹⁹³

By the mid-1970s, video offered a medium that allowed artists and activists to develop new, multiple and varied approaches to the production of moving image work. At this time, video’s capacity for instant playback fulfilled utopian desires for a mode of autonomous self-representation and the creation of art works that enabled self-reflective feedback. ‘The Video Show’ at the Serpentine gallery made a space for these different approaches to converge and, consequently, the diversity of available outcomes led to a distinction between artist videos and community videos, the former often focusing on the material qualities of video and the latter emphasising process

¹⁹¹ ‘Minutes of the Community Arts Committee Meeting,’ Arts Council of Great Britain, held at Victoria and Albert Archives, London, Accessed March 2015.

¹⁹² Sainsbury, Peter. *The Production Board and Video*. London: British Film Institute, 1976, p.58-59

¹⁹³ Hall, David. ‘Video Report.’ *Studio International* Jan/Feb, 1976, p.62

and social engagement. Proponents of artist video campaigned for recognition on the basis of its relationship to artist film, which was already recognized and funded by both arts and film institutions. The remit of these organisations continued to support that which was clearly identifiable as artistic or entertaining. Community video work, with its focus on process and social change remained at the margins.

A Changing Landscape (1975-1980):

Reflecting the suggestions of David Hall and the BFI, by 1975, local organisations were beginning to develop their own film and video policies. In May 1975, the Greater London Arts Authority (GLAA), under the supervision of film and video officer Keith Griffiths, began to distinguish community video from the wider community art movement. In a letter published in the Artist Video Workers (AVW) newsletter, Griffiths admits that up until this point their policies had not been very clear. Subsequently, Griffiths invited the AVW to meet with him in order to ‘explore systematically both the particular and general needs of the Greater London Region in terms of film and video activities and developments.’¹⁹⁴ The AVW responded with a number of recommendations that relate to the independent assessment of video projects rooted in communities. They describe the recognition of work originating on video as follows:

Present funding for video work is totally inadequate: GLAA should see lobbying for more money as one of its major responsibilities. GLAA is tending to enter into too many joint ventures with Local Authorities; we stress the importance of the role of GLAA as an autonomous funding agency, free from political pressures.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ AVW newsletter, London region, May 1975, Issue 5, np.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

The GLAA had previously recognised and supported the role of video work by community groups and granted financial aid to four community video groups experimenting with half-inch video technology in 1973. These included: Liberation Films, The Centre for Advanced Television Studies/Fantasy Factory (John Hopkins), Inter-Action and West London Community Video.¹⁹⁶

The financial support and institutional validation that these new organisations enabled also affected the way community art and video came to be defined, not by the artists themselves, but by the institutions they sought funding and support from. This would come to be a defining factor for the future of community video. The involvement of organisations such as the Arts Council led to their influence on the measurement of the success of these projects. What follows is a description of community art as the Community Arts Committee at the Arts Council understood it. It seeks to delimit what it understands as ‘art’, which it will fund, and anything that doesn’t clearly present itself as ‘art’, which it will not fund:

Community Arts has been described as the bridge function between the arts and community development. It is this blurred relationship with community development, play, education and social services which have led to the suggestion that the Arts Council should isolate the ‘art’ part and judge it on traditional criteria of assessment and excellence, there is no justification for spending Arts Council money on activities which are not art based.¹⁹⁷

A 1975 document outlining the role of the Community Arts Committee sets out two criteria in determining its support for the development of community arts and community video activities:

Has the community art movement had some significant effect on the local communities resulting in greater creative activity as a result of subsidy?

¹⁹⁶ No author, ‘Film and Video Extra’ no.1, The Arts Council of Great Britain, London, UK, 1973, p.7

¹⁹⁷ ‘Community Arts Committee Report’, Arts Council of Great Britain, 1975, p.6, Held at Victoria and Albert Archives, London, Accessed March, 2015

Has the activity clear relevance to the arts and does it contribute to the development of the arts?¹⁹⁸

These criteria are proposed without guidance on how or who might measure ‘effects’ or ‘relevance’ and illustrate how the influence of dominant institutions can come to shape and limit the work of radical outsiders. This same document also defines the role of community art and divides it into four categories: Independent Community Arts Groups, Community Arts Projects, Community Controlled Projects and Individual Community Artists.¹⁹⁹

Much like the relationship of community video to broadcast and cable television, the relationship between community video and the Arts Council is illustrative of the difficulties that can follow financial support from state institutions. The minutes of a meeting of the Community Arts Committee in 1975 refer to a suggestion by community artist Graham Woodruff that evidences this tension:

It is not sufficient to see community arts as a leisure time activity only. Emphasis on the participation of the community provides a method, through the arts, whereby communities can express their particular culture and influence the people/organization who control their lives to the end that the community itself can exercise this control. For this to happen community arts must be closely allied to community action. There was disagreement as to whether these links should be an essential part of the assessment.²⁰⁰

1976 saw increased recognition of the relationship of community arts to community development and an increase in the rhetoric of social inclusion and greater community cohesion displayed in applications such as those mentioned above and in the minutes

¹⁹⁸ Community Arts Committee and the Association of Community Artsists ‘Shared Goals’ Document, 1975, Arts Council of Great Britain, Held at Victoria and Albert Archives, London, Accessed March, 2015

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ ‘Minutes of the second Community Arts Committee Meeting’, Friday 9th May, 1975, Arts Council of Great Britain, Held at Victoria and Albert Archives, London, Accessed March 2015

of meetings of the CAC, the ACA and the Arts Council of Great Britain.²⁰¹ At the same time, funding for community arts projects was increasing. Although the sums were small in comparison to what was being given to larger arts institutions, the Gulbenkian Foundation recorded the following increase in funding from the Arts Council to community arts projects: £176,000 to fifty seven projects in 1975-76 and £300,000 to seventy-five in 1976-1977.²⁰²

The (Resistible) Rise of Video:

Increased involvement and investment in the outcomes of multiple community video projects resulted in the Arts Council commissioning a report focusing on the role of video in social development. Its author, media and communications researcher Caroline Heller, described her motivation in the following way: ‘to examine, in an admittedly skeptical spirit, some of the assumptions on which the public funding of socio-cultural video activities appeared to be based.’²⁰³ Heller justifies her ‘skeptical’ position as being a response to ‘a literature of the richest gobbledygook’ generated on the subject of video.²⁰⁴ In her introduction she describes her desire to ‘sharpen up the debate’ because ‘the sanctimonious association of video with good works (social change being assumed to be one for the purposes of this particular argument) needs to

²⁰¹ Accessed at the Arts Council Archives, held at Victoria and Albert Archives, London, Accessed March 2015 Box numbers include: ACGB/55/30 - Video Bursaries, ACGB/55/21 Miscellaneous applications - Artists' Film and Video Committee, ACGB/113 Policy and Planning Unit: Combined Arts, Community Arts and Art Centres, 1970-1986, ACGB/113/70, Arts Centres Working Group, ACGB/113/16 Community Arts projects – Greater London Arts Association, ACGB/113/23, Community Arts and Video, ACGB/113/7, Community Arts Evaluation Working Group, ACGB/113/15, Association of Community Artists, 1975-1982, ACGB/113/71, Community Arts Committee, 1975-1982, ACGB/113/72 - Community Arts Working Group, 1975-1982, ACGB/113/36 - Community Arts applications, ACGB/113/24 Community Arts Committee - miscellaneous papers 1978, ACGB/113/58, Association of Community Artists, 1979-1981

²⁰² Hewison, Robert, and John Holden. *Experience and Experiment: the UK Branch of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1956-2006*. Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, United Kingdom Branch, 2006, p.104

²⁰³ Heller, C. ‘The Resistible Rise of Video Culture,’ *Educational Broadcasting International*, v11 n3 p133-35 Sep 1978, Arts Council of Great Britain, Held at Victoria and Albert Archives, London, Accessed March 2015, p.133

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

be challenged.’²⁰⁵ The Arts Council subsequently published the findings of the report written by Heller in 1977 under the title ‘The Resistible Rise of Video Culture’. Its publication and the subsequent response from a number of community video practitioners serve to illustrate the position of community video almost 10 years after it was first practiced. This includes the impact of increased institutional involvement, decreased funding and professionalization.

The report draws out a series of propositions inferred from community video practitioners as justification for their work throughout the 1970s.²⁰⁶ These propositions are summarised in the following terms:

- Individual development: stimulation of creativity, confidence and self-awareness.
- Community development: stimulation of participation, mutual aid, awareness and action.
- Democratization of ‘broadcasting’ plus stimulation of critical awareness of media subjectivity.²⁰⁷

After setting out these points, the rest of the report dismisses each of them, starting with the claim that ‘individual development’ can just as easily be achieved through the use of ‘simpler resources,’ such as a sports group or choir. In doing so, Heller ignores the specific function of video as a means by which participants are able to reflect on their representation in the media and with it develop their own forms of self-representation. Ron Orders, who was part of Liberation Films throughout the 1970s, has since made an argument for the way other disciplines might be similarly effective as video for encouraging ‘independent development’:

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Heller is only able to reference three publications by community video practitioners: *Video in Community Development* (1972, CATS), *Basic Video in Community Work* (1976, Interaction) and ‘The Metasoftware of Video’ (1976, Studio International)

²⁰⁷ Heller, C. ‘The Resistible Rise of Video Culture,’ *Educational Broadcasting International*, v11 n3 p133-35 Sep 1978, Arts Council of Great Britain, Held at Victoria and Albert Archives, London, Accessed March 2015, p.133

There was a cafe in Dalston called Centreprise that was a café and bookshop and they ran poetry workshops and oral history workshops, teaching people how to write or enabling people to write. Not necessarily teaching them, but bringing them together and encouraging them to write about their lives write about their history their community and their history of their community. So the tool that you put in somebody's hand doesn't have to be a camera obviously... the same is true of a pencil or a fountain pen.

However, unlike Heller, Orders is able to draw on his experience of community video. In doing so, he emphasizes the comparative benefits of video, not in opposition to other community arts activities, but as a compliment to them.

[Video] has got a lot more flexibility, a lot more going for it and because you can actually engage other people by filming them and by showing them what they do, showing them in their own community, in their own workplace and encouraging them to use the camera and then to use the finished product to change things.²⁰⁸

Considering the potential for video to democratize television, Heller suggests that the 'barriers to change in British broadcasting are patently political rather than technical.'²⁰⁹ This argument ignores projects such as *The News at West 10* and the production of other video projects, which were made to circulate outside of broadcast television. She also fails to consider the complicated relationship community video experienced from its co-option by cable networks and broadcast television.

Heller explains that video recording technology is 'unsuited to the role thrust upon it, and criticizes it as 'inefficient', 'costly' and soon to become 'obsolete'. She describes video as 'easy to use badly and difficult to use well' and draws attention to the 'shortage of completed tapes of viewable quality.'²¹⁰ Heller's commitment to the standards of skill and craft and a focus on the production of finished tapes reveal her

²⁰⁸ Ron orders interview, 2017, www.the-lcva.co.uk, accessed September 2017

²⁰⁹ Heller, C. 'The Resistible Rise of Video Culture,' *Educational Broadcasting International*, v11 n3 p133-35 Sep 1978, Arts Council of Great Britain, Held at Victoria and Albert Archives, London, Accessed March 2015, p.135

²¹⁰ Ibid.

lack of interest or understanding in the role of process. Furthermore, this last point highlights the lack of research Heller carried out. A catalogue of community videos available to hire, published in 1979 by the London Community Video Workers Collective, lists at least 48 finished tapes of viewable quality produced between 1969 and 1976.

Heller argues that the existing evidence did not support the claim that community video was able to encourage community development:

It all sounds excellent. Although there is of course no *necessary* connection between these broad social objectives and the recording of sound and pictures on magnetic tape, there is widely canvassed opinion among workers in the field that video is 'important' and 'a useful tool'. Unfortunately, there is no evidence that this is the case.²¹¹

Peter Lewis, the press officer of COMCOM (the Community Communications group, founded in 1977), responded at the time with a challenge to Heller's report. In it, he wrote how the report bore 'scant resemblance to the facts.'²¹² He proposes that community video projects have supported social change, measured and evaluated by the project participants and initiators:

I wonder if she and I have been inhabiting the same planet for the last five years... In this country, where people have had access to video, demand has been sustained and grown. Few people would claim that there are not 'inherent weaknesses' in video – the high cost of maintenance is one – but to damn it outright by comparison to film is absurd... As to the 'failure to realise any social role for video' and the lack of 'evidence of lasting impact on any community's development' these judgments simply point to the inability of an academic, theoretical approach to come to terms with the social construction of reality. All over Britain, in places which Heller has clearly never visited, people and communities have experienced the impact of video. Some of their experiences have been measured by research, which shows that video can act as a catalyst and a focus of social change.²¹³

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Lewis, Peter, 'The Resistible Rise of Video Culture' a comment by Peter M Lewis, press office, COMCOM, 1978, held at London School of Economics Archive, accessed July 2016, np

²¹³ Ibid.

Responses to Heller's argument against the use of video for community development subsequently appeared in the Association of Video Worker's Newsletter. An editorial collectively called for her resignation and suggested that her report was circulated without any consultation with them. Lewis similarly draws attention to the way in which the report was circulated 'secretly to public funding bodies without any public discussion or accountability'.

Lewis' criticisms highlight two interlinked issues with Heller's report and the positioning of community video by the Arts Council more broadly. Video was still a new medium, as was its use in community development, so both Lewis and Heller struggled to find reliable modes of evaluation, instead relying on anecdotal evidence and word of mouth assessments. Heller uses a 'lack of evidence' to argue against the success or efficacy of community video. However, this lack does not equate to the failure of community video, rather it highlights a lack of means at the time with which to identify and evaluate its benefits. This lack of externally recognizable terms of evaluation were due, in large part, to videos' newness and the focus on process over tangible, recognizable objects. In his response to Heller, Lewis is also unable to draw on specific examples of 'successful' projects or clear evidence of the use of video for 'social change'.

It is important to note that Heller was not wholly dismissive of all community video projects and community video practitioners have since verified some of her criticisms. In an interview in 2017 Lorraine Leeson, a community artist who worked largely in East London, draws similar conclusions to Heller on the limitations of video

technology at the time. Leeson describes the difficulties with handling the equipment and editing the footage:

It was always an issue where to edit it... I think we did it on one inch, a format that I think is almost unknown now. And then it got transferred to Umatic afterwards. But it was such a problem because we had to beg and borrow the editing facilities. So that was one issue. Another issue is that most of the stuff was filmed on Portapaks... These were reel-to-reel video, on a square deck and quite a sizable camera and you were meant to hang the Portapak on your shoulder and hold the camera. Well, for a small person like me, that just wasn't ever going to be possible... So the technology was really quite problematic. Film was getting more out of the question again because of the editing... It seemed in the end that photography was just much more straightforward. We set up a dark room in our cellar, we had a short life house and we could just develop our own photographs. So we moved quite quickly away from video.²¹⁴

In an interview conducted in 2017 Keith Griffiths, who was the film and video officer at the GLAA when Heller published her report, suggested that it was the specific emphasis on process that Heller viewed with some scepticism. He described how he remembered Heller being 'very impressed by John [Hopkins] and liked what he did.' Griffiths went on to state that Heller was very much in favour of the work of 'Liberation Films and Four Corners, who produced product and not just process' and given the modest money available, looked more favourably on the 'Liberation Films side of things.'²¹⁵

Nearing the end of the 1970s, the challenge facing both community video practitioners and the organisations from which they sought funding was that there was a lack of mutually agreed upon processes with which to measure and evaluate success. A report by the Gulbenkian Foundation,²¹⁶ an independent organization who

²¹⁴ Lorraine Leeson Interview, 2017, www.the-lcva.co.uk, accessed September, 2017

²¹⁵ Keith Griffiths Interview by Ed Webb-Ingall, unpublished, May, 2017

²¹⁶ The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation was created in 1956, with the aim to improve people's lives through art, charity, science and education.

shaped community art throughout the 1960s and 1970s, describes this challenge as follows:

Community art, where the personal was the political, and the political was the cultural, presented funding bodies with a considerable challenge. There was no established genre or practice that could be pigeon holed as community art and no agreement even among community artists as to what its ultimate purpose was... While the Arts Council tried to come to terms with the fractious world of community art through a series of committees and reports, the artists themselves found it necessary to become better organized, risking the very institutionalization they wanted to resist.²¹⁷

It is clear from this historical analysis that to separate the history of community art from community video would be to ignore their complex relationship to one another. Instead, drawing out the emergence of each has provided a means to understand their contemporaneous development. The practitioners and the institutions involved in advancing how community video was understood occupied various and often oppositional positions. This tension generated a productive debate about the potential use of this newly available video recording technology. For some community video practitioners, this was advantageous and helped them gain recognition, validation and support, while others were left alienated from their original radical intentions and concerns. What follows is an analysis of the impact of this period of tension in order to understand the position of community video at the end of the 1970s.

²¹⁷ Hewison, Robert, and John Holden. *Experience and Experiment: the UK Branch of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1956-2006*. Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, United Kingdom Branch, 2006, p.103

Conclusion: The End of the 1970s

Between 1977, when Heller published her report and 1980, when this history ends, community video entered a period defined by compartmentalization, professionalization and increased marketisation; a change in focus, with cameras directed towards communities of interest; and increased self-reflection from within the community video movement, with videos and publications considering the role of video in community development and activism. *Community Media: Community communication in the UK* (1980, Nigg and Wade) provides a survey of the use of communications media in community development over the previous ten years. Its conclusion offers a means to understand the continued use of media in community activities in the period following the publication of Heller's report:

The video scene in the UK is still a fragmented one. There is no effective national organisation and consequently there is no coherent funding policy or future development strategy. Video workers still lead an essentially hand-to-mouth existence with vastly inadequate resources. There are probably between 50-100 projects using video in the UK today. More precise figures are unavailable because the research has never been done. The Arts Council of Great Britain recently issued a list of all the community art projects known in early 1978, and this totaled 178 names. However, there was no breakdown by media available and many of the projects did not involve video.²¹⁸

After 1977, Nigg and Wade note support for community video became more 'compartmentalised'. In 1977, the Greater London Arts Authority began to regard 'process video' as outside of their remit as a regional arts association. Instead the GLAA proposed that it became the responsibility of local authorities. By the end of 1977, the Association of Video Workers ceased activity and a number of its members reformed as the London Community Video Workers Collective. Their statement of

²¹⁸ Nigg, Heinz, and Graham Wade. *Community Media: Community Communication in the UK: Video, Local TV, Film, and Photography* ; Regenbogen-Verlag, 1980, p.24

intent addressing the GLAA, published in an internal working paper, highlights the ongoing problem with the prevalence of traditional definitions of cultural activities, the narrow use of which was continuing to limit funding and support specifically for community video activities.

Our case depends on an openness on the part of the panel to question their accepted definition of art... we see our work as acting for the exploration and discovery of the culture that exists and is created within our own communities. We work by, with and for local groups, not about and outside them. This demands involvement and participation from us as part of the community. As a result, our work is not the kind of consumable item that GLAA want to fund – a kind of hit and run system that ignores long term commitment, the building up of relationships, or the possibility that art is other than individual self-expression.²¹⁹

By the end of 1978, indicative of what was to follow, the Association of Community Artists dissolved itself as a national organisation after it was refused a grant by the Arts Council on the grounds that it was considered too ‘political.’²²⁰

Between 1978 and 1980 video production slowed in the UK. A catalogue of community videos available for hire published in 1979 by the London Community Video Workers Collective lists only 18 videos made between 1969 and 1975, 30 videos made in 1976, 39 videos made in 1977 and 51 videos made in 1978, a total of 120. The Videoactive report²²¹ published in 1985, offers 194 videos that were available for hire in the UK (unfortunately it does not list the release date of each individual video, or whether they were all produced in the UK). This figure suggests that between 1978, when 138 videos were available, and 1984, when 194 videos were available, 56 new videos were produced, which is an average of 11 videos per year,

²¹⁹ Nigg, Heinz, and Graham Wade. *Community Media: Community Communication in the UK: Video, Local TV, Film, and Photography* ; Regenbogen-Verlag, 1980, p. 267-268

²²⁰ Hewison, Robert, and John Holden. *Experience and Experiment: the UK Branch of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1956-2006*. Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, United Kingdom Branch, 2006p.104

²²¹ Dungey, J. Dovey, J. Lipman, A. ‘The Videoactive Report.’ London: Videoactive, 1985

compared with an average of 40 per year in 1976, 1977 and 1978. A second community video catalogue published in 1988 by Albany Video, contains 82 titles produced in the UK between 1981 and 1988, only 10 of which were made between 1981 and 1985. After 1985 there was a marked increase in production, with 72 videos made over the following three years. This growth was largely due to access to new funding streams, made possible by the establishment of Channel 4 and the possibility for non-unionized moving image practitioners to work behind the camera due to the Workshop Declaration.²²² Although this analysis is by no means definitive, it serves as an indication of the changing rate of community video production between 1977 and the end of the 1970s.

In 1977, the Arts Council's funding for community art was reduced when government funding was scaled back and, as recommended in Heller's report, they began to transfer responsibility to the Regional Arts Associations. The Gulbenkian Foundation proposes these cuts to community arts not only had financial implications, but also resulted in its reformulation. In their words, rather than part of a 'cultural revolution', community art was reframed as an aspect of 'missionary work, intended to introduce the conventional arts to those who had not experienced it' or else as 'ameliorative help for the disadvantaged.'²²³

²²² Passed in 1982, the Workshop Declaration was established to support a model of integrated practice within the fields of film and television. This meant that any associated groups were required to include distribution, educational activities and the provision of film and video equipment, alongside the production of work. The Declaration included a remit that participating groups should be drawn from outside the mainstream film and television sector, with a particular focus on ethnic diversity and a commitment to local issues. The funding stream and support initiated by the Declaration helped many groups working on politically and socially engaged projects to consolidate their activities. Aitken, Ian. *The Concise Routledge Encyclopedia of the Documentary Film*, Routledge, 2013, p.123

²²³ Hewison, Robert, and John Holden. *Experience and Experiment: the UK Branch of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1956-2006*. Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, United Kingdom Branch, 2006, p.104

January 1977 saw West London Media Group secure funding for a yearlong project, in collaboration with the national Manpower Services Commission.²²⁴ This supported the training of local community members in the use of portable video technology and led to the production of the News at West 10 project as well as a series of videos made by, for and with local pensioners and tenants associations, including one tape that focused on black homelessness (*Black Homelessness*, 1978).²²⁵ Set up in 1975, the MSC funded and supported work for community artists as a ‘capital-light but labour-intensive means of soaking up unemployment.’²²⁶ An article on ‘using video as a therapeutic tool’²²⁷ published in 1980 explains that although video received a number of financial cuts, it had become increasingly available to the ‘helping professions.’²²⁸ A number of establishments set up their own courses and weekend workshops to train participants in a variety of therapeutic approaches. The focus on training and professionalization is indicative of how community video came to be understood by funders by the end of the 1970s. The Gulbenkian Foundation noted this shift at the time:

There was a feeling that, as training and unionization increased, homogenization followed, destroying the free flowing inter-disciplinarity that had characterized community work in the 1960s.²²⁹

²²⁴ Manpower services commission (MSC) was a part of the Department of Employment Group established under Heath's Conservative Government in 1973. The MSC co-ordinated employment and training in the UK through industry, trade unions, local authorities and education interests.

²²⁵ Made by West London Media Workshop in 1978, ‘A series of interviews with several young black people who talk about their struggle to find accommodation, the lack of support from the council and the reasons they found themselves in this situation. Made for the UJIMAA Housing Association.’ <http://www.the-lcva.co.uk/videos/594afdcea0611010529c337c>

²²⁶ Hewison, Robert, and John Holden. *Experience and Experiment: the UK Branch of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1956-2006*. Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, United Kingdom Branch, 2006, p.107

²²⁷ Biggs, Simon. ‘Using Video as a Therapeutic Tool.’ *Journal of Centre of Advanced TV Studies*, vol. 8, 1980, p.27

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Hewison, Robert, and John Holden. *Experience and Experiment: the UK Branch of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1956-2006*. Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, United Kingdom Branch, 2006, p.89

1977 also saw community video makers turn their cameras on pressing issues such as race and gender relations. Amid rising tensions from groups who proposed stopping all non-white immigration and supporting repatriation, a 1976 local council bi-election in Deptford, South London, saw the far right National Front and the National Party secure 44.5% of the vote. In August 1977, community video makers based at Albany Video documented a provocative attempt by these groups to march through Lewisham in Deptford, and a counter protest by anti-racists, which succeeded in halting the racist demonstration (*August 13: What Happened?* Albany Video, 1977).²³⁰ This same year saw Carry Gorney, a member of Inter-Action, adapt emergent feminist consciousness raising practices with a group of women in Milton Keynes in order to produce a community video project called *Things that Mother never told us* (1977/78), to be explored in the next section. Like *August 13: What Happened?*, its initiation represents a shift from local activism towards projects routed in communities of interest, inspired by emergent identity politics. An interview carried out in 2017 with Andy Porter, who was a founding member of WLMW and occasionally worked with Albany Video, describes this as follows:

The grassroots emergence of community politics in the late 60's, the street activism over play, housing (squatting), traffic and so on slowly and inevitably died down or became institutionalised, particularly in the late 1970's, and was often incorporated into the local state or even the national state... Our work in WLMW was predicated on the servicing, in some way local 'activism' - both as instigators and followers, when these 'movements' died down, so did one strand of the work, and hence the movement into identity politics, responding politically to that new kind of activism.²³¹

This shift was also affecting how funding was being applied for and understood. A paper written for the Arts Council's regional arts committee in 1978, which outlined the status of community art at the time, describes a 'significant development in the

²³⁰ *August 13: What Happened*, Albany Video (1977) <http://www.the-lcva.co.uk/videos/599c1e80201c4e2196cb18a5>

²³¹ Email interview with Andy Porter by Ed Webb-Ingall, unpublished, December, 2017

number of ethnic community arts applications.’²³² This evidences the new attention given to shared interest and identity. On reflection, it could be argued that this shift signified the fulfillment of one of the intentions of 1970s community video; that the marginalised groups that so many community video projects sought to ‘enable’ and ‘facilitate’ were now doing this work for themselves.

In 1978, community artist Su Braden published the book *Artists and People*. It provides an analysis of the relationship between artists and their work in contexts outside formal art institutions. The Gulbenkian Foundation commissioned this research in order to understand the impact of artists working with different communities, and its publication is illustrative of a new self-reflection that was emerging from within the community arts movement. Unfortunately for my study Braden does not focus on video, instead examining the various experiences of artists working in ‘sculpture, film, drama, music, painting and video’²³³ in order to understand the changes in the conception of both art and artists that occurred as a result of the wider community arts movement. However, artists using video to work with communities with varying levels of success are referred to repeatedly throughout the publication.²³⁴ In her conclusion, Braden draws attention to the specific benefits of introducing video and printing to community groups who seek means of expression outside commercial and state controlled media.

²³² The context for the Community Arts Committee’s request to the Arts Council council for an increase in allocation for 1978/79, A paper for Regional Committee, 2nd March 1978, Held at Victoria and Albert Archives, London, Accessed March 2015

²³³ Braden, Su. *Artists and People*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978, p.67

²³⁴ The following are some examples from Braden’s book of how video was being used in community arts projects in the 1970s: ‘Downie felt that the group failed when after he suggested that they should each go out and make a short tape on their own and they declined Braden, p.71/2 ‘After his visit, Dunstone made an attempt to become more involved in the school – devising video projects with the boys and working on a photographic project with the staff. Braden, p.84 ‘They saw the social possibilities of video and were particularly interested in the immediate playback aspects of it. They felt that it could be used in language learning, developing conversation and dialogue. Braden, p.92

Community artists are often concerned to use the mechanical media of expression developed by advanced technology and to re-examine the dialectics of their material application.²³⁵

This level of self-reflection and evaluation was timely for community artists asked to justify their existence outside of pre-existing disciplines.

In 1979, the Conservative government won the general election and Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister. Antithetical to the prevailing ethos of community art and community video, Thatcher later went on to make the famous comment ‘there is no such thing as society.’²³⁶ In an essay on film policy in the 1980s, media historian John Hill explains how the Conservative understanding of moving image production was entirely antithetical to the sort of moving image production carried out by community video practitioners in the 1970s:

The key event in the evolution of recent film policy was undoubtedly the arrival of a new Conservative government, led by Margaret Thatcher, in 1979... The Films Act was due for renewal in 1980 and it had been generally expected that a Labour government would increase state support for film in recognition of its cultural, and not just commercial, worth. With the arrival of the new Conservative administration, however, these plans were immediately put to rest... Film policy corresponded to the government’s more general economical attitudes: in particular, an unflagging belief in the virtues of the free market, a commitment to the minimization of state intervention in the economy and a corresponding wish to reduce public expenditure and privatize public assets.²³⁷

In the same year that Thatcher was elected, the young filmmaker Jon Dovey, responded to an advert in *Time Out* magazine for a job working for the South London group Oval Video. In an interview in 2017, he recalled how when he first encountered the community video movement it was largely disregarded by funding bodies. His

²³⁵ Ibid., p.173

²³⁶ Keay, Douglas, Interview with Margaret Thatcher, *Woman’s Own*, UK, September, 1987, p.30

²³⁷ John Hill ‘British Film Policy’ in Albert Moran (ed.), *Film Policy: International, National, and Regional Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2005), p.99

reflections echo those made at the time by London Community Video Workers

Collective:

We couldn't get access to film funds or film subsidy if we wanted to apply for instance to what was then called Greater London Arts Association. We had to go under the Community Arts banner. We weren't allowed to go under the film banner because we weren't 'proper filmmakers' and 'proper filmmakers' were mainly part of an artists led film movement... so they didn't really understand or relate very much to what we were doing.²³⁸

The first video Dovey made at Oval Video was called *Fight the Cuts* (1979). His description indicates the changing tide and focus for community video at the end of the 1970s:

It was a video that I could have made every two years since. Because it was a film about the impact of cuts on local authority services. And I can remember being in nurseries and in schools and in libraries and outside health centres and doing voxpop interviews with people and talking to activists and going to rallies and just documenting this process. And I remember at the beginning of the film was an interview clip from Panorama between Margaret Thatcher and Robin Day, that was how the film opened, with Margaret Thatcher saying something preposterous which went on to become a dominant theme of the rest of my career.

The title of this video is particularly fitting; in 1980 the Arts Council made large budget cuts and ceased funding 41 organisations. In this same year, Liberation Films completed what would be their last video, and it is with this that I will conclude.

Made over a decade after their first film *End of a Tactic* (1968) and fulfilling a similar role to Braden's publication, *Community Video 1980* (1980, Joel Venet) reflects on the position of community video at the end of the 1970s from within the community of practitioners. *Community Video 1980* is a 20 minute, black and white video, made by the distribution manager at Liberation Films, Joel Venet, with the help of his colleague Kez Carey. Venet's description of how it came to be made is helpful in

²³⁸ John Dovey interview, 2017, www.the-lcva.co.uk, accessed September, 2017

framing the atmosphere of frustration and self-reflection that characterized community video at the end of the 1970s:

The *1980* video came out of a sense of frustration at Liberation Films. My job was to promote and distribute the films made by them, which I did to the best of my ability. Liberation Films was very good on educational practice and they taught me a lot about trigger films acting as a catalyst for action. But they didn't really have that good a distribution programme, and like many film-makers they had done the work making the films and needed someone else to do this ... There was pressure on their funding from the Arts Council and I could see the end looming. I was a little frustrated that I wasn't able to be more active in the present, looking at, making, delivering community media in a direct, hands-on way and so Kez Carey and I made this video to fill in this gap and alert the world to all the great things that were going on in London in community video in the present.²³⁹

The video intercuts long tracking shots, recorded from a car window of desolate, concrete housing estates and busy rows of shops, with interviews from community video practitioners, each reflecting on the changing role of community video since its inception (none of whom are named). The opening shot is accompanied by a voiceover of a woman describing the difficulty of getting people involved in a community video project and indicates the tone and mood at the time of its production:

If you ask any person who works in the WACAT collective they will sigh deeply and tell you that the biggest problem that we have is getting people involved, it's like hitting your head against a brick wall, because its really slow, it can take a year literally to get a group going on a regular basis.

Cutting between talking heads, the video continues to evaluate a variety of approaches to production. These range from using video to work with groups of children and people with disabilities to providing a means to think through race and representation. It considers the benefits and problems of short and long-term projects and compares

²³⁹ Interview with Joel Venet, carried out by Ed Webb-Ingall, London, December 2017, unpublished

different structural approaches and formats, from recording plays and interviews to role playing and campaigning. An increase in self-reflection is noted in the video itself, both on the role of community video projects and from the practitioners on their work. One interviewee, assessing the value of community video projects, summarizes that their role was: 'to intervene in community and to create a situation in which the community is able to reflect upon itself, upon its individuals, upon what it is doing and how it is operating, who is in the hierarchy of command and to get them to think about their own lot in life.' In section two of this thesis, through the reactivation of 1970s community video processes, I ask whether this is a reasonable objective. Towards the end of the video, another interviewee concludes that they are becoming more professional. He explains that this is largely due to accessibility to new colour video technology, the need to start to working for money, decreased funding and a personal desire to make 'better productions'. This is followed up by a concern about how they can continue remain local and accessible. A subsequent interviewee counters this concern with the belief that the priority is not always that participants shoot their own video, as long as they are able to articulate themselves. A number of interviewees comment on their changing awareness of the importance of distribution and placing a greater consideration on how, and to whom, a video is screened and shared. As the video concludes, contradictory and complimentary viewpoints are edited together as follows:

The future of video looks rosy; it's the only expanding industry at all at the moment. How community video capitalizes on that or uses that I don't know. I don't see that as being very hopeful at the moment as the culture that video is adopting in the 80s seems a long way removed from what community video was about. I mean pop promos, blue movies and television rip-offs doesn't seem to be have anything to do with what we are doing.

As long as people are gearing their annual reports to what the funders want then there is no chance for change.

When we started there was money around, the hangover of the late 60s of people using video. With the changing political situation community video hasn't always changed to meet that... a lot of the work that was valid then I would question now. We are going to take a much more political stance and only take on work that questions the situation now.

Each of these last comments is edited one after the other. They appear both contradictory and complimentary. Presented in this way, their combination offers a useful framework for how, at the end of the 1970s, community video remained responsive to its context. A moving image practice that continued to question and reflect the changing social and political situation in which it is taken up.

The origination of community video practices in the 1970s can be understood as contingent on, and responsive to, the following factors: the development and availability of portable video recording technology; the movement of art outside of recognised arts institutions where its classification was characterized by interdisciplinarity and audience involvement, rather than singular authorship and the production of a tangible object; the way in which this new technology encouraged and enabled activists to challenge the hegemony and hierarchy of broadcast television through interventions and the development of alternative modes of communication and distribution; the use of this new technology by grass roots activists to collectively represent their experiences of marginalization and oppression; the parallel political use of film and video to activate audiences and challenge misrepresentation by North American groups the Newsreel Collective and Challenge for Change; and the corresponding development of community art, which set a precedent for funding bodies and arts organisations to understand and then shape the use of video as a mode of social engagement and community development.

Throughout this process of historical analysis it has been my intention to insert community video into a broader history of grass roots activism and political filmmaking and subsequently frame community video as a legitimate and recognizable mode of collective moving image production. Hopefully, this will help to clarify the position and work of community video, allowing contemporary practitioners, like myself, to develop and apply effective strategies suitable to the current moment. The following section will draw out the specific methods the community video practitioners featured in this chapter developed in order to facilitate the production of community videos. I will subsequently identify the methods that characterized community video and extract them to engage in a process of reactivation.

Drawing Out a Methodology from 1970s Community Video:

In 1975, six years after artists and activists in the UK first took up video, Middlesex Polytechnic researcher Frances Berrigan wrote a report on the uses of this new technology. 'Theories and Practices of Video Work' proposes that in the mid-1970s portable video recording technology was being used either as a means for 'media reform', counter to and critical of mainstream, broadcast television, or as an 'organising tool' to bring community groups together. The latter use is described as:

... a focusing tool in isolating and defining problems, as a research tool in compiling and collating information. It has been used to increase self-awareness in individuals, and to create identity and purpose in group work. In many of these projects video is used as one method of achieving objectives, which can be educational, social or political.²⁴⁰

This report helpfully frames the way portable video recording technology was understood at the time, but it does not go on to address *how* video achieved these aims. Nor does it explain its values and limitations, choosing instead to focus on funding strategies for the use of this new medium. In the first section, I established why community video practices developed and for whom, making it clear that the term 'community video' was not necessarily a term unanimously used by all its practitioners. Instead it was, for many, a retrospective term, taken up to build solidarity within the movement and to distinguish it from video art and community arts. In order to reactivate community video practices and argue for their contemporary efficacy I will now draw out the specific approaches that characterized the use of video when it was first taken up in the context of community organising and activism. I do this by identifying the practical methods that underpinned

²⁴⁰ Berrigan, Frances J. *Theories and Practices of Video Work*. Rep. Middlesex Polytechnic: Media Research Group, 1975 p.11-12 Held at Victoria and Albert Archives, London, Accessed March, 2015

community video processes in the 1970s. Following the reactivation of 1970s community video practices in section two, I then critically assess their contemporary relevance.

This section will expand on two approaches to the initiation of a community video project that I introduced in section one and introduce a third approach: these are the 'insider', the 'outsider' and the 'hybrid approach'. As will become clear, these will not be explained as discrete positions, but fluid descriptors that exist on a sliding scale. The processes used for each of these approaches are adapted anew each time a project is initiated, always contingent on the specific make-up of the group involved and the content and intention of the video they set out to make. This is one of the defining factors of community video and is also the reason that very few records exist that show how community video projects were originally initiated in the 1970s. There are, however, a number of factors that community video projects share. An analysis of each of these will shape the following section and include the way a project is structured, the role of a mediator based in the community or neighbourhood where the project is to take place, the role of playback, the way video recording technology is introduced to a group, and finally a sensitivity to the social context out of which a project is being developed.

To construct an account of these methods, in this section I make use of primary sources produced by and for community video practitioners active in the 1970s. This allows me to address the deficit in materials that explain *how* to initiate and facilitate a community video project. These sources include the following: community videos that show footage of groups carrying out various camera exercises and games as well

as documentation of discussions about the video projects themselves; publications produced in the 1970s that describe a number of different approaches to initiating a community video project; and interviews carried out with community video practitioners reflecting on the way that they developed community video projects.

The ‘Insider’ Approach:

The following quote, taken from a report published in 1972 on the use of video in community development, sets up a dichotomy between two ways of using video as an ‘organising tool’ to initiate and develop a community video project:

- 1) Communication activity of a self-generating sort within the community
- 2) Communication activity originated by an outsider, for the purposes of an existing community²⁴¹

Point one refers to the use of video by the video maker to record, first-hand, their experience of the world around them. This is what I refer to as the ‘insider’ approach. Point two describes what I explain as the ‘outsider’ approach, which I discuss later in this section. One example I have already given of the insider approach was the work of CAC/WLMW. Another example would be the processes used by a group of squatters in North London called Graft On!, to produce the video *Forming a Resident’s Association* (1974). Graft On! was established in 1972 by artist and activist Sue Hall after she took up residence in temporary housing in the same neighbourhood as John Hopkins, in an area of North London known as ‘Squat-city.’²⁴² This project is

²⁴¹ Hopkins, John et al. *Video in Community Development*. London (22 Gray's Inn Rd., W.C.1): Ovum, 1973, p.69

²⁴² Roberts, Andy, and Susan J. Blackmore. *Albion Dreaming: a Popular History of LSD in Britain*. Marshall Cavendish Editions, 2012, p.158

illustrative of the responsive and often urgent tone that is characteristic of ‘insider’ community videos.

The Labour Government’s drive to rebuild London during the late 1960s required rehousing tenants and residents. In the North London borough of Camden, a number of arts organisations were granted short-term tenancies in large unoccupied buildings, and residents were able to occupy houses as part of ‘short-life’ housing schemes.²⁴³ By 1971, Camden had become home to over 280 squatters. One such building was inhabited by a collection of alternative arts, film and video groups including members of IRAT (the Institute for Research in Art and Technology), TVX/CATV (the Centre for Alternative Television) and the London Filmmakers Co-op. Sue Hall, after spending her early adult life travelling, returned to London and in 1972 moved into a squat on Prince of Wales Crescent opposite the newly founded offices of John Hopkins at TVX.

Along with fellow residents living under precarious housing conditions, Hall founded community video project Graft On!,²⁴⁴ with the urgent intention of resisting the demolition of her neighbourhood. Hall recalls the relationships she was forming at the time: ‘I was working very hard to get local allies to support us and also to get interest from the squatters, who weren’t exactly easy to convince that they should indulge in these strange bureaucratic practices... So while I was doing this Hoppy approached me and he said what about making a video?’²⁴⁵ By 1973, there were several

²⁴³ In the 1970s, councils purchased and emptied a number of properties for regeneration projects or demolition. When these projects fell through due to a lack of funding and, with councils unable to afford to bring them up to the legal minimum standards to rent them out, they designated the properties as ‘short-life’ homes and allowed people to live in them paying little or no rent.

²⁴⁴ Grafton was the name of the electoral ward where Sue Hall lived

²⁴⁵ Interview with Sue Hall, carried out by Ed Webb-Ingall, London, July, 2015 unpublished

organizations in the same neighbourhood, including TVX and Inter-Action, all using video to encourage collective representation amongst disparate and under-represented residents.

In a document written by Hall and Hopkins in 1975 reflecting on the work of Graft On!, they describe it as ‘communications research, an action research agency applying communication theory to social change.’²⁴⁶ Hall defines their use of video technology for democratic aims as ‘Participant Observation’ and expands as follows:

We were squatters ourselves, we were not from the outside. And at first people were very hesitant about the video, and we took it out and let other people handle it a lot. We showed them, this is what you do, this is how you zoom, this is how you focus. And then we’d erase it, we’d re-use tapes, which were very expensive in those days. But after people had had a go themselves, they felt reassured. They didn’t see it as dangerous, or outside, or any of those things. And that was quite crucial. And we videoed occupations, parties, evictions, street actions, lectures, seminars and marches.²⁴⁷

Hopkins and Hall were influenced by the socially engaged approaches developed in Canada as part of the influential Challenge for Change programme, but with a different structure and motivation. Unlike Challenge for Change, which operated a top down model, initiated and funded by the state ‘for the people’. Hall and Hopkins sought to initiate projects from within their own community of squatters. Hall makes clear the distinction between the two approaches:

In the beginning, we thought we'd have a go with what was going on in Canada but we thought we'd start with our own community... We never thought that it was helpful to parachute yourself into someone else's community and to offer your services like an astronaut suddenly landing somewhere wasn't our thing. So, the only communities we ever worked with were ones we belonged to ourselves. Now I'm not saying that's right or wrong,

²⁴⁶ Hall, Sue, and John Hopkins. ‘Socio-Cultural Applications of Television Technology in the UK. London: Council for Cultural Co-operation,’ 1975, p.18. Accessed at Central St Martins Study Collection, London, February, 2015.

²⁴⁷ Transcript of Interview with Sue Hall by Heinz Nigg and Andy Porter, UK, 2015, www.the-lcva.co.uk, accessed August, 2017

it's just that we were libertarians, we didn't believe in telling other people what was best for them.²⁴⁸

As an 'insider' community video group, Graft On! serviced their own short-life housing and squatting community, a sector of society that they believed were either unable or unwilling to be served by others. They identified this sector as one suffering from a loss of democratic rights and social rejection.

The following video project initiated by Graft On! evidences the processes adopted by 'insiders' using video as an organising tool. Between 1973 and 74, Camden council introduced a proposal called 'Participation in Planning' that called for public engagement in the regeneration of the area where members of Graft On! were living. As squatters they knew that these plans would affect their insecure living situation. The Council put out circulars and placed notices in local newspapers inviting the public to meet and contribute to the future planning of the neighbourhood. Hall and Hopkins, along with a number of other squatters, took a video camera to a meeting on what was called the 'road network and environmental area scheme' which, according to Hall 'was a conspiracy to put main roads near estates in working class areas and to fence off and ban traffic in upper middle class enclaves... it was social engineering, trying to creep under the radar in the guise of "participation."' ²⁴⁹

The producers were also the subjects seeking representation, which meant they were able to take advantage of the footage they recorded in a responsive way. After videoing these meetings, the results were then shared with other interested parties including squatters and trade unions. Making use of their position as insiders and

²⁴⁸ Interview with Sue Hall, carried out by Ed Webb-Ingall, London, July, 2015 unpublished

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

utilising videos' portability and capacity for instant playback, they were then able to screen the recordings at other meetings with councillors, where Hall recalls people shouting angrily at one another as they witnessed their colleagues describing the new planning propositions. But when the council ended up building virtually the entire road network that they had proposed, Hall realised that it would not recognise the residents' rights. As she recalls, 'the policy didn't take any notice of what we were doing... we had to follow them, not them us.'²⁵⁰ This led her to establish the first association of residents squatting or living in short-term housing and to produce a video explaining how people living in similar housing conditions might do the same.

The resulting 13-minute video *Forming a Resident's Association* (1974) was then circulated as 'an instructional/ educational tape... hired by local groups in other parts of the country.'²⁵¹ It documents a meeting held by Hall, Hopkins and other residents, at which they attempt to formalize their loose group into a collective organisation, recognizable enough to the council to be taken seriously.

Forming a Resident's Association illustrates the processes a community video maker positioned as an insider might use in their implementation of portable video recording technology. Video makers positioned as insiders use video in a way that is sensitive to the needs of the group that they themselves are part of, with the capacity to develop methods that achieve results for specific situations, able to engage participants as collaborators. The nature of this relationship informs the production processes the video makers choose to use. The community it seeks to involve is located in front of and behind the camera and their experiences motivate the methodology, which

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ 'Fantasy Factory List of completed video productions 1969-1979,' Accessed at Central St Martins Study Collection, London, February, 2015

unfolds and shifts according to their needs and in a language appropriate to their experiences.

Point one from the report *Video in Community Development* described the use of video in the 1970s by insider groups and point two from the report describes the use of video for projects ‘originated by an outsider, for the purposes of... research activity within the community.’ This ‘outsider’ approach refers to the use of video by an outside organisation to activate the inhabitants of a community group through their involvement in making and viewing a video project. This term best describes the contemporary community video project I initiated. To understand and reactivate the methods used for this approach I draw on the following projects, both of which are films about the application of this new medium for community activism. First, I look at the work of community film and video group Liberation Films, who made *Starting to Happen* (1974). This documentary explains the first-hand use of video cameras by community groups to ‘arouse and involve the people of South London’ in community action. Second, I look at the film and video project, *Inter-Action Media Van* (1974), made by Inter-Action. This shows how a neighbourhood in Newcastle were invited to make use of a mobile resource with mixed media facilities to publicise local issues and events and entertain and educate young children.

Before I go into more detail about the specific processes adopted by outsiders initiating community video projects, it is important to recognise the way in which the roles of insider and outsider exist on a sliding scale; as a project develops this can form what I describe as a ‘hybrid’ approach. In her book *Artists and People* (1980), community artist Su Braden suggests that an element of interchange between these

two positions is necessary for a project to be effective. She claims that ideally the practitioner working with a community group should spend enough time within that community to establish ‘fluidity and relevance’²⁵² and for a reciprocal exchange to take place.

The ‘Hybrid’ Approach:

One example of this reciprocal position can be seen in the work of Carry Gorney, a member of Inter-Action who, in 1978, collaborated with a number of women from Milton Keynes in order to develop a community video project. Together, they produced *Things That Mother Told Us* for Channel 40, the local cable television network in Milton Keynes.

Gorney had a background in theatre, community arts and outreach work. She was invited by the Milton Keynes Development corporation arts officer to initiate a project using the arts to animate and create an identity in the new town. At that time, Milton Keynes consisted of a few newly built housing estates in the middle of the Buckinghamshire countryside, 50 miles north of London. Gorney’s first project in Milton Keynes was with teenagers under the age of sixteen. This project was called *Sweet Sixteen* and it was through this work that she came into contact with the wider community of Milton Keynes. Gorney explained in an interview in 2017:

We got the kids who were under 16 to interview anybody who was over 16 on their memories of what it was like to be 16: the music, the clothes, the boyfriends, the arguing with your parents. And it just took off. And that was when I started working with the Milton Keynes cable TV community cable

²⁵² Braden, Su. *Artists and People*. London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1978 p.178

TV channel 40. And they...and we worked together. And the most interesting part of *Sweet 16* was we sat in people's houses in their living rooms, and there was somebody, the person whose house it was would invite a cross-section of people on the street to come in.²⁵³

Following this project, Gorney became interested in working with several of the mothers of the teenagers and began to investigate the potential of community video workshops as a means to bring them together at a time when they were potentially most isolated. They had moved to Milton Keynes from other towns and cities and felt trapped in their homes, alienated by the unfamiliar and unfinished design of the housing and the town itself.

Gorney's project emphasised discussion and collaboration, and the needs of the participants formed its focus. She drew on the methods used by feminist consciousness raising groups of the 1970s, who, through sharing their experiences, set out to 'make the personal political'. Using strategies antithetical to traditional hierarchies of organization and discussion, participants would meet regularly, usually once a week, often in the home of one of the members and form affinity groups with shared outlooks. There was no formal leader and the discussion tended to be structured by going around the room, each woman taking turns to talk about a specific theme, speaking from her own experience. These personal accounts became the basis for group discussion and analysis, determining the subject matter covered in the videos, which included childcare, education, socializing and personal relationships.

As was common in other 'hybrid' community video projects, Gorney functioned as mediator between the 'outside' institution, Channel 40, and the 'inside' group of

²⁵³ Transcript of interview with Carry Gorney 2017, www.the-lcva.co.uk, accessed, August 2017

women. As a community video practitioner, she was able to understand and interpret the needs of Channel 40 and as a working class woman, with children of her own, she was able to engage responsively with the women of Milton Keynes. Gorney's position is indicative of the slippage between insider and outsider, as she became accountable to both the constituency with which she was working and also to herself as a woman. This complex relationship, with multiple levels of accountability, makes itself manifest in what is not shown as much as what is. As a group who were relatively invisible and under represented, the women had to ask themselves: How do we want to be seen and represented? What do we leave in and what do we take out?

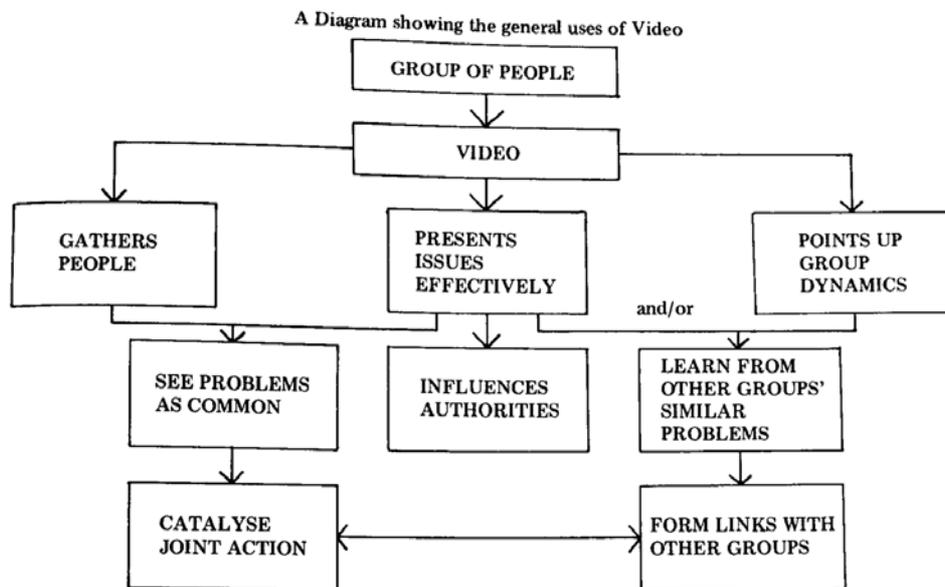
Techniques specific to community video allowed the women to work against the relative passivity usually imposed on the subjects of media representation and instead make evident on screen their control over that representation. Gorney sought to avoid or disrupt the traditional consent or surrender of the subject that was common in documentaries and news footage. She did this by focusing on the participants' control of their image, using strategies that emphasised collaboration and evidenced self-authorship. Much of the programming is made up of footage of discussions. We see the group asking questions, sharing their common experiences and offering advice to one another. In the video, there is no single leader and the formation of the group is circular, allowing each participant equal access and space.

Things That Mother Never Told Us provides an example of the processes that can be used when the initiator of a community video project slips between the positions of insider and outsider. This allows for the initiator to become a facilitator, mediating the relationship between the participants and their intended audience and marshalling

their understanding and use of the portable video recording technology for collective aims. An understanding of the benefits of this hybrid position influenced the way I adapted and translated the methods used by outsider community video practitioners in the 1970s. I did this in order to develop a contemporary community video project and argue for the continued efficacy of the production processes related to it. As I explore further in section two, this approach continued to create a space to represent difference, develop shared experiences and build solidarity.

The ‘Outsider’ Approach:

A number of publications and videos produced in the 1970s illustrate approaches to the use of video with community groups that offer general descriptions of how to initiate outsider projects. At the same time, they refer to the social context of the project and the experiences of the group involved. One such publication, *Basic Video in Community Work* (1975) by Inter-Action, uses the following diagram to suggest the way in which a video project might be initiated and structured in response to its context and points out the potential actions and reactions of the community involved in its production.



(Figure 05: Taken from *Basic Video in Community Work*²⁵⁴)

This diagram is useful as a provocation or starting point for thinking about how one might use video to initiate a community video project as an outsider, but ignores the complicated and complex reality of working with a group of individuals. In order to address this, the pamphlet goes on to describe a number of different projects, their contexts and the intentions of the groups involved. The specificity of these case studies provide useful points of reflection on the efficacy of particular approaches to the different methods and means of initiating a community video project, while highlighting the ways in which the methods taken up are dependent on the circumstances in which the projects take place and the subject of the videos themselves.

²⁵⁴ Biren, Andi. *Basic Video in Community Work*. London: Inter-Action Advisory Service, 1975

A number of the primary sources produced by, for and about community video projects in the 1970s suggest that the processes used to develop these projects share a number of components. These included the way a project is structured, the role of a mediator based in the community or neighbourhood where the project is to take place, the role of playback and the way video recording technology is introduced to a group. The following analysis of these primary sources provides a means of understanding the methods that were used in the 1970s by outsider community video practitioners, and proposes a framework to develop a contemporary community video project.

Invited into a Community:

The first guide that was published on community video practices in the UK was primarily based on projects that were developed in North America, the influence of which I have already described in the previous section. This early publication was called *Video in Community Development* and was written by members of the Centre for Advanced Television Studies including Jon ‘Hoppy’ Hopkins. It was published in 1972 as part of a research report jointly commissioned by Southampton University (who approached Hopkins to carry out research about the use of new video technology in New York and Montreal) and the Home Office Community Development Project.²⁵⁵ It claimed to be ‘the first book about this new movement published anywhere in the world.’²⁵⁶ The projects it covered differed from those that were being initiated in the UK as many of them benefited from state funding, made use of established cable television networks and had the advantage of prolonged

²⁵⁵ In 1973, this publication was revised and republished by the Centre for Advanced TV Studies (CATV) as issue one of their Journal with a print run of 1000 copies and made available for public purchase.

²⁵⁶ Hopkins, John, Cliff Evans, Steve Herman, and John Kirk. *Video in Community Development*. London: Centre for Advanced Television Studies, 1972, back cover

access to newly available portable video recording technology. The publication summarises the findings of video work that had already taken place across the Atlantic and proposes that ‘one of the most exciting new movements for anyone concerned with social change or visual media is the application of video in community development.’²⁵⁷

Video in Community Development focuses on work in North America and Australia to explain these processes to community video practitioners in the UK. It includes case studies on projects in New York by activist group Raindance, Canadian initiatives that were part of the hugely influential Challenge for Change Programme and excerpted articles from the *Radical Software Journal*.²⁵⁸ Combining practical and technical advice on portable video technology, it became a resource with which practitioners in the UK could begin to conceptualise their work in a broader international context. The publication illustrates the ways in which community video practices were understood and framed at the point of their inception. However, as it was published so early in the community video movement, it offers minimal practical information or descriptions of how community video projects were initiated at the time in the UK. It summarises its understanding of the use of video in community development under the headings of ‘community relationships’ and ‘personal relationships’. In regard to the former, the publication suggests that, where possible, facilitators should ‘establish neutrality from different factions’ and wait until they are invited in before proposing a plan of action, making sure that they ‘facilitate rather than direct the course of debate and the

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Launched in 1970 in New York, *Radical Software* was the first publication dedicated to the exploration of the application of low-gauge video technology.

selection of issues.’²⁵⁹ Here the aim of neutrality ignores the influence of the facilitator, which will always affect a project.

The need to be invited into a community and to focus on the facilitation of possible ideas rather than directing the project itself continued as a guiding principal for community video practitioners throughout the 1970s. In her book *Artists and People* (1980, Su Braden), Su Braden draws attention to the importance of the facilitator of a community video project being introduced by a mediator or interlocutor located within the community they wish to work within. Together they can then be responsible for the ‘formulation of the idea...and management of the scheme.’²⁶⁰ Reflecting on a decade of experience of working as an artist in communities, Braden stresses the importance of sharing aims for a project from the beginning: ‘Proposals should include ways of independently evaluating each scheme, and this implies that there should be some definition of objectives from the outset.’²⁶¹ *Video in Community Development* makes similar arguments in a section titled ‘Project Requirements’.²⁶² It proposes that when setting up a community video project the objectives should prioritise communication processes from within the community and not the needs of outside researchers. It stresses the need for flexibility and the determination of a project’s form be dictated by the community.²⁶³ Tony Dowmunt’s *Video with Young People* (1980) claims that the production of a video might be the aim of a project, but that ‘any pictures or programmes recorded may simply be the stimulus for a far more

²⁵⁹ Hopkins, John, Cliff Evans, Steve Herman, and John Kirk. *Video in Community Development*. London: Centre for Advanced Television Studies, 1972 p.113

²⁶⁰ Braden, Su. *Artists and People*. London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1978, p.119

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.119

²⁶² Hopkins, John, Cliff Evans, Steve Herman, and John Kirk. *Video in Community Development*. London: Centre for Advanced Television Studies, 1972, p.113

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

important process – the involvement of people together in analysis and expression.’²⁶⁴

As the decade progressed, more community video projects were carried out, and these provided examples of the way in which this new technology could be used to encourage or enable local activism. They also provide practical guidance, which I adapted to develop a contemporary community video project.

The Structure of a Community Video Project:

In 1975, Inter-Action published a pamphlet called *Basic Video in Community Work*, identifying nine ways video was being used in community contexts:

1. As an information tool
2. As a ‘trigger tape’
3. As a way of getting people to meetings
4. As a way of showing common problems and concerns
5. As a way of illustrating other successful actions
6. As a new form of presenting information to authorities
7. As a way of examining the development of the group
8. As entertainment
9. As a closed-circuit facility in the market or shop front.²⁶⁵

Much of the pamphlet focuses on explaining how to use newly available portable video technology in order to frame shots and record sound effectively, how to edit and trouble-shoot technical faults as well as how to raise funds. Largely a practical guide, with a focus on technical processes, it goes further than *Video in Community Development* to draw on community video projects initiated in London since the arrival of portable video technology in the early 1970s. In doing so, this publication serves as an illustration of the myriad ways portable video-recording technology was being taken up in order to engage a community in an act of self-representation and

²⁶⁴ Dowmunt, Tony, and Ed Berman. Taken from foreword by Ed Berman *Video with Young People*. London: Inter-Action Inprint, 1980, p.VII

²⁶⁵ Biren, Andi. *Basic Video in Community Work*. London: Inter-Action Advisory Service, 1975 p.20

self-reflection. It proposes that video can be used to ‘stimulate an interest in the needs and issues in a given neighbourhood, and then assist residents in articulating their thoughts, developing ways of solving problems, presenting new ideas and providing support for on-going community organisations.’²⁶⁶

Basic Video in Community Work also draws on a number of community projects to explain where the use of video might ‘fail’. This is particularly useful when planning a process of contemporary reactivation, as it provides a sense of what one should try to avoid. These suggestions include avoiding the ‘indiscriminate use’ of video, when, for example, a poster or newsletter might be more appropriate. It also proposes that participants should be involved in clearly defining the project’s objectives, maintaining realistic expectations: ‘too many projects fail because the wider context of the work has not been thought out or because the pre-planning has been inadequate.’²⁶⁷ There are also a number of warnings about having the right equipment, resources and funding to complete a project. These suggestions make clear the importance of transparency when planning a video project. The facilitator must be able to explain to the group what is achievable within the designated time frame and budget and with the technology available.

One section of this publication, entitled ‘Running a video project’, provides more detailed instruction on how one might begin to avoid or address these problems when initiating a community video project as an outsider:

Find out all you can about your neighbourhood... define your objectives carefully and quite precisely. What sort of work do you want to do?...What groups do you want to work with?...publicise your existence. Give talks, have

²⁶⁶ Biren, Andi. *Basic Video in Community Work*. London: Inter-Action Advisory Service, 1975 p.2

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.2

posters and other publicity material printed and most important of all meet the groups you want to work with.²⁶⁸

This section then proposes six techniques to organise the components of a video.

These include the following: live unscripted pictures, live scripted shots, scripted fictional shots, film, slides or still photographs, cartoons, animations and a recording of a TV programme taken from broadcast television.²⁶⁹ For the purpose of my contemporary community video project, I focussed on ‘live unscripted pictures and live scripted shots’²⁷⁰ as these are most clearly aligned with the approaches of the majority of community video projects initiated in the 1970s.

It was not until 1980, eleven years after the first known use of video in the context of community work, that a publication was produced that was able to reflect on how to structure a community video project as an outsider. Written by community video maker Tony Downunt, *Video with Young People* (1980, Tony Downunt) is composed of photographs, diagrams and descriptions of camera exercises that draw on Downunt’s experience with a variety of groups. Although the title of publication suggests it is aimed at projects with ‘young people’ many of the suggestions are directly translatable to working with other age groups. Video is presented as a tool for ‘anyone to produce immediate results that look like TV pictures.’²⁷¹ It goes on to warn that ‘its very simplicity with the great expectations that have been trumpeted for it have meant video is in danger of becoming the wonder drug of community and

²⁶⁸ Biren, Andi. *Basic Video in Community Work*. London: Inter-Action Advisory Service, 1975, p.20

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.20

²⁷⁰ I understand ‘live unscripted pictures’ to take the form of observational, unplanned footage and ‘live scripted shots’ to take the form of storyboarded or directed footage, carried out by participants of the project, where the form is known, but the action is unknown.

²⁷¹ Downunt, Tony, and Ed Berman. Taken from foreword by Ed Berman *Video with Young People*. London: Inter-Action Inprint, 1980, p.V

youth work. Today's wonder-drug is tomorrow's pedestrian pill.'²⁷² One suggestion to counter this potential apathy is to prioritise the development of a structure that is sensitive to the needs and experiences of the participants and flexible enough to change as a project develops.

Dowmunt's book is structured around a set of questions that frame the different stages of a project. It starts with the preparation and introduction of the video equipment, followed by the collective development of ideas and concludes with descriptions of the use of video by specific groups, drawing attention to the contingent nature of community video projects and ways to engage participants in the production of different kinds of project. In a section on using video as a tool in 'community work' it makes clear that it is important that the identity and experiences of the participants dictate the structure of a project.

I think it's worth saying that communities tend to be more fragmented than the word 'community' implies. Just because people live in the same area doesn't mean that they share, or can be encouraged to share, the same interests. They're equally likely to be divided in ways that it's important to recognise – by age, race, sex or class for example. A great deal of thought needs to go into the planning of working with the community [...] They are likely to get most out of working on something that closely reflects their own interest and their own place within the community.²⁷³

If the processes of production are made clear and translatable then the group will have the confidence to shape the way in which the project might benefit or address their individual and collective intentions. When preparing a project, the group are encouraged to collectively consider why they might use video over another medium, enabling their involvement in deciding how and why they might like to use it. Once these points are discussed with a group, it is advised that a 'contract' of sorts is drawn

²⁷² Ibid., p.VII

²⁷³ Ibid., p.40

up between the group in order to set out and share the intentions and limits of a given project. The contract should include how long a project will last, how regularly the group will meet, how they will make decisions, how they will agree to use and access the equipment and how they will share any finished videos.

Once the community video practitioner has been invited to work within a community, and the outcomes and objectives have been agreed upon by the participants, with enough flexibility to adapt as the project develops, the next step is to facilitate the active engagement of the participants in the production of a video. As will be evidenced by the work of community film and video group Liberation Films, this was encouraged through the various functions of playback, including the ‘discussion-screening’.

Playback and Discussion Screenings:

Video can fail if there has been no thought given as to how it is going to be shown to people. What is the point of making a tape if there is no local gathering place where people can see it?²⁷⁴

Starting to Happen (1974) is a documentary produced by the community film and video group Liberation Films as part of Project Octopus. It was made with a community action group based in Balham, South London. I described the origination of this project in the previous chapter and the emphasis placed on the discussion-screening format. Project Octopus and the documentary it produced, adopt a linear structure to present the stages a community might go through when using portable video recorders to shoot, edit and screen a video by, for and about a local issue. The

²⁷⁴ Biren, Andi. *Basic Video in Community Work*. London: Inter-Action Advisory Service, 1975 p.5

structure of this project is particularly informative when planning the reactivation of 1970s community video processes in a contemporary context.

The following breakdown of the approach taken up by Liberation Films is made up of information collated from the Liberation Films Distribution Catalogue (1981) and interviews I carried out with two members of Liberation Films, Tony Wickert and Ron Orders. First the group recorded a 'trigger film' on 16mm. This was made following initial contact with a community group who were enthusiastic about participating in a community video project. Members of Liberation Films then visited the community and recorded a short film about the area, in which they interviewed local residents about their attitudes to living there and their response to local community activities. Second, Liberation Films organized a 'community film show' in which the newly recorded film was shown as the last part of a screening of films about other London communities. The event, which was held in a local hall, library or social space was publicised widely in the area. Following the screening, group discussions were facilitated by members of Liberation Films, providing an opportunity for people to talk about themselves and the place where they live. The trigger film provided a shared focal point. Third, the project team encouraged the local people to use the video cameras to interview each other following the trigger film. Those who were most enthusiastic were then invited to make their own videotapes about their community. Fourth, this newly formed group, who were interested in learning about the technology, then met with the community video team and were trained in the basic use of the portable video recording technology. The objectives of the group were discussed and agreed upon. The emphasis was on fun and experimentation rather than technical skills. Simple exercises, such as voxpop

interviews in the neighbourhood, were carried out in order to gather ideas and explore issues. Members of Liberation Films played the part of consultants and facilitators, providing support and guidance but letting the group lead. Fifth, the group met up on several occasions to view and assess the video material they had recorded. Together with the Liberation Films team, they decided how to edit and structure the final video. They also agreed on a date and format for presenting the finished video to the community. Sixth, a screening event was advertised with posters and flyers throughout the neighbourhood inviting the community to watch the newly made video and be part of a discussion. TV monitors were used for small group discussions and equal emphasis was given to entertainment and lively debate. Seventh, a compilation of film material recorded by Liberation Films and videotape shot by participants was then made.²⁷⁵ This film was both a document of the process and was made available to other community groups primarily as a source of inspiration for further activity and potential community engagement. For the eighth and final stage, the original community group were encouraged to take the compilation film to other communities and set up community film shows there – so that the original film could now operate as a trigger film.

Starting to Happen and the work of Liberation Films illustrates the complex position an ‘outsider’ videomaker occupies and the importance of beginning a project with a clear structure and intent, while keeping it open enough to adapt and change according to feedback and suggestions provided by the participants. This is in order

²⁷⁵ The difference between the footage recorded on these two mediums illustrates the formal characteristics specific to the implementation of each, with film being used by the outsiders and video by the insiders. Where film is used by the Liberation Films crew in order to document the process and offer instruction, signifying distance and authority, video is used by the community groups in order to carry out interviews with one another and document relevant events in their daily lives. In contrast to the film elements, the grainy video footage appears closer to the action and evokes a feeling of familiarity and informality.

for them to consider the process of making a video to construct and reflect on their role and position in their community.

The processes developed during Project Octopus highlight the important function of playback at each stage of a project in order for participants to see and hear themselves on screen and develop ideas collectively. The publication *Video in Community Development* further emphasises the role of playback by proposing that facilitators should make it possible for the participants to view all of the footage that has been recorded, as soon as possible after it has been shot and ideally before editing. This meant participants could choose to erase any parts they considered unacceptable and the facilitator was able to illustrate and explain how the video will be used once it is edited and finally to 'show adequately how the uses of the videotape will, or can be, beneficial to themselves and other people like themselves.'²⁷⁶

These primary sources have so far evidenced the need for a clear structure with collectively developed objectives, the importance of being invited into a community and being facilitated by a particular person or group and the function of playback and discussion screenings throughout a project. Each of the sources also alludes to the particular way the video recording technology should be introduced to the community group. To address this, I turn my focus back to the publication *Video in Community Development* and the work of Inter-Action.

²⁷⁶ Hopkins, John, Cliff Evans, Steve Herman, and John Kirk. *Video in Community Development*. London: Centre for Advanced Television Studies, 1972, p.111

The Introduction of Portable Video Recording Technology:

Video in Community Development stresses that when introducing video recording equipment to a group for the first time the facilitator must be aware of the impact, manage the expectations of the participants and ensure time is allocated for playback and training:

- 1) Consider very carefully the first moves you make with video. At its introduction it has the added strength of fascination, and careless use at this point could easily destroy what confidence has been built up already
- 2) Arrange properly publicised playback sessions from time to time open to the whole community
- 3) Prepare to train members of the community in the use of video should anyone be interested ²⁷⁷

Inter-Action Media Van (1974, Inter-Action) was made under similar auspices to *Starting to Happen*, but over a shorter period of time. It provides an example of the ideals set out above for introducing video equipment to a community group. Made by Inter-Action, it describes how a neighbourhood in Newcastle was invited to consider how portable video technology could be used by ‘a tenants association and youngsters in a park’ to engage people from different backgrounds in the production of a video about the issues facing their neighbourhood. It is particularly useful when considering how one might address the suggestions made above in *Video in Community Development*.

In the opening scene of *Inter-Action Media Van*, the introduction of the video recording technology and the chance to see and hear oneself played back on what looks like a television are enough to get the local community involved. The use of a closed circuit camera attached to the van encourages those members of the

²⁷⁷ Ibid., p.113

community passing by to take part in a game. Using a closed circuit, a camera fixed to the outside of the van is used to directly transmit video onto television screens attached to the side of the van. Participants are able to see themselves as one large group and then, as the camera pans and zooms in, as individuals that wave and gesticulate back at the camera. Regardless of their age, they appear like young children seeing themselves in a mirror for the first time.

Once this introductory game has drawn a large enough crowd of interested participants, they are then divided into three small groups. One group arranges themselves in a circle to receive camera training and we see and hear the Inter-Action facilitator say: 'let's all just sit around in a circle and see how this works shall we? I want an agreement between us that if I say how to use it, you will all use it properly... this is a video portapak...' We see this man handing the camera over to the children, who are aged ten or eleven, and showing them how to use the zoom and the record buttons. The group very quickly begins using it themselves and the man disappears from shot. He has begun holding the camera, then become an instructor on how to use the camera and finally finishes as a voice from behind the camera. The young people pass the camera around in order to teach one another, the facilitator disappears all together and the voice of the young participants replaces the facilitator's voice from behind the camera.

We are shown a second group of young people also seated in a circle making lists on large sheets of paper. They are collectively suggesting themes for a possible video, with prompts from the facilitator. The third group is invited to draw up a storyboard

in the style of a comic strip so that they can plan the order and content of the shots they will later record on video.

The action is centred on rapid learning through play and experimentation with the technology, with minimal direct instruction from the facilitators. Instead, their focus is on creating a space where participants learn about and try out the various features of video cameras together. The video ends with the groups watching back the footage they have recorded and then discussing how they, as a neighbourhood, might use the technology in the future.

Two key approaches from this video inform the processes I use to initiate contemporary community video projects. These are firstly the clear explanation of the technology; a similar process is also shown in *Starting to Happen*, during stage three of Project Octopus. This is always framed in relation to how participants might like to use it. For example, members of Inter-Action showed the tenants association how to produce a video about issues affecting them and subsequently screen it at meetings to get attention from councillors. They also invite the young people to devise and record a short narrative adventure story. The second approach is the sharing of authority through discussion games and learning from one another.

One section in the publication *Video With Young People* that explains how to introduce video to a group is particularly applicable to the process of adaptation and reactivation that I carry out. It warns that when introducing a video camera to a group there is the risk of making participants self-conscious and withdrawn, due to a lack of prior experience or fear of being videoed. This section of the book stresses the

importance of building trust and confidence between a group through sharing the technology and developing games that allow the group to choose how they might use and engage with the video camera. The process of introducing the camera to a group involves finding ways to playfully and inclusively familiarise the participants with the capabilities of the technology and how to use it. This includes showing participants how to hold the camera and make it record and stop recording, how to zoom and focus and how to record sound and how to see themselves through the creation of a closed circuit feedback loop.

These primary sources illustrate the elements that community video projects initiated by outsiders share. These include the role of a mediator based in the community or neighbourhood where the project is to take place, the structure and objectives of a project reflecting the needs and experiences of the participants, the function of playback to encourage discussion and the way video recording technology is introduced to a group. Learning from each of these, I developed a contemporary community video project that reactivates these processes in order to consider their potential efficacy in a contemporary context.

The Context of the Project:

Those community video practitioners who identify as insiders or those projects initiated by someone who occupies the insider/outsider hybrid role are able to construct a methodology that is sympathetic and responsive. This is evidenced in the processes used by Graft On!, who were able to recognise the immediate needs of the

group they were documenting and respond in a language that is accepted, understood and effective.

A facilitator initiating a project as an outsider, who is new to the context, might find such a responsive approach difficult to replicate. Because of this contingency, the videos, publications and projects I have referred to attempt to balance their aim of proposing structures and approaches to developing a community video project, while also stressing that these approaches vary with the context in which the project is taking place and the experiences and intentions of the participants. In the conclusion to her book, *Artists and People*, Su Braden makes clear the need for a dialogical exchange between the facilitator and the participants: 'all the examples in this report stress the need for commitment to context to be linked with a long term view of the work in the real life times of people living in such communities... so that the initiatives come from the communities themselves.'²⁷⁸

All of these resources stress that the ultimate goal is for the participants to become fluent and confident enough to take up the means of production themselves and become insider community video producers. Because of this, it is important to understand how to develop fluidity between the roles of the participants and the role of the outside initiator. The small book *Street Video*, published in 1980, proposes that community video processes are defined by a move 'away from the old division of teacher and taught to the more progressive ideas of people like Paulo Freire who believe that everyone should be a teacher and everyone a student.'²⁷⁹ The author, Graham Wade, goes on to suggest that the context for community video practices in

²⁷⁸ Braden, Su. *Artists and People*. London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1978, p.175

²⁷⁹ Wade, Graham. *Street Video*. Leicester: Blackthorn, 1980 p. 85

the 1970s was a ‘strong anti-authoritarianism – that people should no longer be led by superior leaders, but should collectively learn and discover with each other.’²⁸⁰ Carry

Gorney also mentions the influence of the work of the radical Brazilian educator

Paulo Freire:

If you look at his stuff, he’s talking all the time about creating structures and creating situations where you can have a dialogic relationship with people and the community.²⁸¹

Paulo Freire’s key text *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was translated from Portuguese to English in 1970, after which it had a major influence on the transmission of information and education by, for and about groups working to recognise and overcome their oppression. To analyse the roots of oppression, Freire drew on his experience of the conditions he found amongst the oppressed people in Brazil, where he was from. He framed this in relation to philosophy, politics and pedagogical theory, which was based on the concept of the freedom for all to be critical: ‘a pedagogy which must be forged *with*, not *for*, the oppressed.’²⁸² Freire developed methods that engaged the oppressed in a process of critical thinking and educating themselves through a reflexive exchange between the teacher and the student. Freire used the term ‘conscientização’²⁸³ to explain his methodology. This was similar to the consciousness raising techniques used by Carry Gorney and the women of Milton Keynes.

The term conscientização refers to learning to perceive social, political and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality.²⁸⁴

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Interview with Carry Gorney, carried out by Ed Webb-Ingall, London, January 2015 unpublished

²⁸² Paulo, Freire. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Penguin, 1993 p.30

²⁸³ Ibid., p.17

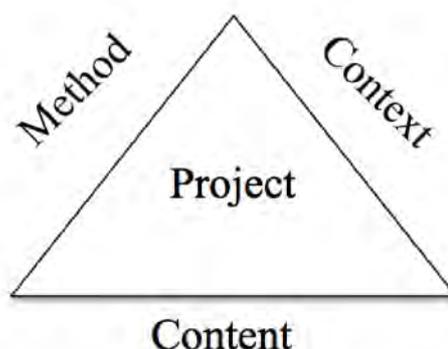
²⁸⁴ Ibid.

As with other proponents of radical pedagogy, Freire's efforts were never confined to theoretical discussions, and commanded a direct relation to practice. As such, his work appealed to community video practitioners who sought a theoretical framework to further develop the way they initiated projects, in relation to social agency, voice and democratic participation.

Following conversations with a number of community video practitioners who cite the influence of radical pedagogy, and in particular the work of Freire,²⁸⁵ I would argue that the production methods taken up to initiate community video projects were contingent on three elements, which were also crucial to projects of radical pedagogy, these are what I refer to as 'method', 'context' and 'content'. As a result of this contingency and in order to reflect the critical position of the community video practices taken up in the 1970s, the methodology I develop translates the processes evidenced in the videos and books I have described. Consequently I am able to consider them in relation to each of these three elements. To avoid not just replicating the processes used by community video practitioners from the 1970s, but to reactivate their spirit, I apply each of these terms in the following way: the **methods** I use are adapted in relation to the **context** I am working in, in order to reflect the specific **content** of the video.

²⁸⁵ Andy Porter and Tony Downmunt also mention the influence of Freire in interviews that can be found in their interview transcripts at www.the-lcva.co.uk

(Figure 06: Diagram of the contingent relationship between method, context and content)



Based on the identification of the practical methods that underpinned community video processes in the 1970s, I have produced a list of ‘instructions’ to explain how one might initiate and facilitate a community video project (Figure 07 in appendix). The list is not intended as a suggestion of best practice or an attempt to smooth over the complications and different approaches to facilitating community video projects but as a provocation. I see it as a work in progress, like the archival materials and historical processes I have borrow from, to be constantly (re)negotiated, annotated and amended. The list is a trigger and an invitation to share ideas and demystify processes and practices, the start of a conversation, with the suggestion that it can only ‘work’ when in a process of modification. As such, I have published and circulated versions²⁸⁶ of the list that have been annotated by my peers (Figures 08 and 09 in appendix). The versions of the list that have been produced subsequently operate as evidence of the conversations and exchanges that have taken place since its inception; the annotated form suggests a dialogue rather than a fixed position,

²⁸⁶ Webb-Ingall, Edward. ‘Drawing Lines across History: Reactivation and Annotation.’ [Http://www.biennial.com/](http://www.biennial.com/), www.biennial.com/journal/issue-5/pdf/drawing-lines-across-history-reactivation-and-annotation. Accessed April, 2017

something which is constantly in motion and reflective of the context in which it is employed.

As well as the production of this list, I have produced the following set of recommendations, which I take up in the following section. An 'outsider' community video practitioner should always:

... be invited into a neighbourhood/group by an inhabitant or member of that neighbourhood/group.

... organise a screening of community video work that explains and illustrates what kind of project might be possible if that neighbourhood/group uses video recording technology.

... spend time with the neighbourhood/group developing and agreeing on a set of objectives and a structure for a video project based on the needs and experiences of the participants.

... introduce the video recording equipment in a fun and playful way that puts the participants in control of the camera and the footage on their own terms.

... encourage the neighbourhood/group to watch back the footage they recorded together in order to understand what they can do with the technology and develop a video project together.

... support the neighbourhood/group to produce a more focused video project with an audience and aim in mind.

... arrange a screening of this video followed by a discussion about the video project.

... agree to leave or step back and encourage the participants to carry on producing their own video project.

Section Two: Reactivation of Techniques and Practices of 1970s Community Video in a Contemporary Context

Chapter One: People Make Videos

This section takes as its focus the outcomes of a contemporary community video project that I ran between 2014 and 2016 under the title People Make Videos (PMV). The project was a response to an invitation to propose a socially engaged project, commissioned by The Showroom, a non-profit gallery in North London. Based on my understanding of community video practices in the 1970s, as described in the previous chapter, it provides a case study for the way these practices remain useful and distinctive in developing non-fiction video projects with groups. I begin by presenting an outline of the project I initiated and a description of the outcomes that my analysis of this case study draws on. I then explain the significance of each of the following elements when initiating a community video project: the duration of a project, the way video practitioners begin working with a community, the role of the ‘trigger film’ and finally the way a video camera is first introduced to a community group.

Background for Case Study:

People Make Videos was part of The Showroom’s continuing programme of socially engaged, collaborative projects with artists, called ‘Communal Knowledge’. Its aims and objectives share many commonalities with those of the community video projects from the 1970s. These include a focus on process and its demystification, an awareness of the potential for artistic production to effect personal and political change, as well as an emphasis on long-term projects in order to sustain careful

relationships with participants, often with the intention for them to become producers.²⁸⁷

Outline of Project:

The process I carried out was made up of two stages. The first six months functioned as a pilot stage. I spent time investigating the neighbourhood where the gallery was based and facilitated short video-making exercises and projects with a number of groups of residents from the neighbourhood. A public screening and evaluation followed this stage in order to plan what we might do next. The second stage took place over the following year with a focus on the production of self-organised video projects. As described in the methodology section, this project was organised according to how I understand community video projects that were developed in the 1970s. As well as establishing a better understanding of 1970s community video practices, my aim was to understand whether they remain useful and distinctive as approaches to develop non-fiction video projects with groups in the current moment.

Outcomes:

The open-ended nature of the community video practices I adapted and reactivated meant that I was unable to know in advance the outcomes to be generated. Following the completion of the People Make Videos project, I have been able to draw on these

²⁸⁷ Communal Knowledge is: ‘a programme of collaborative projects where artists and designers are invited to work with community groups, organisations, schools and individuals from The Showroom’s neighbourhood... Much of the emphasis is on finding ways to re-think or ‘unlearn’ established norms, values, codes, roles and relations, to create visibility, and to produce an alternative body of knowledge gained through communal activity and experience... Trust and a conscious awareness of process and the impact a project can have beyond its existence, are key to our way of working. Some groups and individuals are now starting to get involved in projects within our broader programme, or in some cases are taking on a more proactive role within artistic productions’
<http://www.theshowroom.org/programmes/communal-knowledge>, Accessed September 2017

outcomes: workshop plans developed by me, ten videos and documents produced during the project (posters, flyers, a manual), and verbal reflections and video feedback from the participants. Together, these elements have enabled me to investigate the way that community video production processes that emerged in the 1970s continue to offer a means for contemporary community groups to construct and reflect on collective forms of social action and develop their own modes of self-representation.

Specific Approach:

It is clear from my analysis of a number of community video projects in the 1970s that the two most common uses of video by community groups, although not mutually exclusive, were to record first-hand the world around them, and secondly to encourage activism through their making and viewing. The approach I took up would best be described as the latter, which I have previously described this as the ‘outsider’ approach. I was invited by The Showroom to initiate a video project with a community based in a specific neighbourhood, one with whom I had no pre-existing relationship. In this section I trace the way this position affected the specific aesthetic and formal qualities of the videos we produced.

First, I describe the translation of the methods used and developed by outsider community video practitioners in the 1970s and the theoretical framework that informed the work they were carrying out in order to initiate a contemporary community video project. These are considered while negotiating the complexities inherent in the role of the ‘outsider’ community video practitioner and the hybrid

relationship between the authors and subjects of community video projects. This process takes into account observations and reflections on these processes made by community video practitioners since the original projects were carried out and considers the significance of the following: the duration of a project, the way that groups are formed, the role of the trigger film and the way video recording technology is introduced.

Duration of a project:

The invitation from The Showroom was to run a project for one to two years. This duration was determined by a combination of funding requirements and the intention of the curator to support long-term, socially engaged projects. The length of time allocated for the production of a community video project impacts on what it is possible for the project to achieve. Based on my understanding of community video projects described previously, in particular the eight-step Project Octopus developed by Liberation Films, it was important for me to establish an objective for my project that would give it structure, while remaining adaptable once participants began taking part. My first objective was to spend six months in one neighbourhood, in order to understand if inhabitants of that neighbourhood might benefit from participating in a community video project, and if so how and why.

This aim is adapted from community video group, West London Media Workshop (WLMW, formerly Community Action Centre, CAC), who introduced newly available portable video recording technology, in a similar way, over six months into a neighbourhood in West London. Founding member Andy Porter describes here how

he first started using newly available portable video cameras to create a focus from which to develop a community video project:

I remember the first leaflets saying *CAC gets video* with a picture of the area with headings saying: information equals power, make tapes, take them down to the town hall, show them at your social club. And at the bottom it said: Our Own Television? It was almost trying to make television a living cultural form for the area. When you think we had one Portapak and an inadequate edit deck that was pretty ambitious. But basically the principle behind it was that the open resource should grow as the community grew, in response to it, and shouldn't be something that's brought in, imposed, and then removed.²⁸⁸

This approach is also in accordance with evaluations and recommendations written by Su Braden, following her experience initiating community arts projects in the 1970s.

Braden suggests that this approach would allow the outside initiator to familiarise themselves with the neighbourhood, develop meaningful relationships and a shared 'vocabulary' with its inhabitants. Braden's research into community arts projects carried out in the 1970s stresses the importance for artists to understand the specific nature of the context in which they are working. This is so the artists are able to adapt and translate their artistic practice and develop a 'vocabulary' together with the community group they are collaborating with. Braden suggests 'artists must move towards the cultural context of those with whom they wish to communicate'²⁸⁹ and goes on to explain that if one is to attempt to explore society creatively then 'whoever you hold a dialogue with you have to understand and accept their language... it's a situation of understanding peoples culture and finding a synthesis.'²⁹⁰

A number of community video practitioners stress the concept of 'access' in relation to projects based in communities. Braden considers it central to the efficacy of a

²⁸⁸ Nigg, Heinz, and Graham Wade. *Community Media: Community Communication in the UK: Video, Local TV, Film, and Photography*. Zürich: Regenbogen-Verlag, 1980, p.41

²⁸⁹ Braden, Su. *Artists and People*. London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1978, p.11

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.163

community arts project: access to the processes of production and access to a vocabulary that enables a nuanced, reflective and critical understanding between the initiator and the participants. Social geographer Gillian Rose defined 'access' historically:

In the early 1970s it was usually understood to mean giving a group of people, who were excluded from the mass media, equipment, basic technical training and assistance so that they could make their own film or radio or television programme, which would then be broadcast.²⁹¹

To encourage such participation, the facilitator must spend long enough within a community to develop this vocabulary together with them, so that everyone involved can recognise the specificity of the local cultural expression. Subsequently, the facilitator can then make available the media most suitable to it. The efficacy of a community video project rests on the relationship between duration and access, and the shifting relationship between the initiator and the participant. This echoes the synthesis of method, context and content that makes up the foundation of radical pedagogical practices described in the theoretical framework. As a consequence, the artist recognises their personal responses and allies them with those of the community they are working with. What remains is something mutually recognisable and understandable: 'It can be *our* culture as opposed to somebody else's culture that we've had imposed on us.'²⁹²

Following the completion of this project I would extend the term 'vocabulary' to refer to a shared language and set of ideals. This is not to encourage homogeneity and erase difference, but to find a means for participants (including myself as the facilitator) to understand one another's different positions. This became clear in the second phase of

²⁹¹ Rose, Gillian. 'The Cultural Politics of Place: Local Representation and Oppositional Discourse in Two Films.' *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 19.1 (1994) p.8

²⁹² Braden, Su. *Artists and People*. London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1978. p.164

the project when the separate groups I began working with were invited to reform as one group, all meeting together.²⁹³

In his book *Video and Young People* (1980), community video practitioner Tony Downum suggests that the initiator of the project could introduce an agreement form that all participants in a project sign up to. So formal an agreement seemed inappropriate in my understanding of the group and my relationship to them. Instead, I proposed a list of guidelines as a provocation for the group to respond to and adapt. I printed the following out on sheets of A4 paper. We then collectively annotated the list in order to form a structure for the second stage of the project.

People Make Videos Draft Intentions:

1. People Make Videos (PMV) is a community video making collective.
2. The conception, production and editing of all videos is a collective endeavour.
3. Following six months spent together it is our intention to work together as one group with a common aim.
4. We are concerned with the urgency of the subjects we address. It is not just about what we would *like* to make a video about, but what we think *needs* a video made about it.

(Figure 10a: Original list of guidelines that was proposed)

This created a means for the participants to contribute to the form and intentions of the project and encourage their agency and ownership as it progressed. It also created an atmosphere of transparency and flexibility. One key criticism of the draft list was the emphasis on collaboration and collectivity; there was a concern among the group that this would result in the production of videos about subjects that didn't address

²⁹³ Following a year spent meeting with the four groups and the production and screening of a video about the process *What Would You Make A Film About?* (2015), at which the groups met one another, we agreed to meet up as one group once a month for a year to continue to work together on community video projects <https://vimeo.com/129413452>

their individual concerns and experiences. We worked through different amendments and adjustments to the draft list. This ensured an individualized experience that included their suggested corrections, and at the same time adhering to the collaborative modes taken up by community video practitioners in the 1970s. These amendments enabled us to develop a shared vocabulary, one not dictated by professionalism or prior assumptions, but by familiarity and use.

People Make Videos Amended Intentions:

1. People Make Videos (PMV) is a community video ~~making collective~~ group.
2. ~~The conception, production and editing of all videos is a collective endeavour.~~ Although we will support one another throughout all stages of production, the ideas, production and editing of all videos will be decided upon individually.
3. Following six months spent together it is our intention to ~~work together as one group with a common aim~~ make one video each. Through doing this we hope to find things we have in common.
4. We are concerned with the urgency of the subjects we address. It is not just about what we would *like* to make a video about, but what we think *needs* a video made about it.

(Figure 10b: Amended list proposed by the participants)

In accordance with the group's concerns, one of these amendments was the development of the 'video relay'. This approach expanded the idea of the trigger film from stage one and used footage recorded by one participant to encourage and inspire another participant in how they might use the camera in response to what they had seen. Participants took the camera for an agreed period of time in order to record footage for their own video project. This footage was then played back at the next meeting for the rest of the group to view and comment on. A different participant would then take the camera and collect footage that responded in some way to the footage they had seen at the meeting. We agreed to repeat this process until everyone in the group had spent some time collecting footage in response to material recorded

by other members of the group. The following is a short description of each of the videos that were made as a result of developing the project together in this way.

Member one recorded footage of birds he sees regularly in Regent's Park, London. He then wrote and recorded a short voiceover about migration and immigration, relating the experience of the birds to the experience of humans migrating to London > Member two walks through Regent's Park on his way to the Job centre and to a gay bar opposite. He decided to combine footage of his experience of these two locations with a voiceover made up of conversations that he had at each location > Member three took the opportunity of having a video camera to record footage of his local neighbourhood and to try and capture the changing landscape and the effect of gentrification > Member four took a similar approach and made a video that traced his walk from the gallery where the workshop took place to the day centre he regularly uses. He recorded a voiceover as he walked > Member five used the video camera to take the viewer on a walk between their home and their place of work, recording all of the different kinds of houses she saw on the walk > Member six collaborated with two other members of the group to record a shopping trip to buy fabric to make a sari.²⁹⁴

Following the development of a shared language and set of intentions we were able to work as a group to contribute to a collective project that did not obscure or ignore the experience of individuals. What became clear from this approach to the collection of footage was that each participant shared an experience of living in the same city. The

²⁹⁴ Each of the videos produced as a result of this exercise makes up the material I will refer to throughout this section. The videos can be viewed on the memory stick provided and at this link: <https://vimeo.com/album/5060800>

videos shared differences and similarities with one another and with the videos produced in the 1970s, both in their content and the approaches they took up. Chapter three of this section expands on the way the experiences and make-up of the participants was made evident in the aesthetics of the videos they produced.

Entering a Community:

At the start of the project, I met with a number of groups who were based in the neighbourhood surrounding the gallery. The curator chose these groups because they had existing relationships with the gallery, having been involved with previous Communal Knowledge projects. In the 1970s, 'outsider' community video practitioners who collaborated with a mediator between themselves and the community of participants appeared to be most successful at producing sustained and sensitive community video projects. For example, the Liberation Films crew were invited to work in a neighbourhood by members of the Balham Action Group, an organisation with existing relationships and an understanding of the community with whom Liberation Films collaborated. This strategy is important in order build and sustain existing relationships and avoid the 'parachute' critique of some community video projects in the 1970s.

'Parachuting' refers to those projects where no previous relationship or shared motivation exists between the initiator of a project and the participants. The implication in these cases is that the participants in the community might benefit from the initiator's expertise in running a project. This is problematic as the initiator assumes a sense of entitlement that they 'know best'. Similarities can be drawn here

to forms of social work or care, particularly when initiated by the state through government or local council initiatives. Often, in these cases the motivation is counter to the original intentions of community video practitioners. The objective instead is to professionalise and pacify individual participants through the group's self-surveillance. Reflecting on state-instituted community video projects, film theorist Janine Marchessault writes: 'The 'authentic' expression of community was made to replicate the instrumental discourses of the state'²⁹⁵ the effect of which was 'to contain and stabilize, as television can do, the potentially explosive effects of difference.'²⁹⁶ Marchessault goes on to suggest that where the state is responsible for the construction and institutionalisation of cultural difference along lines of race, age, class, ability, gender and sexuality, these projects can only ever serve to reinforce ideas of difference, where participants continue to be defined by their exclusion. Describing Canada's state-initiated community video project, Challenge for Change, Marchessault argues that although this project was successful in supporting Canada's alternative video culture, the extent to which it was able to identify and challenge existing and oppressive power structures to effect real change was questionable. At the heart of CFC was a contradiction: that the move towards change should come from within the very community that the state believed needed to be organised. On reflection, it is clear that such a contradictory position would limit the kinds of change such a project could effect. A retrospective criticism of CFC is that it relied on methods and technologies that, when instrumentalised by those with power, privileged coercion and consent. My project asks to what extent can community video projects initiated by outsiders respond to such criticism and create a space where

²⁹⁵ Marchessault, Janine. *Mirror Machine: Video and Identity*. Toronto: YYZ, 1995, p.20

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.21

difference is recognised and dominant power structures can be challenged or complicated?

In an assessment of community arts in the 1970s, Su Braden makes a distinction between these approaches, drawing attention to a more considered way of initiating a project with a community group. Braden suggests that where the interest and invitation has come from within the community of participants at a local level the project has a stronger chance of higher levels of engagement and commitment:

An artist placed in a new context appears all too frequently to feel the job in hand is to take his or her art to the people, with the consequent expectation of a response or degree of participation that is based on a relationship between professional and amateur. The difference between this attitude and that of artists who have initiated or responded to community based projects in the 1970s lies in the belief of the community in the range of creative expression so often ignored and wasted in the communities where they work. Their expectation is, therefore, one of creative equality with members of those communities, and this expectation accounts for the blend of community development techniques and artistic skills employed by community artists. They are intent on raising the expectations in their own power of creative expression of the people with whom they work.²⁹⁷

It can be argued, as social geographer Gillian Rose makes clear, that a community video practitioner might well begin a process as an outsider invited in but, as a project develops, they can become an insider, through finding and developing their voice and role within a group they have been invited to work with. This is what I have previously described as 'hybridity'. Rose argues that it is imperative for the efficacy of a project that there is recognition of some form of transformation not just on the part of the participants but also for the initiator. In an article that analyses the impact of two film and video projects carried out in communities in London in the 1970s, Rose describes the process of constant negotiation entered into between the initiator

²⁹⁷ Braden, Su. *Artists and People*. London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1978, p.108

as representative of the dominant culture and the participants as representative of the marginalised culture:

Marginalised cultures are neither the same as hegemonic cultures nor entirely different from them; cultures affect one another, cultural forms are adopted, transformed, returned; and cultural identity is itself constantly renegotiated.²⁹⁸

Rose goes on to suggest that the work of community video practitioners can create a space for ‘hybridity’ in order to imagine these differences not simply in terms of insider and outsider but in terms of ‘multiple identities and interdependence.’²⁹⁹

Though initiated by an individual outsider, the People Make Videos project was motivated by the need to collectively represent the multiple experiences and identities of the participants, including my own.

This ‘hybrid’ position, which I go on to explore in chapter four is what has been referred to as the ‘Third Voice’ of the ‘researcher-filmmaker’ by ethnographic filmmaker and anthropologist Jay Ruby. Reflecting on the work of American anthropologist and filmmaker Barbara Meyerhoff, Ruby explains:

The researcher- filmmaker seeks to locate a third voice—an amalgam of the maker’s voice and the subject’s voice, blended in such a manner as to make it impossible to discern which voice dominates in the work — in other words, films in which outsider and insider visions coalesce into a new perspective.³⁰⁰

The People Make Videos project seeks to understand the way these identities and relationships effect the processes and aesthetics of community video projects and address the concerns and criticisms raised by Janine Marchessault.

²⁹⁸ Rose, Gillian. ‘The Cultural Politics of Place: Local Representation and Oppositional Discourse in Two Films.’ *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 19.1 (1994) p.49

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.49

³⁰⁰ Ruby, Jay. *Picturing Culture: Explorations of Film and Anthropology*. The University of Chicago Press, 2000, p.199

Forming a Group:

During the pilot phase, each of the community video meetings I organised was publicised through leaflets, posters and announcements posted in and around the neighbourhood surrounding the gallery. Together with the curator, we presented the aims of the project to four existing groups and explained that I was spending some time in the neighbourhood in order to find out if a community video project would be of use or interest to the neighbourhood. I went on to explain that we were looking to meet with groups in order to use a video camera to share ideas and collaborate on a project based on the word ‘community,’ the form and content of which would be decided upon collectively.

I initially met with four different groups who were based in the neighbourhood: Penfold Community Hub, a centre located opposite the gallery which offers ‘stimulating and accessible activities, as well as advice and counselling services’³⁰¹ for those aged over 50 or those who identify as carers; King Solomon’s Academy, a non-selective, non-denominational, co-educational school within the English academy programme, located on the same street as the gallery; Mosaic Community Trust, a charity working to promote community cohesion and interfaith harmony by learning from one another; Church Street Library English as a Second Language (ESOL), a group who meet at the local library to practice their English conversational skills.

Following these meetings, all but one group confirmed that they would like to meet with me to further explore the potential of a community video project. Mosaic

³⁰¹ ‘Penfold Community Hub’ *Notting Hill Housing*, www.nhhg.org.uk/penfold/

Community Trust declined as they found the explanation too open-ended and members of the group were uncomfortable with the idea of being videoed. During the six month pilot stage, I met with each group four times in sessions lasting between two and four hours, depending on the availability of the group. At this stage I was very open with the groups about the as-yet-undecided nature of the type of video we might make. Based on my understanding of the community video projects from the 1970s, I stressed how important it was for them to bring their own ideas and spend time with me, to become familiar with my research and practice and to use and become comfortable with the video camera. I explained that based on the findings and outcomes of a number of introductory workshops we would then proceed to develop a more sustained video project.

One group who did not have a pre-existing relationship with The Showroom was the 'open call' group who were formed during the pilot phase using an approach that was developed by community video group West London Media Workshop in the 1970s. In order to form a new group and gauge the interest of a neighbourhood in participating in a community video project, this process was carried out in the manner described by 1970s community video activist Andy Porter:

We would post flyers and posters around the local neighbourhood, on notice boards and through people's front doors, inviting anyone who was interested in community action or filmmaking to come along to an open meeting to watch films and videos and learn to use the video cameras and meet other people from the neighbourhood who they might share a common interest with.³⁰²

I worked with a graphic designer to plan the design of a flyer and poster that would invite participants to collaborate on a community video project. Following the overall

³⁰² Interview with Andy Porter carried out by Ed Webb-Ingall, 2015. Unpublished

approach, the design of the poster was based on one made by Community Action Centre in the 1970s.



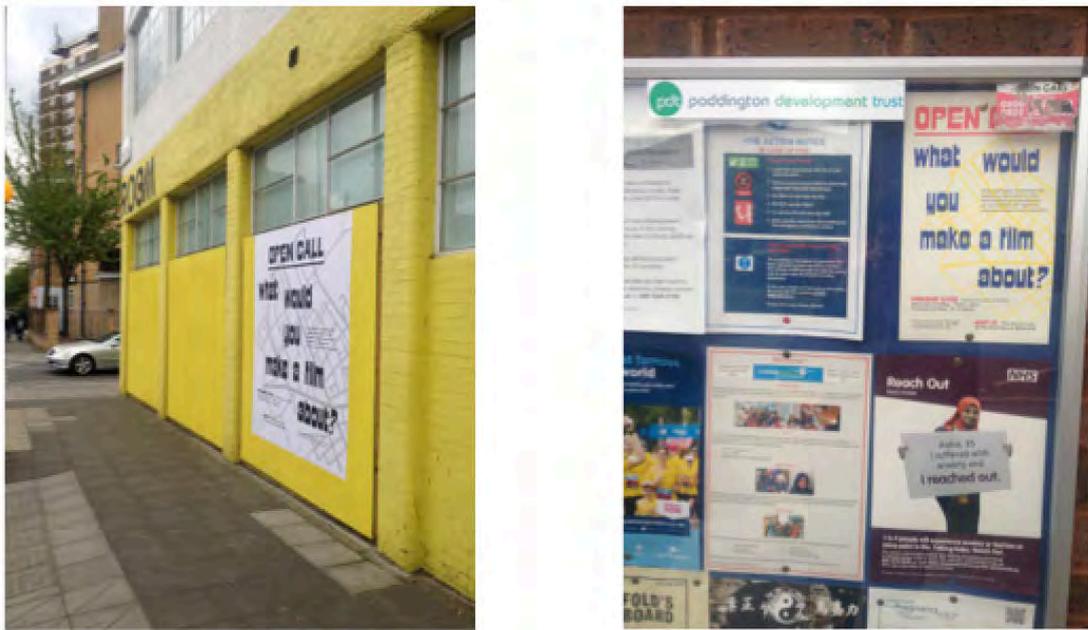
(Figure 11 Left: Original Community Action Centre Poster, 1974

Right: poster designed for The Showroom, 2015)

The text on the poster asks the question: What would you make a film about? It then describes the workshop as follows: ‘Free and open workshop for anyone interested in filmmaking and questions of community. All ages, no previous experience required.’

I proposed two meeting dates with different times in order to cater to different lifestyles, one a weekday evening and one a weekend afternoon, with the option to attend one or both. The local council invited The Showroom to share the poster on 160 public notice boards around the neighbourhood, including those in advice and

drop-in centres, housing estates, libraries and doctors' waiting rooms. Flyers were also made and distributed in the area surrounding the gallery and a large version of the poster was also posted onto the front of the gallery. This group was the only one whose members did not have established relationships or shared experiences with one another and as such had the greatest variety of participants and range of reasons for attending.



(Figure 12: Open Call poster in the neighbourhood)

Each workshop began in the same way. The curator, who had previous relationships with the groups we were meeting with, would act as an interlocutor and introduce me and explain why I had been invited. Following this introduction I would then introduce my research project and explain the rough structure and intentions of the workshop as follows:

We are going to begin by watching a film or video made in the 1970s by, for and about a specific community. After we have watched it we will talk about how we relate to the content of the film and video and discuss what feels different and what feels the same. Following this discussion we will experiment with the video camera together.

Drawing on my understanding of radical pedagogy in the methodology section, my initial aim was for each participant to share the reasons they had chosen to attend the workshop, to begin to establish a sense of collectivity. This also created a space for the group to listen to any expectations or special requests anyone in the group might have. It allowed for me to respond either by tailoring the project in order to attend to these desires where possible, or else make clear the limits of the project. This process of transparency created a shared sense of what was possible and how this might be achieved, while remaining realistic and honest about what we might not be able to accomplish in the time-span or with the technology made available for the project. It also provided a means for me to be clear about the wider intentions of my research and how the contemporary community video project would function in relation to it.

Trigger Video and Discussion Screening:

Following the confirmation of each of the four groups, I developed an introductory workshop plan in order to familiarise myself with the groups and begin to develop a shared vocabulary and later to enable access to the video camera. This process adapted stages two and three of project Octopus, developed by Liberation Films, described below:

Stage 2: Community film show: Following the screening, group discussions are facilitated by members of Liberation Films, providing an opportunity for people to talk about themselves and the place where they live, the trigger film providing a shared focal point.

Stage 3: Introduction to video: The discussion following the trigger film is videotaped by the project team, who attempt to involve local people in using the

video cameras to interview each other. Those who are most enthusiastic are then invited to make their own videotapes about their community.³⁰³

Instead of recording trigger-films in the local neighbourhood, the approach taken up by Liberation Films, I chose to use film and video projects made by community groups in the 1970s. This was beneficial, as it allowed me to avoid making a video about, and in, a place that I had no relationship to. It was also an important part of the process of reactivation: by showing videos to the groups, where the themes were familiar while the subjects on camera were unfamiliar, it was my aim for the participants in each of the groups to identify similarities and differences in their experiences.

The trigger films produced by Liberation Films were composed of a series of voxpops with inhabitants of the neighbourhood where the community video project was due to take place. They are shown responding to set questions, which are edited to show differing and complimentary opinions in order to then engage the viewer in the same conversation. A member of Liberation Films, Tony Wickert, describes the trigger film in opposition to the ‘sophisticated editing processes of the big film industry who sometimes couldn't care less about manipulating the images of people in every way.’ He goes on to position the trigger films instead as a means to portray ‘confusion in a situation rather than to an over-view of order. So the audience can identify.’³⁰⁴

The archival trigger-film I chose to screen to each group was selected in order to adhere to Wickert's description and according to what I knew about each of the

³⁰³ This description is made up of information collated from Liberation Films Distribution Catalogue (1980, Liberation Films) and interviews with Tony Wickert and Ron Orders carried out by Ed Webb-Ingall, 2015. Unpublished

³⁰⁴ Nigg, Heinz, and Graham Wade. *Community Media: Community Communication in the UK: Video, Local TV, Film, and Photography*. Zürich: Regenbogen-Verlag, 1980, p.158

groups I was working with. For King Solomon's Academy, I chose to show *Step Forward Youth* (1977), directed by Dave Kinoshi and Menelik Shabazz. This is a documentary made by, for and about young black British residents in London, to represent their unheard and unseen lives. For Penfold Community Hub, I screened *Fly a Flag for Poplar* (1974) and *All You Need is an Excuse* (1972), both made by Liberation Films. These document two community film projects made about and in order to initiate further community action. The ESOL Group watched *Things that Mother Never Told Us* (1977), made by Carry Gorney of Inter-Action and a group of women living in Milton Keynes, a new town on the outskirts of London. For the Open Call Group I also screened *Fly a Flag for Poplar*, in order to focus on a community film project made with a group of people who shared the same neighbourhood.

Before screening the video I had selected for each group, I would explain why I chose it and provide some background information on the production of the video, such as who made it, why and when they made it. Where possible I would then invite members of the groups to read aloud a synopsis of the video written by the filmmakers themselves. Reading aloud together was one way to challenge the presumption that I had all the power and all of the answers and to shift the mode of knowledge transfer. It was a means to introduce multiple voices from the past and present into the same space, and for the group to begin to embody and reactivate archival materials.

After watching *Step Forward Youth*, the King Solomon group responded to the question 'If this film was made now how might it be different?' by relating it to their personal experiences of the police, crime, gangs and relationships. The film is made

up of various discussions between groups of teenagers, similar in age, class and racial mix to that of the students watching and so the open format for their own discussion mirrored those seen in the film, with the added dimension that the students were discussing their own experiences while reflecting on the experience of others.

Following the initial introduction with the ESOL group, I realized that the difference in the levels of spoken English would affect the exercises we might carry out and the time I would have to allow for each one. I was interested in how, as a group, we might use this to our advantage to learn from one another. I explained that we would watch an excerpt from a video called *Things that Mother Never Told Us* in order to get the group thinking about conversations. The excerpt shows a group of women in a domestic setting discussing everyday issues including childcare, marriage, children, sex and friendship in the manner of a consciousness-raising group. It was surprising how quickly the group engaged with the video on a personal level. Each participant was keen to explain how he or she related to the women they had just seen sharing such personal information in such a public setting. One participant believed it was important to share and talk with friends while another disagreed and stated ‘this is information that I would only discuss with my husband.’ The video operated as a trigger in the way that the content was familiar, a circle of people talking and listening to one another, but the topic of conversation was unfamiliar.

Introducing a Video Camera:

Following the discussions of archival material, I introduced the video camera to each of the groups. It was important that the video camera we used looked and felt different to a still camera or a mobile phone and, without being anachronistic, replicated the role of the video camera in 1970s community video projects. In section one, I described how early video technology was heavy and access to more than one camera per community group was limited. The equipment consisted of separate cameras and recording units that often required two to three people to operate smoothly: one person to hold the recording unit, one person to hold the camera and a third to hold the microphone. My intention was to make use of a single camera for the whole group. This was in order to decentre ownership and set apart the production of a community video as something distinct from a video made with a smart phone. The collaborative use of a single video camera resulted in a collective investment and a diffused sense of ownership of the footage that was produced by the groups. Subsequently, the footage that had been collected was easy to access and edit freely.

The camera we used did not look like a smart phone, a tablet or a still camera; it looked like a video camera. It was my own Canon Vixia HF S11. This was chosen because I am familiar with its capabilities and functions. It is made for a domestic market, making it affordable and easy to use out-of-the-box. It is able to record up to 64GB of standard definition colour footage on a built-in hard drive with the option to add additional memory. This meant we could record up to 24 hours of footage without having to download it between uses. It is light and small enough, under seven centimeters square and weighing 450g, that most able-bodied people were able to handle it, but heavy enough that it can be held steadily and feels robust when held or resting on a table. It has a built in microphone and a port for an external microphone.

This allowed for it to record sound from in front of and behind the camera, as well as directionally with the addition of a hand-held microphone. The viewfinder is located on a foldout screen that allowed the group to rewind, playback and watch their footage instantly. The screen is rotatable, which means that the person in front of the camera can be shown what is being recorded.

In the 1970s, the camera equipment looked expensive and, though recognizable, unfamiliar in its operation. In every community video workshop I have facilitated, the initial engagement with the camera has been tinged with trepidation and suspicion, not just in relation to how it works, but also about how it might capture their image and where the footage might subsequently be stored or shared. I use this reaction to talk about different forms of representation and consent. After this, we had conversations about CCTV, YouTube and making videos on smart phones. We talked about how who is behind the camera might affect our behaviour and what other videos people in the group might have been involved in making. We also had a discussion on the role of the audience and how this might shape the production process. At this point in the workshops, I proposed a verbal agreement, much like the ‘contract’ described in the publication *Video with Young People*, referred to in the methodology section. The aim was to form an agreement on how and where the footage recorded on the camera might be used. This is what it covered:

Shall we all agree that anything videoed on this camera is owned by us as a group? If anyone in the group would like to share or use it with anyone not in the group they must first obtain permission from everyone in the group.³⁰⁵

³⁰⁵ See the appendix for the consent form we agreed on using to control the ownership of the footage

Some participants from the ESOL group and the sixth-form school were particularly concerned with having their faces on camera. To address these concerns, we agreed that before we began recording, the person behind the camera would be responsible for ensuring the person in front of the camera was comfortable and happy and, if necessary, suggest they focus the camera on their hands or feet and rotate the viewfinder so the subject would know what was in frame. Once the group approved the agreement and we had included the amendments that they had suggested, I then introduced the camera with a simple game, similar to those used in *Inter-Action Media Van* (1975) and *Starting to Happen* (1973).

I began by showing the group how I hold the camera and encouraged them to find a way that was comfortable for them. I then explained how to turn the camera on and off, how to record and stop recording and how to zoom in and out. This approach was adapted from one of the scenes from *Inter-Action Media Van* (1975, Inter-Action) and another one from *Starting to Happen* (1973, Liberation Films). In the latter, we are shown one of Liberation Films' founding members, Tony Wickert, explaining how 'very easy it is to use' a Sony Portapak video camera to a mixed group of people, made up of men and women, young and old, arranged loosely in a circle, some sitting and some standing.

Most members of the ESOL group professed to having never been before or behind a video camera, with the exception of two participants, one who mentioned its use on holiday and for birthdays and another who had been a television news broadcaster in India. It became important to find ways to manage the mixed skill levels in the groups and not to alienate those participants who might have filmmaking experience while

also not patronising those with none. This instructional approach stressed the importance of access in order to demystify the means of production and placed an emphasis on learning from one another:

The concept is rather that of recognising local cultural expression, making available the media of expression suitable to it in such a way that the dialogue between skilled artists and local communities re-establishes fluidity and relevance... establishing a strong and viable debate between the perceptions of the artist and those of the community.³⁰⁶

At one point in the workshop, I informed the group that the camera was recording and passed it to the person next to me. I asked them to say the first thing that came into their head while holding it and to experiment with the controls as they did so. In this exercise the camera recorded their learning process and the effect it had on the person behind the camera, a voice that often remains unheard or edited out. Together, the group began to understand that the filmmaker is neither passive nor neutral.

Responses from the groups ranged from confidently zooming in and out while saying 'I feel fine and I am excited about what we might film next' to others quickly passing the camera on saying 'I feel uncomfortable having my picture taken and would rather not be doing this.' Other comments related to the camera's weight, either heavier or lighter than expected and concerns about dropping it and how expensive it was. In order for the group to become comfortable with the camera we carried out a number of other question games, passing the camera around the circle until it became a familiar object that the participants appeared comfortable with.

In the first workshops a number of the participants from King Solomon's and the ESOL group were opposed to having their faces videoed, so we talked about anonymity, invisibility and opting out. Most members physically and verbally showed

³⁰⁶ Braden, Su. *Artists and People*. London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1978, p.178

their discomfort with the camera and with being videoed, when I attempted to introduce the camera to the ESOL group in the same way I had done with previous groups. Very few were interested in holding the camera and even fewer in being on camera, even with the suggestion that we could just video their hands or feet. These participants said it was for 'religious reasons', although they didn't expand on this. The few participants who were comfortable holding the camera and being in front of it helped encourage a few more to get involved. Those who were interested passed the camera between themselves but were unsure what to do with it or what to say, resorting to saying 'hello' and waving at the camera. This challenged my preconception that the majority of the public is familiar with video recording and highlighted the disparity in access to screen media.

Together we developed a set of rules whereby those participants who were uncomfortable being on camera would allow themselves to be videoed in the following ways: either focusing the camera on their hands or feet or by using a specific crop or angle to preserve anonymity. This is made evident throughout the video *What Would You Make a Film About?* (PMV, 2016) where we hear voices without knowing who is speaking them, or we see cropped bodies and voices speak from behind the camera.

I ended the first ESOL workshop by asking whether they wanted me to return. The participants responded positively to this proposition and said that they had enjoyed themselves as usually they 'just sat around talking'. I decided to use the next workshop to think about how the playback function might be useful to a group who formed in order to have conversations with one another to practice their English.

At the first meeting with Penfold Community Hub, each member of the group passed the camera around and I encouraged the person holding the camera to show the person they were passing it on to how they had chosen to hold it and operate it. The purpose of this was for the group to learn from one another's individual experience and understanding of the video camera and where possible discourage them from perceiving me as a teacher or authority figure. This exercise encouraged the group to become confident enough to move around the room with the camera and begin asking questions about other functions the camera had. I then explained how to use a tripod and when it might be a useful aid when videoing certain subjects. We all practiced panning from left to right and up and down as well and we learned about cropping and framing a particular scene or subject in order to focus attention. As can be seen in the video *What Would You Make a Film About?* (PMV, 2016), one of the participants used this as an opportunity to explore the workshop space with the camera, while the built-in microphone recorded her describing what she was seeing and how she was doing it. Leaving the camera recording while a participant learns how to use it became a useful tool in further demystifying the technology. When it was played back, this footage could be used to instruct and inform other participants of the camera's capabilities.

Once the entire Open Call group seemed confident in front of and behind the camera, we went out into the neighbourhood together. I asked the participants to take turns videoing one scene that made them think of the word 'community' and while doing so to discuss what they had chosen to video and why. I was interested to see how they felt without too much guidance and for each of them to decide how to frame and

shoot a scene. This initial use of the video camera created its own particular aesthetic, which I go on to explore in the next chapter as a form of 'looking-seeing-showing'.

The video camera functioned as a tool for each participant to take the rest of the group to a part of the neighbourhood and share their personal relationship to that place.

These places included streets where people had grown up, parks they had spent time in and a statue and church whose history was known by one of the participants. After each person had taken their turn behind the camera we returned to the gallery and reflected on what we each thought about the workshop. The participants were eager to watch their footage straight away but we decided to wait until the following workshop, when we would have more time to discuss each of the participants' contributions.

The video camera in community video projects is used to simultaneously draw out and record individual issues and group discussions. Like the video camera in activist video projects, described by film theorist Roger Hallas, it is not the object 'out of which political confrontation and articulation are produced,'³⁰⁷ but rather works alongside the already engaged and active subjects.

In an essay written at the end of the 1970s, feminist film theorist Julia Lesage explains how *cinéma vérité* was an 'attractive and useful mode of artistic and political expression for women learning filmmaking in the late 1960s.'³⁰⁸ However, *vérité*'s sheen of objectivity rendered it ambiguous in its relation to the subject. Conversely,

³⁰⁷ Hallas, Roger. *Reframing Bodies: AIDS, Bearing Witness, and the Queer Moving Image*. Duke University Press, 2009, p.89

³⁰⁸ Lesage, Julia. 'The Political Aesthetics of the Feminist Documentary Film.' *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* 3.4 (1978), p.514

feminist documentary and community video makers who were both working at the same time avoided making films about people, to collaborate with them instead.

Thomas Waugh uses the term ‘collaborative vérité’ to describe the use of a video camera in this way. In doing so, Waugh challenges the traditional understanding of the ‘interactive’ mode in documentary theory that privileges the camera at the centre of the action. In community video projects, the camera encourages conversation and validates any interaction between participants:

A semi controlled event, usually within a defined space and one that might have taken place without the filmmaker’s intervention, proceeds with all participants aware of and consenting to the camera’s presence and with an unspoken but visible collaboration shaping the event.³⁰⁹

This term offers a resolution to two otherwise oppositional filmic approaches: those of collaborative filmmaking, with its focus on process and the equal relationship between the subject located in front of and behind the camera, and cinema vérité, which emphasized a hands-off approach to the subject. Both community video and what Thomas Waugh describes as ‘committed documentary’³¹⁰ focus on the process of intervention and change. Each of these modes seeks to reflect the position of the subject located in front of and behind the camera as well the experience of their intended audience.

The end of phase one:

I have presented a summary of the ways I reactivated and adapted the production processes developed by community video practitioners in the 1970s to initiate a contemporary community video project from the position of an outsider. The efficacy

³⁰⁹ Waugh, Thomas. *The Right to Play Oneself: Looking Back on Documentary Film*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2011, p.209-210

³¹⁰ Waugh, Thomas. *Show Us Life: Toward a History and Aesthetics of the Committed Documentary*. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1984. P.105

of a community video project remains reliant on similar elements to those demonstrated in the 1970s. The duration of a project affects the levels of access made possible and the potential to develop a shared vocabulary between the ‘outsider’ initiator and the ‘insider’ participants. Those projects initiated by insiders, such as the work of Graft On! may require less time to develop similarly effective projects due to a prior knowledge and inherent understanding of the needs of the group and their pre-existing shared vocabulary, developed through shared experiences.

The process by which a community video practitioner enters into a community and the subsequent formation of a community video group must be sensitive to the specific make-up and needs of the participants. Collectively watching a pre-existing community video as a trigger for discussion provided a shared experience between the individual participants of each group. They could then reflect on this together, discussing what they agreed with or found reflective of their experiences, or not.

In chapter three, I describe how the trigger films also provided a formal structure and style from which the participants could develop their own video projects. The way the video camera was first introduced to each group and initially used by the participants functioned as both a practical learning moment to demystify the technology and as a means to decentre single-authorship and ownership. The language and exercises we developed set a precedent for the myriad ways the camera and the workshops functioned as a means for the participants to express their needs and share their experiences.

Chapter two: Playback

In the 1970s, newly available portable video recording technology introduced the possibility to record and playback footage immediately. This capacity was central to the production processes developed by community video activists and, as such, formed the focus of much of my practice-based research. At the start of the contemporary community video project, I was under the impression that many participants would be uninterested in the moment of playback. I wrongly assumed that they had access to and used smart phones with video recording and playback capabilities. This wasn't the case for all participants and belies the misconception that 'everyone has access to a video camera.' This chapter draws on the role of playback in the 1970s in order to explicate its continued significance in the current moment. I argue that community video projects are characterised at each stage of their production by playback, and this is one factor that distinguishes this practice from other similar approaches to non-fiction moving image production.

Playback was built into all of the workshops at each stage of the project and enabled participants to reflect on the image of themselves as seen on monitors, share their footage in order to collaborate with one another and with other groups, watch footage recorded by others to understand the way the video camera functions as a means to record and bear witness and, finally, provide feedback on the community video project itself.

Playback occurs when participants are able to review footage recorded on a video camera, in two ways: either through a live feedback loop, when the camera is attached to a monitor or projector creating a 'closed circuit', or after a period of collecting

footage together on one reel of tape (in the 1970s) or in the case of People Make Videos, the memory card of a video camera. Not all of the participants involved in the project initially expressed an interest in seeing what they had recorded once they had used the camera to record some footage of their own. This was especially the case for those who were hesitant about being in front of the camera. In spite of this hesitancy, I asked them if they would mind if we reviewed some of the footage at a subsequent meeting; all of the participants agreed.

After the first set of workshops, playback was used in place of the trigger film. This encouraged the participants to review one another's footage. They were able to view the work of other members of their group, share in their experiences behind the camera and see the neighbourhood that they shared from different viewpoints. This created a similar effect to the trigger film, but with the difference that the participants were able to more directly relate it to their own video projects. Liberation Films employed a similar approach when they began to encourage participants to use a video camera to make their own videos.

In 1972, Liberation Films began to introduce video equipment at their community film shows in order to record post-screening discussions. Audiences were composed of residents based in the neighbourhood where the screening took place. These audiences were encouraged to use the video cameras to interview each other and share points of interest. These videotapes would then be played to a larger audience the following week, with the novelty of seeing a new video made by and about the community in which it was being screened enough to draw a crowd. In some cases these screenings led to the formation of action groups around specific issues. It was

at this stage that Liberation Films became interested in the potential of this new medium to initiate moments of reflection that led to active participation.

Playback encourages participants to consider the experience of seeing and hearing oneself and to reflect on how this footage might circulate. It also encourages them to discuss what this feels like as an individual experience. As a result, participants become familiar with seeing themselves on camera, as well as more confident behind it. At this stage, playback also served an instructive role; participants were able to see how they could affect the viewing experience in the way they held the camera and moved with it. Moreover, they were able to review the effect of the duration of a take, the choice of camera angles and the addition of sound. This produced a specific aesthetic, which I go on to discuss in the following chapter.

As I explained in section one, Challenge for Change was established in Canada to make use of video's capacity to record and share information through playback and to institute 'a programme designed to improve communications, create greater understanding, promote new ideas and provoke social change.'³¹¹ This approach to playback subsequently influenced community video groups in the UK, including West London Media Workshop. One member, Andy Porter, recalls an early project about housing conditions in the neighborhood where they were based. It was the result of a series of problematic decisions surrounding the management and provision of social housing that led to many residents living in 'horrible conditions – damp on the walls, floorboards falling away.'³¹² They used the video technology to carry out a series of interviews; here Porter describes it as follows:

³¹¹ Waugh, Thomas, et al. *Challenge for Change: Activist Documentary at the National Film Board of Canada*. MQUP, 2014. p.343

³¹² Transcript of Interview with Tony Dowmunt by Heinz Nigg and Andy Porter, UK, 2015, www.the-lcva.co.uk, accessed August, 2017

It was my first experience of doing this, based on the sort of Challenge for Change model. We went round and interviewed and shot material with people in their homes, talking about how conditions were affecting their lives and the lives of their families. We then - as best as we could in those days, because it was very crude – edited it all together... they called a public meeting with the councillors, and there must have been upwards of 40 or 50 people there, at the local hall, and we played it back on a television monitor, and it forced the councillors to confront the conditions, which they were not doing anything about. And in that sense it was very successful, on that level, because it brought people together.³¹³

For the purpose of People Make Videos, I adapted this approach to encourage a ‘conversation’ between two groups, who might not usually have spent time with one another, but shared the same neighbourhood. The first was the Penfold Group, some of whom felt alienated by the changing make-up of their neighbourhood. The second was the ESOL group, many of whom were new to the neighbourhood, who meet to have conversations and practice their English. It was my intention to use the recording and playing back of a video as means to encourage understanding and reflection between the groups. I began by inviting the Penfold group to record a video that could be played back to the ESOL group. This group would then record their responses, which would be played back to the Penfold group.

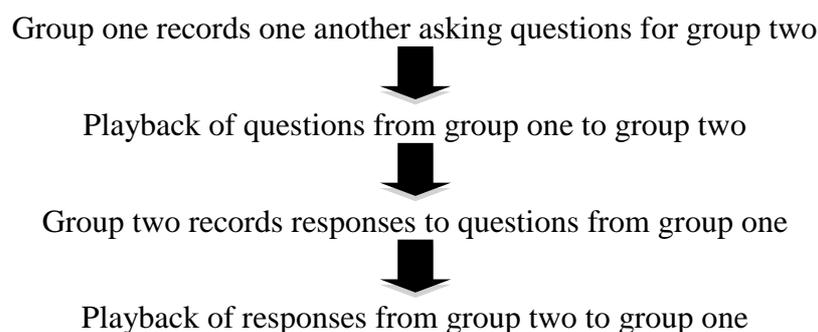
I proposed this idea at the second meeting with the Penfold group after we watched a scene from *Fly a Flag for Poplar* (Liberation Films, 1974) as a trigger film. In this scene, a group of people from the same neighbourhood come together to discuss who is responsible for taking care of the community and organising events for them.

Following this, we had a discussion about what the word ‘community’ meant to each of us. This brought out a number of views and opinions about the changing make-up of the neighbourhood and feelings of alienation that occur when you don’t know your neighbours or recognize people in the street.

³¹³ Interview with Andy Porter by Ed Webb-Ingall, July 2017, unpublished

In response to this conversation and the ESOL group's wish to develop their conversational skills, I invited members of the Penfold group to think of and record one another asking questions they would like to ask members of the ESOL group, many of whom were new to the neighbourhood. The Penfold group posed questions to the ESOL group including the following: 'If you could change one thing about the neighbourhood what would it be?' and 'How long have you been here and what do you do here?'

At my next meeting with the ESOL group, I connected the camera to a projector to play the questions back to them. The participants in the ESOL group then each took turns recording their answers on camera. I was then able to edit together the questions and the answers and play them back to the Penfold group. The diagram below illustrates this exchange:³¹⁴



(Figure 13: Using playback for a cross-community conversation)

Using playback in this way encouraged the different groups to share their problems and possible solutions, and begin to negotiate their feelings of isolation. This

³¹⁴ Please see the video *Excerpt for Playback chapter - Conversation Piece* on the memory stick or here: <https://vimeo.com/267025510>

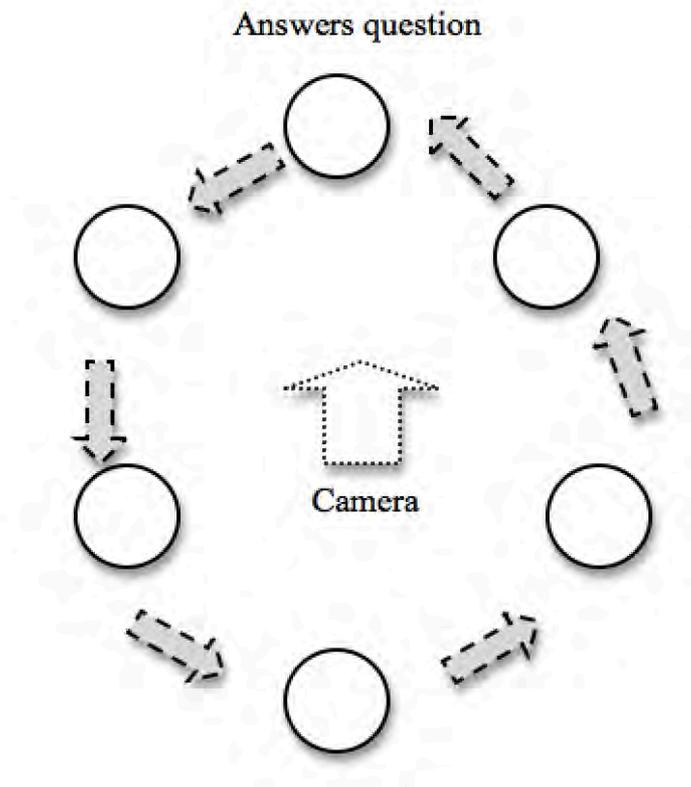
combination of collaboration and playback enabled a shared understanding of experience, while making room for individual experiences to be recorded and recognized.³¹⁵

As the People Make Videos project progressed into the final stage, the participants became more confident, each developing their own style and approach to using the camera and becoming familiar with the process of reviewing their footage. During this stage, playback functioned as part of a process of ‘paper editing’. This was a technique used in the 1970s, when editing footage was a complicated and time consuming process, but it was important for participants to collectively review their footage and make decisions about how it was structured and presented. For the participants of People Make Videos this process involved sitting in pairs at a computer and watching through one another’s footage. They would then note down the clips they wanted to use, the start and end time of the specific clip and the order in which they wanted to present their selection. I would then be responsible for carrying out their instructions, the results of which would be played back and adjusted according to their instructions at the next meeting. This process focused the participants’ attention on the content and order of footage, so that they could tell a particular story or convey a specific experience. The atmosphere during these sessions was always one that encouraged support among the group, with participants laughing together and pointing at the screen when familiar places or voices were seen and heard.

³¹⁵ The following is a link to a video that illustrates how this idea functioned
<https://vimeo.com/album/5060800/video/267025510>

As well as making a space for sharing experiences with one another, collective viewing during the editing phase resulted in an agreement among the participants that they would share their footage and sound clips with one another. This meant that the videos each individual made shared a direct relation. This evidences one approach the group developed for working as individuals, while creating collaborative videos that merged with one another; the soundtrack or footage at the end of one video would appear at the start of a different video. This is further explored in the final chapter.

At the end of each workshop I used playback in an exercise called ‘video feedback loop’ to create a space for participants to share and critique their experience of the workshop and suggest changes they would like to see at future meetings. This functioned as follows: at the end of each meeting the group would arrange themselves in a circle with the camera on a tripod at the centre of the circle, the person sitting behind the camera would turn it on and press record (once they had permission) and ask the person in front of the camera a question about the workshop, such as ‘tell me one thing that surprised you about today?’ or ‘what would you like to do next time we meet?’ The person in front of the camera would then answer. When they had finished, the person sitting behind the camera would stop recording and move one seat to their right and the person in front of the camera would move to their right. Everyone in the group would take a turn in each position. The diagram below illustrates this:



(Figure 14: Illustration of chair feedback exercise)

This process meant that we could collectively address any failures or misunderstandings and make adjustments and improvements for subsequent meetings. For example one participant used this time to ask how they might learn more about editing and another participant requested that they spend more time learning to use the video camera and less time having discussions. We were then able to reflect on this feedback and collectively propose solutions. Where possible, I could also schedule activities for the next workshop that would address these concerns. I tried doing this exercise with and without the camera and found that when we used the camera participants appeared to take the process seriously. The camera acted as a witness, validating the experience of feeding back to the group. There were a number of

issues, however, that we were unable to resolve, which ended in participants not returning. For example, one participant was not interested in collaborating or learning in a participatory way. Instead, they were expecting something closer to an evening class, where they would learn specific skills and work towards the production of an individual video. I explained that we did not have the resources to work in this way and that focusing on a traditional teacher-led, pedagogical model would be antithetical to 1970s community video process. Another participant found the collaborative element difficult to engage with. They isolated themselves from group activities and asked if they could work alone, which they did at first. However, once they realized the whole project would be run collaboratively, they decided not to return. In both of these cases, I researched and suggested evening classes and clubs I found at local colleges in the area.

Art historian Rosalind Krauss emphasizes how ‘unlike the other visual arts, video is capable of recording and transmitting at the same time – producing instant feedback.’³¹⁶ Instant feedback, via a closed circuit connecting the video camera to a digital projector, was used in my project in order to construct what Krauss describes as ‘a situation of spatial closure’, one that focuses on the people present, and projects images of them back for the participants in the room to reflect upon together.

Playback also meant that the participants were also able to reframe and reconsider experiences that might otherwise go ignored or unnoticed. This act is what I describe as ‘looking-seeing-showing’ and draws on activist film theorist Roger Hallas’ concept of ‘witness’. Hallas locates witnessing in activist video as that which occurs in ‘a

³¹⁶ Krauss, Rosalind. ‘Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism.’ *October*, vol. 1, 1976 p.52

framework of relationality.’³¹⁷ He proposes witnessing as a performative act; through bearing witness, the reality of an event and the bodies and voices documented become affirmed. In 1974, Sue Hall made the video *Ben’s Arrest* (1974), which illustrates the first hand use of portable video technology from within a community group to bear witness. Hall had been organising the painting of some houses in the area she lived in North London. Arriving at the corner of her street, she saw a police van parked outside a row of squatted houses. Hall later recalled;

I went home to get the Portapak, thread the tape and put the battery in... I went back as fast as possible just in time to see the police coming out with what they claimed were stolen goods and violently arresting a young black man before apparently beating him up in the back of the Transit van whilst I was still shooting video.

This hand-held recording, on half-inch Sony videotape, lasts only two minutes and comprises a single take that follows the forceful eviction and arrest of an Afro-Caribbean teenager by bailiffs and police. Hall takes advantage of video’s in-built sound recording capabilities, narrating what is taking place from behind the camera and asking questions of the police. The shaky camera and live voice-over, both common characteristics of the first hand use of portable video by community groups, engender a sense of urgency and intimacy. However, both the teenager’s shouts and cries and Hall’s questions remain unanswered. The silence of those carrying out the eviction highlights the division between the videomaker and the evictee, on one side, and the authoritarian police, on the other. The use of video as a form of witness by marginalised groups was significant in the 1970s, as it was presented on monitors, which looked like broadcast televisions, with their familiar grain and flicker. However, it was used to provide a counter-narrative to the more sterile and detached

³¹⁷ Hallas, Roger. *Reframing Bodies: AIDS, Bearing Witness, and the Queer Moving Image*. Durham: Duke UP, 2009, p.10

presentation of similar scenes when transmitted as television news. These were videos that showed how it ‘really was’: this man was brutally evicted; these women think and feel like this; these people are being treated like this.

Participants in the People Make Videos project used the camera to look at something they were familiar with while knowing that what they were recording would later be played back and seen by others. When I asked the group if they were using the camera as a tool to ‘see’ or a tool to ‘show’, they said they were using it to do both. When a participant in a community video project picks up a video camera and presses record they are engaging in a simultaneous process of **looking** at what they are familiar with, **seeing** it mediated through the lens of the video camera and recording it with the knowledge that others will be **shown** what they have seen. In a community video project, this process locates the audience in front of the camera and behind it.

Participants are confronted with imagery that positions them between the known and unknown, it is in this space that differences and similarities are recognised and those involved are able to reflect on our subjective experiences. In this way, the role of playback in community video draws on the radical pedagogical model which makes clear the relationship between method, content and context; production processes are formulated with consideration for the specific content of the video and the context in which it is being made and played back.

There is however the risk that subjects and events that are witnessed can be read as what Hallas describes as a ‘confessional spectacle.’³¹⁸ In such cases the radical potential for public validity and recognition may become a site that affirms dominant

³¹⁸ Hallas, Roger. *Reframing Bodies: AIDS, Bearing Witness, and the Queer Moving Image*. Durham: Duke UP, 2009, p.11

victim narratives and pre-conceived expectations of marginalised voices. Hallas draws attention to the risk of this in video projects about AIDS, where public testimony ‘may be just as much a disciplinary trap for the witness as it is a liberating opportunity.’³¹⁹ This can occur when the subject is unable to speak for and represent him or herself. In an insider community video project, the lines of representation can become blurred. There may be a shared responsibility, where individuals are able to speak on behalf of a group or community. However, in the case of an outsider community video project it is important that the subjects are able to dictate the way they are represented and how their image is played back.

Feminist film theorist and filmmaker Alexandra Juhasz offers a position that counters Hallas’ concerns. Instead, Juhasz proposes that collaboration, enabled through playback, is the ‘obvious and ubiquitous alternative to victimhood.’³²⁰ In her own collaborative video work with female prisoners, *RELEASED: Five Short Videos about Women and Prison* (2000), Juhasz aligns the use of video in this way with the burgeoning women’s movement and feminist approaches to documentary filmmaking, which were concurrent with the development of community video in the 1970s. Juhasz also draws on the development of a feminist sociological research method: ‘shared-goal filmmaking’. She proposes that video’s unique capabilities offer an alternative to Hallas’ concerns, to develop a counter-tradition she refers to as ‘victim critique’:

In feminist collaborative video, the medium (inexpensive, debased, nonprofessional), the message (woman, as subject, needs to be constructed), and the ideology (the personal is the political; process over product) align into a near-perfect praxis... By maintaining the classic position of subject/object,

³¹⁹ Ibid.,

³²⁰ Juhasz, A. ‘No Woman Is an Object: Realizing the Feminist Collaborative Video. *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies*, vol. 18, no. 3 54, 2003, p.74

the victim documentary also necessarily reestablishes the inside/outside binarism...This has resulted in a counter-documentary practice that they call “shared-goal filmmaking.”³²¹

This approach seeks to offer an alternative research method that does not position subjects as objects without agency and instead creates ‘conditions in which the object of research enters into the process as an active subject.’³²² Juhasz proposes that collaborative approaches to non-fiction moving image production, such as those developed by community video practitioners, generate feelings of solidarity and a more honest reflection of the relationships that exist between those located in front and behind the camera. The following chapter expands on the specific aesthetics that these collaborative methodologies make manifest, which are as varied as the methods that the participants experiment with and the themes they choose to represent.

³²¹ Ibid. p.74

³²² Ibid.

Chapter three: Community Video and Aesthetics

Until recently, art video and community video have been mutually exclusive terms. Video artists have had to distinguish their work as Art – video art – by linking it with the non-utilitarian concerns and institutions of high art in order to procure funding. Video activism, especially around AIDS, is changing and challenging this historical distinction... Agencies are being made to re-think the ideologies which have defined “art” in modernist terminology and “community” in terms of development and preservation.³²³

Contemporary cultural historian Janine Marchessault has reviewed the historical distinction between video as art *or* video as activism. In her appraisal of contemporary approaches to video activism, Marchessault proposes that this oppositional framework deserves to be reconsidered. Since its arrival in the UK at the start of the 1970s, the use of video by artists and activists continued to develop throughout the decade and so too did the need for increased funding and support from arts and film institutions. As I explored in chapter three of section one, this produced a difference between the conceptualisation of videos produced by artists in aesthetic and material terms and those produced by activists and community groups in relation to politics and process. As a result of this distinction, community video came to occupy a precarious position at the margins of each, largely subsumed under the banner of community arts. The historical analysis I previously carried out has enabled me to reconsider community video and propose a language with which to identify the specific aesthetics of videos produced by community groups.

I will draw comparisons between 1970s community video productions and those video produced as part of the People Make Videos project in 2015/16. The development of a language with which to describe community videos will allow for the processes that produce them to be understood as specific, translatable and

³²³ Marchessault, Janine. *Mirror Machine: Video and Identity*. Toronto: YYZ, 1995, p. 23

applicable as methods of collaborative non-fiction moving image production. I will reflect on the shifting position of the video maker to understand the differing effects of the ‘outsider’ and ‘insider’ role. This takes into consideration the sensory and perceptual features of the footage produced including the role of voice, mise-en-scène and self-reflexivity.

Articulating Community Video Aesthetics:

In the introduction to a collection of essays entitled *The Anti-Aesthetic, Essays on Postmodern Culture* (1983), art critic Hal Foster proposes the term ‘anti-aesthetic.’³²⁴ My understanding of this term allows me to construct a language to describe community video aesthetics and to rethink the reactivation of community video practices and the videos produced as a result of them. Foster defines an ‘anti-aesthetic’ position as one that questions the idea of an aesthetic experience that exists apart from history and ‘signals a practice, cross disciplinary in nature, that is sensitive to cultural forms engaged in a politic (e.g., feminist art) or rooted in a vernacular – that is, to forms that deny the idea of a privileged aesthetic realm.’³²⁵

The suggestion of an aesthetic language with which to describe or explain community video was considered by most community video practitioners in the 1970s as antithetical to their focus on access and activism. For many, this was a purposeful distinction to differentiate their work from arts institutions and video artists, who they considered elitist and exclusionary. In a 1972 interview in the journal *Screen*, members of Liberation Films make clear the desire for a new conception of aesthetics,

³²⁴ Foster, Hal. *The Anti-aesthetic Essays on Postmodern Culture*. New York: New, 2002

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.xvii

one based on a correlation between aesthetics and process. They propose that they are less interested in the aesthetics of cinema and more in the aesthetics of pragmatism.

As Liberation Films member Tony Wickert states:

I'm seeking a new film aesthetic... we're trying to do something else, we're trying to use film as a tool, as a device. We're trying to alert people and turn them on to the potential of using film as a tool. There's this big distraction all the time about the aesthetics of cinema... It's just boring. I wonder how people sustain it, I believe they don't.³²⁶

At the end of a funding application written by Liberation Films to the Arts Council in 1974, Liberation Films propose the aesthetics of a community video project should be considered according to its internal structures and intentions. In the application, Liberation Films emphasise the complicated and shifting relationship between aesthetics and process.

Finally, film aesthetic. We use the phrase deliberately, knowing that many people see a dichotomy between film as 'art' and film as 'social action'. We see this conflict as a false one. On the one hand, all art is social, it is made for and used by society, and affects its values. It can be powerful in doing so, irrespective of obvious 'message'... it is not a matter of sugaring the pill, the message not getting across unless successfully packaged... The aesthetic is intrinsic and will show in every element... and the aesthetic of the film flows from it, a search for a pattern not a linear story, for emotional truth not high drama... We do not have a worked out theory – though in making *Fly a Flag for Poplar* we think we have begun.

Community video practitioner Tony Dowmunt reflects on his understanding of aesthetics in the 1970s as that which was enacted and made manifest in response to dominant television and documentary modes of the 1970s and as an expression of the specific processes of production:

I thought it was a system that perpetuated various kinds of aesthetic conformity, again in the interests of maintaining the (late-capitalist) status quo. Crudely, we believed that for 'the revolution' to succeed, we were all going to have to learn to see things differently: that is to say, the 'visions of

³²⁶ Pines, J. 'Left Film Distributors.' *Screen*, vol. 13, no. 4, 1972, p.123

the excluded' suggested aesthetic as well as ideological challenges and ruptures. Radical films needed to be made in a radical way – which was as important, or more so, than to have radical content.³²⁷

Writing on the development of emergent collaborative documentary practices in the 1970s, Alexandra Juhasz states that such 'changes in process also create new documentary aesthetics.'³²⁸ Taking up the example of new feminist approaches to non-fiction filmmaking, Juhasz describes the methods and aesthetics the practitioners experimented with as 'varied as the causes with which they engage.'³²⁹ I will reconsider and reposition community video as a mode of moving image production aligned with other non-fiction moving image forms, countering the approach taken up by artist film and video makers such as those proposed by David Hall in chapter three of section one. The aesthetic qualities belonging to community videos will instead be considered using Foster's term 'anti-aesthetic'. I understand this to be an approach to interpreting image production not located outside of or in reaction to a process and politics of representation, but one that seeks to rework dominant modes of representation. My purpose is to describe the sensory and perceptual quality of the videos themselves, as they are dictated by the specific processes developed to produce the videos and the objectives and context of the person or people producing them.

As well as the concept of an 'anti-aesthetic,' I also draw on the aesthetics of two approaches to non-fiction moving image production: first, feminist documentaries of the 1970s developed at the same time as community video practices, using similar methods and producing comparable outcomes; second, the 'realist' documentaries of

³²⁷ Downum, Tony. 'A Whited Sepulchre, Autobiography and Video Diaries in "Post Documentary" Culture.' *Goldsmiths University London*, 2009, p.123

³²⁸ Juhasz, Alexandra. 'No Woman Is an Object: Realizing the Feminist Collaborative Video.' *Camera Obscura*, Duke University Press, 22 Jan. 2004, muse.jhu.edu/article/51165 p.75

³²⁹ Ibid.,

the same period, which Bill Nichols suggests propose ‘a distinctive form of social engagement. The engagement stems from a rhetorical force of an argument about the very world we inhabit.’³³⁰

The formal characteristics that film theorist Julia Lesage uses to describe feminist documentaries propose a way to understand the aesthetics of community videos. Writing at the end of the 1970s, Lesage describes the defining facets of feminist filmmaking documentaries in contradistinction to the decade’s more experimental work as ‘biography, simplicity, trust between woman filmmaker and woman subject, a linear narrative structure and little self consciousness about the flexibility of the cinematic form.’³³¹ Some of the documentaries Lesage mentions include *Self Health* (Catherine Allan, Judy Erola, Allie Light and Joan Musante, 1974) *Growing up Female* (Julia Bell Reichert with James Klein, 1976), *Janie’s Janie* (Geri Ashur, 1970/71) and *Joyce at 34* (Joyce Chopra and Claudia Weill, 1972). Although feminist documentaries often look and sound like other non-fiction forms, they do not simply reproduce and thus perpetuate dominant ideologies. Instead the specific aesthetic decisions and desired effects vary in the ways in which each adopts and adapts traditional approaches to suit the specific needs of both the filmmaker and the subject. There is a focus on the participants’ control over their image, often showing strategies that emphasise collaboration. Seeking to avoid or disrupt the traditional consent or surrender of the subject, the formation of the groups often remains unfixed, allowing each participant equal access and space. The way information is presented signifies shared authorship and avoids privileging any single intention or experience. This is

³³⁰ Nichols, Bill. *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana U, 2010, p.178

³³¹ Lesage, Julia. ‘The Political Aesthetics of the Feminist Documentary Film.’ *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* 3.4 (1978), p.508

achieved through the presentation of multiple and differing positions and voices, avoiding a singular or didactic point of view as well as through the way subjects are framed and their voices represented. A common characteristic of both feminist documentaries and community videos is the open-ended presentation of information, where the production and watching of the film or video encourages further discussion and the development of ideas.

The relationship between feminist documentary aesthetics and those of community video enables a comparison with more traditional, realist documentaries. Lesage echoes social geographer Gillian Rose's support for the traditional documentary form, arguing that such conventional approaches to the transmission of information are designed to reach as wide an audience as possible. Rose reflects on the role of 'realism' in community video projects and the aesthetic effect of the camera work that characterizes the majority of community video projects:

What mattered in community media was the revelation of oppression and this encouraged a dependence on realism as its aesthetic form. Realism refers to a set of conventions, which persuade the viewer of the truth of what they see... The veracity of what we watch is established in part by this visual sense that the camera was really there. The realism offered is based on the sense of intimacy engendered by participation of the camera in these events and it is a realism of a fragmented everyday³³²

Documentary theorist Bill Nichols defines the conventions of documentary realism as the use of a camera and sound recorder, with 'proper lighting, distance, angle, lens and placement'³³³ to construct an image that appears 'highly similar to the way in which a typical observer might have noted the same experience.'³³⁴ This mode

³³² Rose, Gillian. 'The Cultural Politics of Place: Local Representation and Oppositional Discourse in Two Films.' *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 19.1 (1994) p.11

³³³ Nichols, Bill. *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana U, 2010, p.166

³³⁴ Ibid.

traditionally relies on an objective gaze that seeks to erase distance and ‘engage the world directly, as a participant.’³³⁵ However, in the case of community videos, the participant is engaged in the world, not only through a process of recognition and representation but also as they are located in front of the camera as the subject and behind the camera dictating the specific aesthetic of the video. The majority of community videos are structured in a similar way to many traditional realist documentaries. They are largely comprised of talking heads interviews intercut with observational footage, occasionally accompanied by the use of voice over in order to direct or contextualize the action on screen.

The Aesthetics of Outsider Video Projects:

To identify the characteristics of community video practices developed in the 1970s, the following pages comprise a comparative study of a number of the videos that were made as a result of People Make Videos. I do this by constructing an aesthetic explanation of community videos, influenced by the framework proposed by Foster and the language used by Lesage, Rose and other political documentary theorists writing about non-fiction films produced in the 1970s. The videos produced as a result of the People Make Videos project can be divided up into three phases: the pilot phase, which produced *What Would You Make a Film About?*, which I will discuss first; the phase following its production, which produced *For your public convenience*, *How Can We Live Now*, and *Save the Church Street Drop-in Centre*, which I focus on in this chapter; and the final phase, which produced six short individual videos, which I discuss in the next chapter.

³³⁵ Ibid.

During the pilot phase of People Make Videos, when I occupied the role of outsider, it was important that participants learned how to use the video camera, so they could begin to feel comfortable in front of and behind it. The footage that we recorded was documentation of the workshop activities. The video camera allowed participants to learn how to use the video camera and consider what they would like to make a video about. A series of exercises previously described, adapted from those used in the 1970s, enabled participants to learn how to handle the camera, to achieve different shots, to ask questions of a subject, to experience how it feels to be in front of the camera and how it feels to see and hear a recording of yourself played back while others watch. My role and intentions, positioned alongside those of the participants, would make itself visually manifest in the video footage we would subsequently record, edit and present.

What Would You Make a Film About? (People Make Videos, 2016) was made following a request from the participants, who, after completing the pilot phase of workshops, requested we host a public screening event. The structure of this video borrows the instructional, ‘video within a video’ model presented in *Starting to Happen* (Liberation Films, 1974). Like *Starting to Happen*, *What Would You Make a Film About?* serves multiple purposes: to document, present and instruct the initiation, facilitation and production of a community video project. The video is structured around the presentation of the project as a list of instructions and questions to the audience, who were also participants, their friends, families and local residents. The instructions and questions are illustrated by video footage recorded by the participants

of the community groups involved as well as excerpts from community videos made in the 1970s.

The structure of the *What Would You Make a Film About?* revolves around a series of instructions and questions that reflects the multiple aims of the project and invites the viewer to occupy multiple points of access. For example, the video ends asking the participants and the audience the following question: ‘What Would You Make a Film About?’ The video presents multiple outcomes from the project and offers the audience different experiences of the same production processes. This reflects the relationship between the participants located behind the camera and the way the camera was used and the footage recorded. The camera moves between the participants, and we see and hear them occupy multiple positions: teacher, student, subject, and facilitator. The visual quality of the footage is unstable and the camera rarely settles or focuses on any one subject for very long. Pans are rarely smooth and canted framing is a common feature. Unlike video photography in the 1970s, sudden movements do not result in ghosting.

Similar moments of learning are reflected in the aesthetic characteristics of 1970s video. The difference in the 1970s is that each time the camera moves, the image flickers, revealing the horizontal grain of the videotape. This draws our attention away from what we see on screen to the person located behind the camera. Video cameras in the 1970s would have been affected by the availability of light, producing dark grey imagery, with little contrast between black and white when used inside, and prone to ‘burn-out’ if used in bright, sunny conditions. When the camera lens was

directed towards the sun or other bright light sources this could produce a faint, 'ghostly' image on the camera tube.

The digital video camera we were using had auto-correction for exposure and focus, producing clear imagery. The participants declared this was important so that their videos did not look 'amateurish'. They made it known that any elements that appeared experimental or unexpected should be purposeful, either to produce a specific sensory experience in the viewer or to focus their attention on a particular element on screen.

At intervals throughout *What Would You Make a Film About*, the camera is passed around and records close-ups of the participants' hands and faces. A soundtrack of their hands brushing against the built-in microphone accompanies this footage. The video camera we used was similar to video cameras used in the 1970s in that we were able to rely on the on-board microphone to record synchronised sound. This was used to capture moments of learning from behind the camera and to encourage participants to focus on image capture, without the distraction of an external microphone. For the first stage of the project, the camera is used to record a process of learning, for example how to focus, zoom or pan, often accompanied by a voice over, recorded from behind the camera, which explained the action we see on screen. This mode of presentation illustrates ideas of accessibility and transparency that are key to the efficacy of a community video project; the theory and practice of community video are made manifest in the aesthetic of the video itself.

Outsider to Insider:

Following the pilot phase, the participants of People Make Videos became more confident with the video camera and the formal structure of the workshops decreased. In small groups of three to five, the participants began to leave the confines of the gallery to take up the role of insider community video makers. The participants interpreted and adapted the approaches and techniques we had seen in the trigger films to produce a number of new videos comparable in their structure, aesthetic and themes to those produced in the 1970s. The videos they produced reflect the aesthetics of similar community video makers in the 1970s such as *Graft On!* and the videos produced by the community participants in *Starting to Happen*. The contemporary videos also took as their focus an issue in the neighbourhood that the group was familiar with and interested in making a video about. This indicates a shift from the outsider mode, with which the project was initiated, to one more aligned to the insider mode. The distinction between the aesthetics of videos made by outsiders and insiders became clear when comparing the video *What Would you Make a Film About?* with those video projects produced subsequently by the People Make Videos participants.

The participants of People Make Videos produced three videos following the pilot phase: one protested the lack of maintenance of a public toilet (*For your public convenience*, 3'04, 2015), another depicted the people who used a market located near the gallery (*How Can We Live Now?*, 4'26, 2015) and a third defended a local drop-in centre threatened with closure (*Save the Church Street Drop-in Centre*, 8'49, 2015). Each of these videos is made up of observational footage intercut with interviews with

local residents who were familiar with the issues the videos sought to understand and reflect on. Unlike the videos made in the 1970s, these videos are all shot in colour.

Black and white footage recorded on video in the 1970s limited the amount of information video makers were able to record and transmit. The framing of shots and the movement of the camera were intended to capture the most visual information and contribute to the audience's overall understanding of the situation being recorded.

Camera pans or reframing are used to find a clearer shot, one that was more in focus or has the correct amount of exposure. For the participants of *People Make Videos*, access to colour video recording created an impulse to pan the camera across a scene in search of something to settle on that visually appealed to the videomaker and hopefully their audience. This echoes the strategy of 'looking-seeing-showing' mentioned previously. In the case of the insider approach, when the camera settles on a frame they would like to capture, it is not only about witness and learning but about sharing something the video maker finds aesthetically pleasing. This is made clear in the video *How Can We Live Now?* (2015), where at the start of a scene the subject of an interview appears at the centre of the frame and slowly the camera begins to pan away. The sound of the interview continues, but a collection of patterned fabrics, brightly coloured fruit and vegetables and the silvery scales of fresh fish fill the frame.



(Figure 15: Scenes from *How Can We Live Now?*)

In the video *Save the Church Street Drop-in Centre* (2015), the subjects being interviewed talk about their vulnerable positions and the role of the centre, which is threatened with closure. The colour footage draws attention to the bright and lively atmosphere of the centre, one that is full of effervescence and dynamic personalities. The video opens with an exterior shot of the building, which is painted red. It fills the frame, and the colour helps to hold our attention, drawing us in. The subsequent footage frames the service users against the bright yellow walls of the interior; their coloured clothing and animated expressions communicate the sociability of the centre.



(Figure 16: Scenes from Save the Church Street Drop-in Centre)

Save the Church Street Drop-in Centre differs from *How Can We Live Now* and *For your public convenience* in the way it frames the subject located in front of the camera. *Save the Church Street Drop-in Centre* is presented as a campaign video with a clear aim, to raise awareness and create support to keep the centre from closing. Like *Forming a Resident's Association* (1974, Graft On!), *How Can We Live Now* and *For your public convenience* use the act of making a video to learn more about a particular issue or subject in their neighbourhood, similar to the video elements in *Starting to Happen* (Liberation Films, 1974).

Each of the interviewees in *Save the Church Street Drop-in Centre* fills the frame. They appear to speak directly to the camera, which holds their gaze, and this in turn

creates a clear sense of urgency and immediacy. The subjects being interviewed in the other two videos are often framed alongside a participant from People Make Videos. We see and hear them together, negotiating their understanding of a given subject or question. The subject rarely looks into the camera. Instead, their point-of-view moves between the interviewer, who is also in frame, and the person holding the camera. This shifting point of view extends out to include the audience, where the person located behind the camera acts as a placeholder for the audience.

The structure and length of each video was dictated by the group and settled upon according to the footage we had collected on each subject. We used simple titles to mark the beginning and end of each video. We edited the footage with Final Cut Pro, which meant that we could easily move clips around and overlay them on a timeline, trying out multiple sequences. As I explained in chapter one of section one, this was not an option in the rudimentary editing techniques available in the 1970s.

We were easily able to overlay the audio from one clip with the footage from another, matching the clearest sound with the clearest or most appropriate image. We sat around a computer and watched all the footage together. I was sat nearest the computer, in order to organise the selected clips on a timeline, while the members discussed what footage they wanted and what order it should be shown in. The group emphasised the need to combine critical insights with elements of humour and observational footage to avoid ‘overwhelming’ the viewer with too much information and hold their attention.

Every decision became a conversation about representation as we collectively navigated our individual understanding of what we wanted the finished video to communicate. This was an approach to collective editing I had seen used in *Starting to Happen*, but instead of being able to make the changes in real time, members of Liberation Films made notes of the participants' suggestions and carried them out later. One scene in *Starting to Happen* takes place in the living room of a participant who, along with members of Balham Action Group, is shown instructing the Liberation Films team on how she wishes them to edit the video they will show later at a community video show. The language adopted by the participants very much replicates that of the professional editor: 'cut here', 'great shot', 'let's use that take'. This scene is located in a domestic space, with the action being dictated by a woman to a group of men. We see her child looking on from the doorway. This reveals the complex set of multiple roles and spaces that community video practices allow for.

The portability of 70s video and its capability for playback with minimal technology meant that those otherwise excluded from the process of editing, perhaps due to commitments in the home or lack of access and confidence, were able engage with the medium very much on their own terms. The familiarity of the context allowed for a confidence in communicating a message specific to the needs of the participants.

Geoff Richman, a member of Liberation Films, explains the complicated relationship they had to the process of editing:

In the process of editing there are two considerations to be made. One is the editing of the story in relation to people's needs and the responsibility we have as an outside group to that. The other consideration concerns the use of montage as a technique of editing – from this comes the power of images placed one after the other.³³⁶

³³⁶ Nigg, Heinz, and Graham Wade. *Community Media: Community Communication in the UK: Video, Local TV, Film, and Photography*. Zürich: Regenbogen-Verlag, 1980, p. 158



People Make Videos, 2015



Starting to Happen, 1974

(Figure 17: Scenes of collective editing in 2015 and in 1974)

Each of the three videos produced by People Make Videos following the pilot phase employs a linear progressive structure that traces the development of the participants' comprehension of the issue it seeks to understand and represent. They begin with establishing shots of an area of the neighbourhood that is relevant to the subject matter, such as the market or the exterior of the public toilets or drop-in centre. These shots are followed by footage of the participants asking general and open questions of members of the public, in order to establish what they might already think or feel about the subject. The interviewer tends to be on camera, alongside the interviewee. When this isn't the case, their voice and the question make up part of the soundtrack. These shots are intercut with observational footage that provides a sense of the

context where the questions are being asked. As the participant behind the camera gathers more information, their understanding of the given situation makes way for more focused questions and a closer interrogation of the subject matter they are seeking to understand and document through the production of the video. The video elements in the first half of *Starting to Happen* are structured and framed in a similar way. First, the participants select the subject matter or line of inquiry. In their case it is focused on safe play spaces for children, the need for a community centre and the way litter is dealt with. Second, the participants use their familiarity with the neighbourhood and their position within it to gain access and ask questions of its inhabitants.

As the previous chapter demonstrated, playback is at the centre of the majority of community video projects, with an inherent element of self-reflection. During the production processes in the 1970s and throughout the People Make Videos project the videomakers are encouraged to call both social and cinematic conventions into question, in order to understand and frame their own position and reflect on the process of producing a video. For example, as the video makers carry out interviews with members of the public, we see and hear their opinions and understanding of a given situation change and develop; we learn and gain understanding as they do. The fluidity of these roles is enabled by and demonstrates the familiarity of the videomaker with the context and subject matter of the video, as well as their lack of a specific and personal authorial agenda. They are able to shift between playful and compassionate roles as they learn more about a given situation. Working from within a familiar context they are able to use the making of a video to explore and make

sense of their surroundings, while the involvement of the community informs and shapes their understanding and experience of it.

Bill Nichols proposes that reflexive documentaries that are politically or socially motivated allow the participants and the audience to ‘acknowledge the way things are but also invoke the way they might become.’³³⁷ This is similar to Jane Gaines’ concept of ‘political mimesis,’³³⁸ where the act of making and/or watching a video positions the maker and/or audience as ‘social actors’³³⁹ who, through being shown what exists, are able to actively and collectively question a given situation. This creates what Nichols describes as ‘a heightened consciousness,’³⁴⁰ which ‘opens up a gap between knowledge and desire, between what is and what might be.’³⁴¹

In the videos made by People Make Videos and the participants of *Starting to Happen*, the questions they ask are answered and extend into a conversation. This in turn engenders a sense of camaraderie between the person behind the camera and the interviewee. In both cases the video maker takes up the role of witness. This is a role that, when the video is screened, the audience takes part in. This is further emphasised by the role of ‘voice’. Each of these videos makes use of a combination of the on-board microphone and a hand-held microphone to capture the voices of the subjects located in front of and behind the camera. Alongside instant playback, the built in microphone, was the unique feature that made newly available portable video recording technology so appealing to community groups and activists in the 1970s.

This function creates an intimacy and immediacy in the footage, where the voice from

³³⁷ Nichols, Bill. *Introduction to Documentary*. Indiana University Press, 2017, p.130

³³⁸ Gaines, Jane M. *Collecting Visible Evidence*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota, 2006. p.88

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ Nichols, Bill. *Introduction to Documentary*. Indiana University Press, 2017, p.130

³⁴¹ Ibid.

behind the camera shifts seamlessly between that of a narrator, describing the action taking place in front of the camera, to that of the inquisitive voice of the interviewer. The participants recording video in *Starting to Happen* and those involved with People Make Videos use a hand held microphone to capture dialogue in which all voices are heard equally. They engage their subjects as their equals, reflected by the interviewer and microphone remaining in the frame.

The set-up of community video shoots in the 1970s was similar to that used in People Make videos. In both cases, the participants were in groups of two or three: one person located behind the camera, and one or two people holding the microphone and asking questions in front of the camera. Interviewees are able to use the opportunity to voice their opinions and share stories, often reflecting on how things have changed and making suggestions for improvements. The participants in the video projects in the 1970s and the participants of People Make Videos were both keen to collect as many different opinions as possible. The people we see are diverse in their appearance and the positions they share are varied and often contradict other opinions. As a point of comparison, in Sue Hall's video, *Ben's Arrest*, which I referred to previously, we do not see the person located behind the camera, and the frame is filled with uniformed policemen with their backs to the camera. The voice is a tool of interrogation, and by extension the camera is Hall's ally, bearing witness and offering protection.



Starting to Happen, 1974



Starting to Happen, 1974



How Can We Live Now, 2015



For your public convenience, 2015

(Figure 18: Street interview scenes from 1974 and 2015)

The participants of the community video projects made in the 1970s and those who participated in People Make Videos had little experience of being represented on their own terms in mainstream media. For many of them the act of being asked their opinion and creating a platform to be heard was welcomed when it originated from within their own community. The interviewer(s) and recording equipment often remain in shot and their questions are heard. The editing and inclusion of voices in this way further conveys the subjects' control over their speech and position. This works on two levels. Firstly it rejects the traditional approach where statements are implausibly edited together to appear as one statement. Secondly, it refuses to hide the presence of the interviewer and other participants who have mediated the subjects' contribution. This enables participants to develop arguments and points of discussion

together, using familiar, often colloquial language. The portability of video cameras and the minimal technological knowledge required works in combination with the familiarity of the subject located in front of the camera.

Mise en Scène and Liminality in Community Video:

The videos produced by community video groups in the 1970s and during People Make Videos take place in a variety of settings. They are shot in interior and exterior spaces, public and private, the location always dictated by the content the video project intends to explore and reveal: for example squats and council meetings for squatters, living rooms and kitchens for women and playgrounds and parks for children. Subjects and participants are seen inside their homes, sitting together on sofas in their living rooms and around kitchen tables or else occupying public and shared spaces such as libraries, crèches and halls. When they take place outside, it is on street corners, in the doorways of shops and houses and walkways and thoroughfares on housing estates. Subjects and video makers are positioned in circles having discussions or in small constellations of three or four people interviewing one another, speaking from both personal experience or making authoritative demands.

The position of the camera affects the way the audience can relate to the action on screen. It is either passed among participants or it pans between them from a fixed point, always at the centre of the action, recording and bearing witness, facilitating and encouraging conversation and reflection. When the scene is of an interview, the interviewer remains in shot and they direct and follow the flow of the conversation with a hand held microphone, which is moved between the subject, the interviewer

and the person located behind the camera. When the microphone is directed at the person behind the camera, the audience is drawn into the action with the suggestion that they too will be listened to.

It is often the case in community video projects that the rooms and spaces where the video recording takes place are familiar to the local audience. In some cases it is also the place where playback occurs. This involves the audience as part of the action, increasing a feeling of inclusivity and representation. This strategy produced a particularly effective experience for the intended audience of the community video project, *Things That Mother Never Told Us* (Interaction, 1977), made in the new town of Milton Keynes, just outside London. The majority of the footage that makes up this video project is of discussions between isolated women, in the manner of affinity groups or consciousness raising groups, made popular by the burgeoning women's movement. The rooms and spaces where the discussions take place were often the living room or kitchen of one of the participants. These spaces would have been familiar, and in many cases the same design as the room into which the programmes were broadcast through a local cable television network. In addition to this, the position of the camera was within the circle of women, drawing the audience into the discussion as their position on their sofa or armchair completes the circle of women seen on screen. The addition of the opportunity for audience members to phone-in live and have their contribution to the discussion broadcast, further encouraged active participation and reflected an aesthetic of inclusion.

Although the video recording technology in the 1970s was portable, it was heavy and difficult to move between locations, particularly while recording. This meant that

most camera movement in the videos produced then is limited to tilts, pans and zooms. The movement and multiple locations in the videos produced by the participants of People Make Videos evidence the contemporary combination of lightweight cameras, automatically adjusted exposure, long battery life and digital memory. These enable easy movement inside and outside and recording for prolonged periods of time.

Film theorist Hamid Naficy describes films made by and about marginalized groups as ‘accented films.’³⁴² Naficy proposes that accented filmmakers originate from liminal positions, displaced through exile, diaspora or due to their ethnicity and this in turn contributes to the aesthetics of the videos produced by these filmmakers.

The variations among the films are driven by many factors, while their similarities stem principally from what the filmmakers have in common: liminal subjectivity and interstitial location in society... What constitutes the accented style is the combination and intersection of these variations and similarities.³⁴³

For Naficy and the participants of People Make Videos, liminality refers to an effect that is the result of living at the edges or in-between spaces of society. It is characterized by myriad positions and experiences of difference and exclusion. The participants of People Make Videos self-identified as elderly, street homeless, living in temporary or precarious housing situations, suffering from mental and physical illnesses, caring for others, subject to financial difficulties and as migrants lacking in English language skills to gain work or access benefits. The participants of community video projects in the 1970s occupied similar precarious and liminal positions; they were squatters, isolated women, social housing tenants and young

³⁴² Naficy, Hamid. *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*. Princeton Univ. Press, 2001 p.11

³⁴³ Ibid.

children.

Nacify describes the work of these filmmakers as taking place ‘in the interstices of social formations and cinematic practices’ in states of ‘tension and dissension... using interstitial and collective modes of production.’³⁴⁴ He suggests that this works to critique dominant and hegemonic systems of oppression and misrepresentation. Nacify points to liminality as that which characterizes ‘accented’ moving image works, while evading a singular or homogenous aesthetic:

As partial, fragmented subjects, these filmmakers are capable of producing ambiguity and doubt about the taken-for-granted values of their home and host societies

For community video, liminality extends beyond the subject and aesthetic to the mode of presentation and the material itself, low-grade videos shown in church halls, libraries and out of the back of vans on street corners. Community videos were made by and about liminal subjects and interstitial locations, with few exceptions, to be shown and shared in similarly liminal spaces. The interstitial locations that appear as backdrops in the videos, reflect the subjectivities of the filmmakers and participants. Each of the videos made following the pilot phase of People Make Videos are made in and about locations that could be described as ‘interstitial’ spaces. The same goes for the community videos produced in the 1970s. They are recorded somewhere between the public and the private and tend to be spaces used by marginalized groups, often occupied precariously or temporarily. *For your public convenience* (2015) is about the closure of a public toilet, *Save the Church Street Drop-in Centre* (2015) is about a space where elderly and at risk residents meet to have a meal and spend time with others and *How Can We Live Now*, (2015) takes place at a temporary street

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

market. Similarly, much of the action in *Starting to Happen* (1974) is about the need for a zebra crossing and it is recorded in libraries, living rooms and the doorways of shops and houses. In *Ben's Arrest* (1972) the focus is on the occupation and forced eviction of temporarily squatted houses, where all of the action takes place on the street and the entrance of a squat. The videomaker positions the audience in these 'in-between' spaces as they stand on the threshold of shops and houses. The microphone is shown reaching across the frame, over fences, counters or market stalls, as if to invite the audience in and to draw the subject out.

I would argue that the liminality that pervades community video has contributed to the exclusion of community video from the wider history of non-fiction filmmaking practices. By this I mean a combination of the low resolution of domestic video, the local and culturally specific subject matter of community videos, the collective aesthetic dictated by the experiences of the marginalised people in front of and behind the camera and the interstitial spaces that the videos document and circulate in.

In order to counter this marginalization I have constructed a language with which to reconsider and reframe community video as an approach to non-fiction moving image production. I have used this language to analyse and understand the aesthetics of community videos produced in the 1970s and compare them to those produced as part of a contemporary community video project. In doing so, I have framed the different positions of insider/participant and outsider/facilitator, who produce and inhabit community videos. This has helped to shape an understanding of the formal structure and processes of each and to use the language I have constructed to describe and conceptualise the specific aesthetics of videos produced in this way.

The trigger films I showed each of the groups created a template that the participants replicated. An engagement with archival materials allowed the participants to situate themselves and the work they were carrying out in a lineage of community activism. As a result of this, the videos produced in the first year of the contemporary community video project directly reactivated the methods used in the 1970s, and the videos they produced are very similar aesthetically. This is illustrated in the similarities noted above. Much like the videos produced in the 1970s, the aesthetics and structure of the videos produced by People Make Videos reflect the experiences and intentions of the subjects located in front of and behind the video camera and are informed by a consideration of the intended audience. What remains problematic is that the trigger films encouraged the participants to simply reproduce the processes carried out by community video groups from the 1970s, and there was too little time for the group to develop their own visual language that related to their needs.

Film theorist Chuck Kleinhans proposes a counterpoint or resolution to this problem and instead suggests that political films need not always conform to the characteristics that have been taken up to present authoritative, seemingly neutral impressions of reality. Instead he proposes a level of experimentation and improvisation that responds and is sympathetic to the participants and intended audience of the project:

[If] we remain aware of the ideological nature of forms, be they realist or avant-garde, we can expand our options to embrace a variety of forms which depend on context, audience, intention and other concerns for effect. We can also be open to using new forms, mixing and creating forms appropriate to new political forces, and new voices within the progressive coalition.³⁴⁵

³⁴⁵ Kleinhans, Chuck. In Waugh, Thomas. *Show Us Life: Toward a History and Aesthetics of the Committed Documentary*. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1984, p.320

In the following chapter I explain how the techniques and approaches developed in the final phase of this project carried a marked difference to those produced in the 1970s and reflect Kleinhans' emphasis on variety and genre blending. During this phase, the participants developed forms and approaches that reflected the members' similarities and differences in experience and intention. The themes and content remained largely the same, but a key difference between those videos produced in phase one and those produced in phase two was the experimental and individualised aesthetic of the footage and editing of their videos, which I will discuss in the next chapter. This also allows me to consider the shifting roles of the participants between insider and outsider and the effect this has on the formal structure and aesthetic qualities of the videos they produced.

Chapter Four: What Remains of 1970s Community Video?

This research is an historical project and a practical one, which has sought to understand what community video was and its function in the current moment. This project has been motivated by the way that radical processes of the past can be mobilized and reactivated in the present. This chapter reflects on the videos produced during the final phase of People Make Videos in order to consider the efficacy of 1970s community video in a contemporary context. During phase one, through the reactivation of 1970s community video practices, the participants developed a familiarity with one another, with the video camera, with the experience of playback and with basic postproduction processes. During the final phase, the participants interpreted and adapted the approaches and techniques they had previously used in order to think and work critically, exploring a specific theme or subject through the production of a video. The processes employed by the participants of People Make Videos and the videos they made are assessed in order to frame reactivation not simply as a process of nostalgic repetition, but of critically responsive reconstruction. Subsequently, I compare community video projects produced in the 1970s to those community videos produced now and examine what remains from 1970s community video that can be abstracted and applied.

Throughout this thesis, community video has been framed as a set of processes that can be adapted and interpreted according to the context in which a project is taking place and the requirements of the group involved in its production. This, in turn, produces videos with a specific set of aesthetic qualities predicated on the intentions and experiences of the participant(s) located behind the camera. The videos produced during the first phase of People Make Videos attest to the way that the processes

involved in an ‘outsider’ and ‘insider’ community video project shape the specific aesthetic and formal qualities of the videos made.

The videos produced during the second, final phase have allowed me to reflect on a ‘hybrid’ community video project, in which the roles of insider and outsider begin to blend into one another. As described in my methodology, hybridity is evidenced in the processes used by the group and the aesthetics of the videos that they produce. It is made possible through the prolonged duration of a project and ongoing access to a shared space to work together. As a result of this, trust between the participants, including myself, increases, which in turn permits the development of a shared verbal and often experimental visual language to develop. This chapter considers how these factors make themselves evident in the moving image projects collectively produced by the participants of People Make Videos. These will be understood in relation to the following factors, each of which in turn relates to the other: the development of what I refer to as ‘cynicism’ in community video projects, the role of production processes that are specific to the individual needs of the participants of a community video project and the appropriation and abstraction of pre-existing moving image practices to produce hybrid and contrasting community videos.

The aim of this project has not simply been to transpose 1970s community video processes into a contemporary context, but, through collectively reactivating these processes, to develop a means to both assess the merits of 1970s community video and critically reflect on the experiences and situations lived by the participants of the People Make Videos. Due to the responsive and contingent nature of how I understand community video practices, it is my argument that any kind of repetition

or direct transposition would be out of the question. The nature of community video practices is such that they can only continue to offer a means of moving image production that is adapted, updated and modified according to and reflective of the specific time and place they are being carried out.

Making Room for ‘Cynicism’ in Utopia:

Most, if not all, of the discussion surrounding community video has been bound up in the rhetoric of ‘empowering’ oppressed groups through the production of video projects. The following description, taken from a contemporary handbook on participatory video, typifies this position:

Participatory Video is a tool for positive social change; it empowers the marginalised and it encourages individuals and communities to take control of their destinies.³⁴⁶

However, as I have argued earlier, framing 1970's community video in terms of ‘empowerment’ and ‘animation’ is misleading and problematic. In particular, community video makers who are in the position to *choose* whether to represent the experiences of those more precarious than themselves tend to perpetuate existing problematic hierarchies and power dynamics. In analysing *People Make Videos*, it was therefore necessary for me to find a critical framework that counterbalances this tendency and help me to avoid repeating this simplistic, utopian position. As I now explain, this framework relies on the concept of ‘cynicism’ understood as a productive, critical tool.

³⁴⁶ Lunch, Nick, and Chris Lunch. *Insights into Participatory Video: a Handbook for the Field*. Insight, 2006, back cover

According to its current usage, cynicism is typically described as that which is motivated by self-interest and often aligned with pessimism and scepticism. This is not the only way this term can be used. By remaining sceptical and critical about the underlying motives and reasons that inform community video practices, a productive understanding of the forces that shape these practices can be facilitated, one that provides guidance and avoids the aforementioned simplistic utopian tendencies. For *People Make Videos*, this cynical stance allowed us to reflect on existing power dynamics and challenge underlying assumptions. One example of this has been to avoid asking: How can we use this new technology in order to empower marginalised groups and unheard voices? Instead I have asked: How is this new technology still able to function as a tool to reflect on our given position and place in the world? Such a cynical position is well suited to video, a medium specifically intended for the working and reworking of an idea or position over or against itself, allowing for critical feedback and responsive adjustment.

This kind of productive cynical framework finds inspiration in postmodern theoretical responses to 1968. In his publication ‘Critique of Cynical Reason’ (1988), Peter Sloterdijk positions cynicism as a key concept of the postmodern period, following the deterioration of the utopian ideals of 1968. This makes it particularly useful when reactivating 1970s community video techniques. Sloterdijk seeks to reframe cynicism as ‘kynicism’ in order to question the status quo, as an ‘intervention in the present aimed at opening up a new space for a cultural and political discourse.’³⁴⁷ More recently, the philosopher Peter Osborne, has written on the role of cynicism in contemporary art, inviting the reader to instrumentalise cynicism as a form of

³⁴⁷ Sloterdijk, Peter, and Andreas Huyssen. *Critique of Cynical Reason*. Translated by Michael Eldred, Minnesota, 2001, p.X

resistance. Osborne proposes that rather than failing to support current forms of art that mobilise and adopt an oppositional or provocative position, it may be that such work is best understood – and practiced – cynically. He concludes: ‘the question is not whether to be cynical, or how to avoid cynicism, but how best to be cynical: in what mode and in what relation to politics.’³⁴⁸

The question of whether it is possible to make a community video project a cynical project is particularly complicated when working with participants who live difficult or precarious lives. This shared experience is one of the ways that the participants of community video projects become bound together. Judith Butler writes that ‘we are in the midst of a biopolitical situation in which diverse populations are increasingly subject to what is called “precaritization.”’³⁴⁹ This term can be understood as a level of uncertainty experienced across certain groups living under contemporary capitalism. The reasons the participants of People Make Videos gave for attending a workshop were as varied as the wish to learn new skills, to feel part of a group or simply to get out of the house, rather than to reflect critically on their experiences. However, their shared experience of precarity also produced a site of alliance, which, in the case of People Make Videos, was made evident by the similarity of the themes of the videos that they chose. These include their experience of homelessness, migration, unemployment and gentrification, all in the context of London.

If community video is a process specifically for/with the precarious – those on low or no income, the unemployed, the elderly, the homeless, the refugee, the teenager –

³⁴⁸ Osborne, Peter, Editor, Nina Montmann. *Scandalous: a Reader on Art and Ethics*. Sternberg Press, 2013, p.43/p.46

³⁴⁹ Butler, Judith. *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*. Harvard Univ Press, 2015, p.15

then, according to Butler, the act of coming together and producing a video, can be understood as a form of protest, as a performative gesture of visibility.

When bodies assemble on the street, in the square, or in other forms of public space (including virtual ones) they are exercising a plural and performative right to appear, one that asserts and instates the body in the midst of the political field, and which in its expressive and signifying function, delivers a bodily demand for a more livable set of economic, social and political conditions no longer afflicted by induced forms of precarity.³⁵⁰

In her writing on the performativity of assembly as a political act, Judith Butler frames the contemporary use of video recording technology by precarious groups in a way that echoes the practice of video by community video. Here Butler draws attention to the collective subjectivities that can be made visible through their assembly and documentation. Rather than framing the use and circulation of video in this context simply as another addition to the overproduction of images, Butler proposes that “the people” become constituted ‘by the conditions of possibility of their appearance.’³⁵¹

Butler continues by arguing for the interdependent relationship between the ‘infrastructural conditions of staging’ and the ‘technological means of capturing and conveying a gathering, a coming together’ that together work to insert and make visible the precarious subject in the public field.³⁵² In doing so, Butler is suggesting that the use of visual media not only works to communicate who ‘the people’ claim to be, but that media has entered into the very definition of the people. She does this by framing this form of mediated representation as one that is ‘self constituting.’³⁵³ For *People Make Videos* then, experiences of precarity were not avoided out of fear of

³⁵⁰ Butler, Judith. *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*. Harvard Univ Press, 2015 p.11

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.19

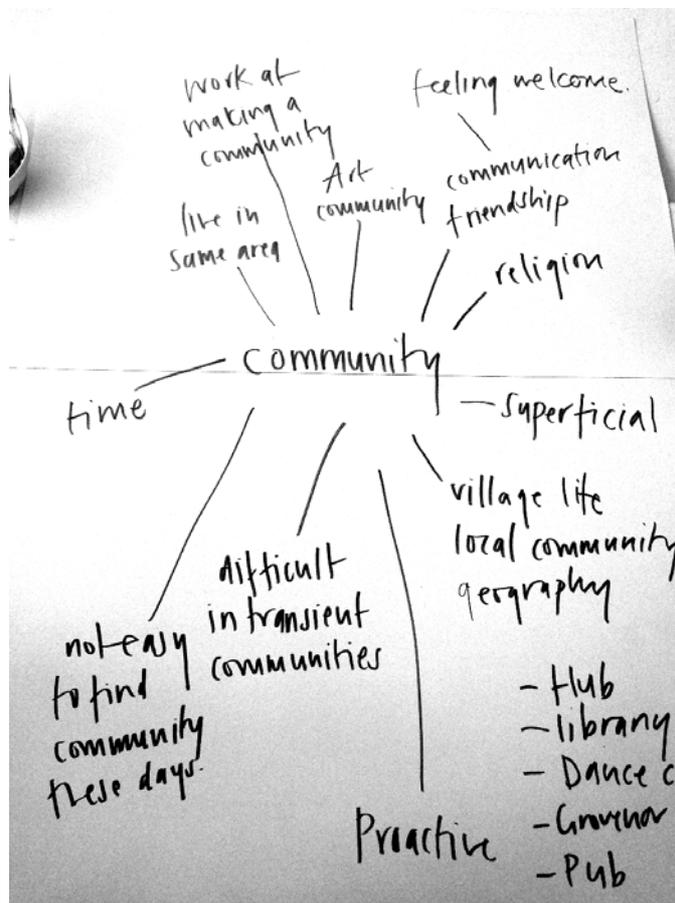
³⁵² *Ibid.*

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, p 20

conflict, rather they allowed for an alliance. Consequently, the act of making a video created a means to explore and represent individual and collective experiences of precarity.

The following is one example of how cynicism became a useful tool for reflection and production. Throughout this project, the idea of ‘community’ was never positioned as inherently positive or preferable; rather, it was under constant scrutiny. Each workshop began with the participants describing their understanding and experience of what this word meant to them.

Together we responded to the questions: What is community? Where is it located? What community do I feel part of? What does it feel like to be part of a community? Community became a useful term to trouble our assumed relationships to one another and the area the workshop took place, which, for most of the participants was also where they lived. Through this process of critical reflection



and discussion, we were able to understand the mutability of this word and how our different understanding of it might be used to shape our subjective experiences and frame the production of a video.

(Above, Figure 19: An example of some notes made during a discussion about the word ‘community’)

Writing on the damaging effects of neo-liberal culture on democratic politics, Jeremy Gilbert suggests that the idea of ‘community’ is a dangerous one, that is all too often evoked in order to diffuse any potential criticism of pre-existing power relations within communities. Instead, Gilbert, like others including Jean Luc Nancy,³⁵⁴ proposes the idea of ‘the common’. For these writers, the ‘common’ functions as a means to explain a shared set of capacities and dispositions with a creative potential among individuals, without necessarily fixing or resolving these positions. It is constructed through what Gilbert describes as a ‘collaborative social process of production’.³⁵⁵ For People Make Videos, the ‘common’ helps to imagine and construct a space for cynicism, which enables dissatisfaction and disparate positions to arise, but also for productive, unexpected outcomes to occur. Gilbert goes as far as to suggest the following:

Any mere celebration of communality, which does not in some sense stage the ongoing perpetual self problematisation of the group and its constituent identities, cannot be democratic in a meaningful sense.³⁵⁶

The intention for the final phase of People Make Videos was for both cynical and utopian positions to be possible. This intention was not understood as one based on unity or sameness, but instead one based on a shared understanding of difference or, as Butler describes it, ‘partiality.’³⁵⁷ Butler uses this term to frame ‘the body politic as

³⁵⁴ Nancy, Jean Luc. ‘On Being in Common.’ Miami Theory Collective, editor. *Community at Loose Ends*. Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1991

³⁵⁵ Gilbert, Jeremy. *Common Ground: Democracy and Collectivity in an Age of Individualism*. Pluto Press, 2014, p.165

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.200

³⁵⁷ Butler, Judith. *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*. Harvard Univ Press, 2018, p.4

‘a unity that can never be,’³⁵⁸ one where full inclusion is not possible, but rather a motivation for its formulation. In doing so, Butler proposes a means to understand how the People Make Videos project allows for the negotiation of difference and the production of new forms of communication.

Cynicism and ‘partiality’ played a key role at the first meeting of the final phase of People Make Videos. I invited all of the participants who had been involved up to that point to meet up, in order to discuss what we might do next and to decide what, if anything, we might make a video about. This decision was prompted by requests to continue working together made by the participants who attended a screening of *What would you make a film about?* (2015). Unlike previous meetings, which were clearly structured around exercises and aims set by me, this meeting was purposefully open-ended. This was made possible because we had already spent a significant amount of time building up trust and a developing a shared language. This meeting also allowed me to begin to explore the manifestations of our hybrid relations, evidenced in how we communicated and made decisions collectively.

The first meeting created the opportunity for productive tension between the participants. Some of them seemed to enjoy this more discursive approach, which allowed for greater autonomy and the freedom to make their own, personal videos. The undefined structure of this meeting resulted in a level of dissatisfaction. One participant voiced her concerns about being ‘bored with talking all the time’ when, in her words, ‘she came to learn how to make a video, not just talk about it.’ Another

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

participant, who found it hard to speak or understand English, showed discomfort in the lack of structure and apparent conflict arising between group members.

All six participants who attended the meeting chose to make videos that combined observational footage with a recorded soundtrack on the themes of gentrification, unemployment or homelessness. In each instance, they were able to position themselves as insiders with a familiar grasp of the subject matter *and* outsiders developing a means to communicate their findings to an audience located outside of the immediate group of participants. Greater freedom and the possibility to develop a personal response to the act of making a community video enabled the participants to negotiate and present a more complex position than that which was demonstrated during the first phase of the project. Hybridity permits this dialectical space of cynicism and reflection to exist, while the production of a video introduces a means for the participants to mediate *how* they choose to engage critically with their surroundings. As I go on to explain, this hybrid position produced videos that, rather than being didactic, presented the participants' findings as responsive, open-ended inquiries.

Processes of Being Seen:

The past ten years have seen political groups develop and experiment with new modes of activism and self-representation that have been useful in rethinking organisational structures for collaboration. Among these are the Occupy movement, following the economic crash in 2008, the UK student movement in 2010 and the formation of direct action groups such as Black Lives Matter and Sisters Uncut in response to increasing structural racism and sexism. Each of these groups makes clear the

continued need for, and importance of, opening up spaces for antagonism, critique and opposition in order to produce new modes of communication, reflective of current social and political concerns. As well as evidencing the ongoing role of collective action, these contemporary movements and groups have also taken up the production of moving images. In order to counter their misrepresentation and offer an alternative to mainstream news, they have produced news stories and documentation of protests and direct actions, which are shared on platforms such as YouTube, Face book and Twitter. I propose that the use of video in this way is comparable to the Newsreel groups in the 60s and 70s, while the production of community videos allows for something different to occur.

From the production processes used to produce them to the aesthetic of the finished video, community video projects are defined by their oppositional nature and the need to construct forms of self-representation and story telling. As in the insider projects in the 1970s, the processes used by the participants to produce their videos are specific to their experience and understanding of the subject they are making a video about. The processes used in community video projects are geared towards the development of cultural forms that are accessible to those who currently inhabit them and those for whom they might be new and unfamiliar. The previous chapters have established the central role that 'process' plays in the production, distribution and presentation of a community video. These processes continue to be contingent on the content and intentions of the video being made and the context in which it is being produced and presented. It is now my intention to examine whether the specific processes used to develop a community video project have changed, to understand the reasons for these changes and to describe the way these changes are made evident.

During the first phase of this project, a selection of community videos made in the 1970s provided examples for the production processes that followed. During the final phase, the group conceived of their own production processes. These were based on their specific intentions and experiences. This methodology echoes the Freirian idea of ‘praxis’, that is ‘reflection and action directed at the structures to be transformed.’³⁵⁹ It occurred at various intervals throughout a project and is evidenced by the critical reflection that took place at each stage of People Make Videos. This iterative process happened in the following ways: when the participants returned from a shoot and watched footage, when they edited footage with one another, when they played back a finished edit for the group. At each stage, the participants altered and revised their conceptions of video production and responded by planning a subsequent action, such as the production of a second video, the addition of more footage or the organisation of a discussion-screening event for a wider audience.

The methods used by the participants of People Make Videos can further be understood as a form of ‘convivial research.’³⁶⁰ This is a useful term, developed contemporaneously with my own project of reactivation and described by its originators at the Center for Convivial Research & Autonomy³⁶¹ as a responsive approach to research, carried out in the ‘heat of the moment.’ It is explained as a form of ‘civic pedagogy’ that seeks to ‘recenter horizontal, insurgent learning and

³⁵⁹ Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Continuum, 2010, p.126

³⁶⁰ Callahan, M. ‘Convivial Research’ *Convivial Research and Insurgent Learning Workshop*, crl.mit.edu/digital.org/convivialres, 2016. Accessed October 2017

³⁶¹ ‘As a small collective dedicated to collective pedagogies, the CCRA currently claims a number of interconnected projects that weave together innovative, community- centered research, learning, and local capacity-building. The CCRA’s investment in co-learning spaces generates critical analytical skills, research tools, facilitation techniques, and community service strategies able to address the intersections of environmental regeneration, community well-being, community safety, food sovereignty, and community health.’

collective research as critical dimensions of political formation and an updated participatory democratic conception of praxis.’³⁶² To frame community video practices that borrow from the 1970s as a form of convivial research is to understand them as collective, community-led, grass roots investigations that oppose the objectification of subaltern groups. The aim of this contemporary community video project was to construct spaces for the continued and shared production of knowledge. In processes of convivial research, this happens in the service of the constituencies the participants occupy and where they seek to address the specific problems impacting them.

The production methods used by the participants were influenced by their changing conception of themselves as the producers of videos and their experience of the videos they made. Filmmaker and theorist Alexandra Juhasz describes this shifting, iterative relationship when writing about her own video work with female prisoners:

From collaborative documentary work we often forge activist communities and identities and shape new meanings of the issues we care about, as well as of the media and our own agency in relation to it.³⁶³

For the participants of *People Make Videos*, this iterative approach resulted in the decision by the group to produce videos that were observational and reflective rather than interventionist. With the exception of *Save the Church Street Drop-in Centre*, which was made as part of a wider campaign, there was no desire expressed by any of the participants to change a given situation through the production of a video, rather to highlight it, share it or better understand it through making a video about it. This could be attributed to the participants’ feeling of powerlessness or of their choice to

³⁶² Callahan, M. ‘Convivial Research.’ *Convivial Research and Insurgent Learning Workshop*, crl.mitodigital.org/convivialres, 2016. Accessed October, 2017

³⁶³ Juhasz, Alexandra. ‘No Woman Is an Object: Realizing the Feminist Collaborative Video.’ *Camera Obscura*, Duke University Press, 22 Jan. 2004, muse.jhu.edu/article/51165, p.80

take the opportunity not to focus on what for many of them would have been the impossible task of changing their situation. Although the participants continued to work collaboratively, the processes they adopted also evidence the introduction of individualism into community video projects.

By their definition, community video processes are always contingent on the context they are being used in and for. However, as the previous chapter makes clear, a number of aspects from the production processes used in the 1970s still remain. These include the effect of the duration of a project, the way technology is introduced to the group, the role of playback, the development of an anti-hierarchical, horizontal organising structure and a reliance on a form of consensus decision-making. The latter two factors allow for the equal recognition of multiple roles, skills and experiences and encourage productive debates, where full agreement is not the aim, rather a shared understanding of what the conditions of disagreement are. This particular mode of collective organising has been articulated in Hardt and Negri's concept of the 'multitude.'³⁶⁴ Although by its nature the 'multitude' has been a difficult term to define, it is best understood as an organising principle where the relations between the participants of a group aim to be democratic and collectively driven. In the words of Hardt and Negri, it is 'a constant process of metamorphosis grounded in the common.'³⁶⁵ It is a useful term to position alongside 'the common,' as it describes a collective organising principle that accounts for the existence of individual difference. It also functions to undermine the potentially homogenizing affect of the word 'community'.

³⁶⁴ Hardt, Michael, and Antonio Negri. *Commonwealth*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.* p.173

One key difference between the processes used in community video projects produced in the 1970s and those used during People Make Videos is the role and impact of individualism. This was evidenced by participants' wish to remain self-reliant and produce videos independently of one another. Following our first meeting, rather than collaborate on one single video project, each of the participants was keen to carry out their own, individual video project. This did not mean that they were unable or unwilling to share in the production process. In fact, the group decided upon the methods they used to produce their individual videos collectively. Together, we developed what I described previously as the 'relay approach.' Briefly, this involved the participants taking turns with the video camera, recording footage and sharing it with the group. One after the other, a different participant would borrow the video camera to record their own footage, inspired by what they had seen recorded by the previous participant. It was because of this that there was a cohesion and relationship between the individual videos that were produced, both thematically and aesthetically.

This individualised approach was made possible by the participants' familiarity with the video camera, the portability of the camera itself, and the level of media fluency, which amongst other things was made evident by their desire to work alone and the relaxed attitude the participants demonstrated in front of and behind the camera. Each of the participants agreed to borrow the video camera for a week or two to collect their footage. We would then watch the footage back collectively and help one another make decisions about what it might benefit from and how it might be improved. A number of the participants also helped one another behind the camera, recording sound material and helping to make editorial decisions.

The process described above does not assume that the individual and the collective are antithetical positions; instead it suggests that the formation of each is in relation to the other. The collective structure of the People Make Videos group allowed for a space for the construction of an individual contribution within it. The formulation of a collective project made up of individuals can be understood in terms of the proposition made by Jean Luc Nancy's in his essay 'Being Singular Plural'. Nancy states that the constitution of the identity of an entity is always relational. He writes 'prior to "me" and "you", the self is like a "we".'³⁶⁶ By invoking Nancy's claim of an individual identity that is constituted by its relation to an 'other', one is able to understand the way that 1970s community video processes can be adapted to include individuality, without undermining or undoing what it is that defines community video. This is central to understanding how community video might continue to function in a contemporary context.

This approach follows on from the work of feminist community video makers in the late-1970s and groups like Black Audio Film Collective in the early-1980s who sought to make videos that recognised and represented difference within the construction of a collective identity. One of my arguments for the continued efficacy of community video is that it allows for these two to not only co-exist, but also benefit one another. In fact, the connections and disruptions that arise when there is space for individual expression and difference to occur allow participants to understand and interpret their subjective position.

³⁶⁶ Nancy, Jean-Luc, and Robert D. Richardson. *Being Singular Plural*. Stanford Univ. Press, 2000. p.94

What I have described above is the formulation of a collective project based on the individual needs of its participants. This was made possible by the processes we used, developed from the hybrid positions the participants, including myself, came to occupy. Insider community video projects tend to speak on behalf of the collective they see themselves as being part of, for example a tenants association demanding a change to their rights, a specific childcare group proposing a new system of funding or a sector of society protesting about their treatment. Outsider community video projects attempt to create a space where individuals can share their collective experience of a single issue or subject, for example a problem with traffic in a built up area, the provision of after school activities in a given neighbourhood or the treatment of particular social or political moment. Hybrid community video projects invite the participants to navigate and choose how they engage with a given issue or theme, either collectively, individually or a combination of the two.

The processes used in the final stage of People Make Videos were characterized by the shared desire of the participants to question themselves and a refusal to fix the identity of the group. Hybridity allowed for these processes to unfold iteratively and individually. As in the 1970s, the motivation for the participants to develop new forms of self-representation formed out of non- hierarchical organising structures. However, improvements in portable video cameras paired with the development of the participants' own confidence with the technology meant that the processes the participants used focused on the needs of the individual. This meant that each individual became constitutive of a group whose structure encouraged the development of the needs and intentions of the individuals involved.

Absorption, Appropriation and Hybrid Images:

My analysis of the videos produced during the final phase focuses on the way the participants adapted 1970s community video processes to deploy a range of appropriated contemporary representational strategies. The visual artist Sharon Hayes uses the concept of ‘absorption’ to describe the way that history might be appropriated in the present moment through the methodologies of ‘citation, anachronism and respeaking.’³⁶⁷ Each of these methods is used by Hayes to locate historical materials and moments in the present to disrupt a linear understanding or presentation of history. Similarly, community videos produced in the 1970s functioned as triggers for the production of contemporary video projects, which in turn opened up a space in the final stage to absorb what continues to be deemed as radical and useful in the current moment. Like the reactivation of 1970s community video, Hayes makes use of historical materials to, in her words, ‘uncover, in the present moment, a given historic genealogy that was willfully obscured or erased; or to unspool a historic trajectory so that another present or future moment might have been, or might be possible.’³⁶⁸

The videos produced during the final phase were made by absorbing and then abstracting the processes used in the 1970s. This resulted in videos that are representative of the specific experiences of the person positioned behind the camera. These contemporary videos shared the following aesthetic qualities with community videos produced in the 1970s, which I focused on in the previous chapter: a roving,

³⁶⁷ Hayes, Sharon. ‘Temporal Relations.’ Lorenz, Renate, editor. *Not Now! Now!: Chronopolitics, Art & Research*. Sternberg Press, 2014 p.70

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.71

unfixed camera, which simultaneously, looks, sees and shows; a soundtrack partially made up of exchanges between a voice that emanates from behind the camera and the voice of an interviewee or subject located in front of the camera; and liminal locations that include shop counters, doorways and street corners and equally diverse voices.

However, the difference between these two approaches, evidenced in the aesthetics of the videos the participants produced, appear in the following ways: the appropriation and combination of multiple genres and styles, the use of fast-cut editing and juxtaposition, the inclusion of autobiographical, self-reflective elements and the addition of non-diegetic sound to create polyphonic, soundtracks. I distinguish the videos made by People Make Videos from community videos produced in the 1970s by likening their aesthetics to a number of non-fiction moving image strategies, including music video, documentary, auto-biography, video-diary and experimental film. Each of the videos made by the participants of People Make Videos combines various styles and approaches to filmmaking. This mode of appropriation and genre-blending has similarities to the videos produced in the years preceding 1970s community video by newly formed video groups in the early 1980s, such as Black Audio Film Collective (1982) and Sankofa Film/Video Collective (1983). Responding to the emergence of 'identity politics', their focus was on racial politics and representation, influenced by contemporary debates on post-colonialism and the ideas of social theorists such as Homi Bhabha and Stuart Hall.

The videos made by both of these groups centre on investigations of black identity and culture within the British experience and serve as examples of the reworking of the documentary form to articulate new voices. Community video maker Tony

Dowmunt has since described the work of Sankofa as representing a move from what was considered community video in the 1970s to what it would go on to look like in the 1980s: 'It feels like it's both very political and very community orientated...but also it is kind of aesthetically adventurous. It felt like it changed the language in some sense of agitating filmmaking and community filmmaking.'³⁶⁹ In a number of ways the production processes used by these groups echoed those of earlier community video projects, taking up non-hierarchical methods of organization, in the case of both Sankofa and Black Audio Film Collective and shared authorship in the case Black Audio Film Collective, to represent the voices of marginalised, misrepresented and ignored groups. However, members of both organizations often chose to be credited as individual directors and the aesthetic of their finished videos departed from what had come before. To represent the various viewpoints and stories that make up the subject matter of their videos (including *Who Killed Colin Roach?*, 1983, directed by Isaac Julien, a member of Sankofa, and *Handsworth Songs*, 1986, directed by John Akomfrah and produced by Lina Gopaul, members of BAFC), they used newly available colour video and drew on the 'cut and paste' aesthetic, which was made possible by developments in editing technology and popularised by contemporary music videos. The experimental editing style they took up made use of freeze-frame and slow motion techniques, which serve to hold the attention of the audience on specific, intimate and personal moments. The inclusion of found-footage from news broadcasts, cartoons and adverts subverted pop-cultural references, presenting them in a visual language specifically geared towards sub-cultural interests.

³⁶⁹ Transcript of Interview with Tony Dowmunt by Heinz Nigg and Andy Porter, UK, 2015, www.the-lcva.co.uk, accessed August, 2017

The videos produced by the participants of People Make Videos are similarly responsive to the context they are produced in, in their case London, and reflective of the contemporary image culture the makers regularly encounter. London provides the backdrop for each of the six videos made during the second phase of People Make Videos. In this way they are evocative of an approach to non-fiction moving image production indebted to modernist portraits of cities that go back as far as the 1920s, such as Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin: Symphony of a Metropolis* (1927) or Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* (1928). A more recent comparison would be to the work of the experimental filmmaker Patrick Keiller, whose own portraits of London, *London* (1994) and *Robinson in Space* (1997), are similarly characterized by a hybrid approach to filmmaking. Both of these films by Keiller combine experimental self-reflection with documentary and direct address, set in dialogue with a changing cityscape.

All six of the videos made by the participants of People Make Videos adapt or react to ideas of authenticity permitted by observational documentary forms. The art historian Paolo Magagnoli has explained how the contemporary appropriation and abstraction of documentary methods allows for the possibility for 'truth' to be preserved through new and various modes of non-fiction production. Far from simply being a sceptical rejection of documentary techniques, there is instead what he describes as the construction of 'affective truths and subjective truths, which contribute to giving a more complex account of life.'³⁷⁰

³⁷⁰ Magagnoli, Paolo. *Documents of Utopia: The Politics of Experimental Documentary*. New York: Wallflower, 2015, p.56

Three of the six videos produced by the participants explore the themes of unemployment (*YOU UP FOR IT*, 2016), gentrification (*Work in Progress*, 2016) and homelessness (*Home*, 2016). These three videos are largely comprised of fast-cut, short takes of street scenes, layered with a lyrical soundtrack that is atmospheric and impressionistic. They can be best understood as having an observational documentary aesthetic combined with what is typically associated with the form of a music video. By this I mean that they are comprised of the following characteristic elements: 'surrealism, jump cuts, comedy, repetition and documentary modes.'³⁷¹

The other three videos produced during this final phase also refer to the documentary form, but are particularly diaristic and personal in nature. They include two portraits of walks taken by individual video makers (*Sunrise/Sunset*, 2016 and *Migration*, 2016) and a study of a fabric shop that one of the participants visits regularly (*Silk Cuts*, 2016). Each of these videos takes the production of a video as an opportunity for the participants to reflect on a personal experience of the city; the camera functions as a tool to look, see, record and share what is familiar to the person located behind the camera.

Dissonance and Polyphony:

The participants who made *YOU UP FOR IT*, *Home* and *Work in Progress* all made videos that examine similar themes and resemble one another aesthetically.³⁷² Each combines recognizable observational documentary techniques with more

³⁷¹ Manghani, Sunil. 'The Pleasures of (Music) Video.' *Music/Video: Histories, Aesthetics, Media*, edited by Gina Arnold, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2017, p.25

³⁷² In fact, all three videomakers borrowed footage and sound clips from each other for use in their own videos and.

experimental, lyrical methods. *Work in Progress*, for example is aesthetically distinct from 1970s community videos. In the words of the participant who made it, this four and a half minute video is an exploration of 'gentrification and London'. It is made up of footage recorded in different parts of London. This is occasionally intercut with a composite image of a satellite photograph of London, overlaid with the outline of the board from the game Monopoly, to comment on the acquisitive treatment of London by property developers. The editing is rapid and the majority of the shots are only a few seconds in length. It is motivated by rhythm rather than a narrative, progressive structure. The camera searches along roads, stairwells and busy streets. Panning frenetically from left to right and up and down; we are shown graffiti and banners opposing gentrification.

The soundtrack consists of diegetic sounds of the city such as drilling, traffic noises and a busy market combined with the audio from short interviews with two people reflecting on changes in the cost of rent and land use. The videomaker, who asks questions from behind the camera, conducts these. This is blended with non-diegetic recordings of the People Make Videos group reading fragments of a poem by William Blake called *London* and of one participant whistling the tune of 'Maybe it's Because I'm a Londoner'. The video maker also makes use of a barely comprehensible audio recording of an auctioneer, which sounds like a machine-gun delivery of random numbers and words. Like the composite image of the Monopoly board, this serves to frame London as a marketplace for buying and selling at high cost and high risk.

The overall effect is one of alienation and dissonance, portraying the city as a place of change, movement and unrest. This is emphasized by the combination of sped up and

repeated shots of street scenes with slow motion footage of a ball bouncing down a set of stone steps or quiet moments of beauty such as the light of the morning sun refracted through a collection of coloured glass on a windowsill. The montage-style editing technique is representative of the juxtapositions experienced during the participants' own encounters navigating the city. Such contrasting positions became evident when the camera pans from the construction of a new and expensive looking high rise to a collection of makeshift shelters for homeless people, located under a bridge within sight of the new development. The video is a patchwork of firsthand experiences mediated by the video camera and modified through a dense and demanding editing process.

The iterative production process enabled the participant to spend time working on multiple paper-edits, and the opportunity to collaborate with the other participants allowed him to record extra footage and blend multiple positions and experiences into a single video. The video ends with a scene that typifies many of the elements that distinguish this video from those produced in the 1970s. Rather than relying on the documentation of direct experiences and speech acts, the video maker uses montage to leave the viewer with an atmospheric impression of the London he wanted to portray. The final scene shows the reflection of a sunset on the Thames, which is paired with a soundtrack that mixes the sound of lapping waves, construction work, the repetition of the faint whistle of 'Maybe its because I'm a Londoner' and the sound of the auctioneer. Combining diegetic and non-diegetic sound creates a polyphonic soundtrack, emulating the multiple subject positions and the variety of experiences encountered by the participant as he moved through the city with a video camera.

The Personal and the Political:

Sunrise/Sunset, Migration and *Silk Cuts* invite a more reflective view of urban life in pace and intention than the previous three videos and are similarly distinct from the community videos produced in the 1970s. In these videos, the camera moves slowly and rests for longer on subjects in moments of contemplation or further investigation. This is signified either through the use of the digital zoom function on the camera or an observation or question spoken from behind the camera. Similarly, these videos combine footage of an experience of London with a mixture of diegetic sound and a voiceover recorded and added during postproduction. In the case of these videos, the voiceover is slow and considered, offering a poetic and personal experience of the participants' experience behind the camera.

Although they were produced using community video processes, in documentary terms it is helpful to frame these videos as similar in intention and aesthetic to what documentary theorist Laura Rascoroli refers to as 'first person documentaries'. These are non-fiction films that serve a similar function to a diary or notebook.

In these films, the author often becomes the true hero of the text, and its focal point; everything is overtly filtered through his or her sensibility and point of view, to the extent that, at times, the films compellingly approximate the confessional style... The camera is used 'as a pen' to produce a personal and reflective discourse.³⁷³

The term 'new autobiography'³⁷⁴ was coined by the critic and writer P. Adams Sitney to describe experimental, personal diary films made by filmmakers in the 1960s,

³⁷³ Rascoroli, Laura. *The Personal Camera: Subjective Cinema and the Essay Film*. Wallflower, 2009 p.106/108

³⁷⁴ Sitney, P. Adams 'Autobiography in Avant-Garde Film,' in *The Avant-Garde Film: A Reader of Theory and Criticism*, ed. P. Adams Sitney New York: New York University Press, 1978, p.246

including Jonas Mekas and Stan Brakhage. This new level of self-reflection became a ‘pandemic trope in sixties film’³⁷⁵ when, as art historian David James notes, ‘the director, the process of filmmaking, the conventions of storytelling and the act of viewing were all placed in the foreground.’³⁷⁶ These hybrid autobiographical filmmaking practices foreshadowed the introduction of video as a technology specifically inscribed with self-expression. In her recent writing on autobiography and video, theorist and historian Ina Blom positions video, through its etymology, as ‘ontologically tied to the first-person perspective of an individual subject.’³⁷⁷

The term “video” – the first-person present-tense conjugation of the Latin verb *videre* – literally means “I see,” rather than “you see” (*videt*) or “we see” (*videmus*)... Video is, so to speak, the medium of individuality being processed through the first-person present tense. Only live signals could imbue the still shaky historical construction of the individual subject with the indisputable present, authority – and contingency – of a distinct life force.³⁷⁸

Both the experimental autobiographical films of the 1960s and the framing of video as a mode of self-expression set a precedent for the reflective personal portraits made by the participants of People Make Videos who, like their experimental and documentary counterparts, also made videos to show their lives as they see and experience them.

The videos made as a result of People Make Videos are representative of both the experience of the participants living in London and their familiarity with contemporary forms of image making that specifically centre autobiographical content. The use of video in this way, as with all of the videos produced by People Make Videos, is evidence of how moving image production was understood and why the participants of People Make Videos took it up. Michael Fischer has described self-

³⁷⁵ James, David E. *Allegories of Cinema: American Film in the Sixties*. Princeton University Press, 1989 p. 283

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁷ Blom, Ina. *The Autobiography of Video*. Sternberg Press, 2016, p.38

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.38-39

reflection and autobiography in film and video practices as ‘an exploration of the fragmented and dispersed identities of late twentieth century pluralist society.’³⁷⁹ By centering the personal and subjective position of the filmmaker, the self-reflective, autobiographical form locates the narrator as what Fischer describes, an ‘inscribed figure within the text, whose manipulation calls attention to authority figures.’³⁸⁰ This in turn allows the videomaker to reflect on their experience of these figures and critically respond to them, through the ‘self-constituting’ process of video production.

The autobiographical mode continues to be a familiar trope of moving image production, made popular by reality television formats and video diaries, and made possible by websites such YouTube and increased access to personal video cameras. For the videos made as a result of People Make Videos, the autobiographical and the personal do not replace the political, but serve to represent it. The participants who made these videos did so to reflect on, record from and respond to encounters from their everyday lives. Unlike many diaristic videos made for YouTube, which typically are individually produced with no specific audience in mind, these videos were made as part of a community project that sought to collectively capture and share the individual experiences of the participants.

Each of the participants who made these videos occupies what would be deemed as precarious positions in society. All three of the video makers are elderly, living on low to no income. One lives in sheltered housing, one identifies as homeless and the third is a woman of color who speaks minimal English. For each of these participants,

³⁷⁹ Michael M. J. Fischer, ‘Ethnicity and the Post-Modern Arts of Memory,’ in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, ed. James Clifford and George E Marcus Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986 pp. 194-233, quoted in Catherine Russell, *Experimental Ethnography: The Work of Film in the Age of Video USA*: Duke University Press 1999 p.276

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

making a video is illustrative of Butler's idea of subjective self-constitution through image production, a process where the production of a video was equally as important as the invitation to share and reflect on the specific way that they see and experience the city.

Sunrise/Sunset is a six and a half minute video that maps a walk taken by the video maker from the Showroom Gallery, where the video workshops took place, to West London Day Centre, where the video maker was exhibiting some of his drawings as part of a group exhibition. There is very little editing, the video maker simply collated all of the footage he recorded in the order he videoed it. He leaves in scenes where the camera recorded footage while held on its side, which simultaneously attests to the completist nature of a survey and the idiosyncrasies produced by individual experience. The sound design is simple, combining a voiceover and a recording of the maker's footsteps with the sounds captured by the camera's built-in microphone. This serves to illustrate the way the maker located his experience of the city as central to the video's production.

The video begins with a wide shot of the exterior of the Showroom Gallery. This is accompanied by a voiceover, recorded and added after the footage was recorded. The voiceover describes the short walk we are about to be shown. Holding the camera just below eye level, the participant records his walk through an underpass and takes in the empty bed of a homeless person. This is followed by a shot of the exterior of the crown court, from which the camera pans to reveal a passing recycling truck. All of these elements are treated with the same gaze. As the camera moves from building to street scene and back again, so too does our attention. As the video progresses, the

duration of the shots extends. This suggests the increasing confidence and curiosity of the video maker. By the time we reach the destination, the exhibition, the footage has taken on a near forensic quality. The camera takes in whole rooms, slowly moving from left to right, tracing pipes and cables around corners. The camera occasionally settles on a composition that holds the interest of the video maker, such as a selection of three cakes recorded from above or their reflection in a silver coffee pot. As much attention is given to the half eaten Swiss roll on the table as to the art exhibited on the walls. As the videomaker leaves the interior of the day centre, his gaze and the camera is held by the sunset, which provides the opportunity for the video maker to reflect on the sunrises he experiences most mornings. He ends the film with a fade from the sunset to black, which is paired with a description of the birds he hears and sees most mornings. Whether this reference was purposeful or accidental, it echoes the descriptions of birds featured in another personal and autobiographical video made as part of People Make Videos called *Migration*.

Migration is about the various birds the video maker sees when walking from the sheltered housing he lives in, through Regent's Park, to the Showroom, where the workshop took place. After this participant recorded his footage, he then made a sound recording of a lyrical poem, which provided a soundtrack for his finished video. The poem describes the types of birds in the park and their migration patterns. The author then relates them to the migration of people and the displacement experienced by some inhabitants of London. The footage in both of these videos is similar in the content and aesthetic to the videos made during phase one. It uses an observational, moving camera that rarely settles on any subject for more than ten seconds. However, it differs to the videos made during the first stage, and those

videos produced in the 1970s, because instead of using a voiceover to explain, explore or clarify their position, it is used construct and communicate a poetic impression.

The different approaches and aesthetic effects of each of the individual videos produced by the participants of *People Make Videos* were vividly in evidence when they were shown together, one after the other, at the final screening event. Instead of proposing a homogenous set of intentions and experiences, the differences between each video served to highlight the multiplicity of ways each individual participant experienced living in London.

Hybridity and the production of Hybrid Images:

Contemporary film and media theorist Jihoon Kim has used the term ‘hybrid images’ to describe the ‘dissolution of the boundaries between one art form and another’³⁸¹ in the production of contemporary moving image projects. Kim has charted the conditions of ‘post media’ from the 1990s onwards, as defined and understood by the precipitation of the flexibility of media images. Kim is useful here, as his work follows on from Rosalind Krauss’ term ‘post medium,’³⁸² which was developed at the end of the 1970s following the increased use of new video technology by many artists. Both Kim’s ‘Post Media’ and Krauss’ ‘Post Medium’ position the take up of new media technologies as enabling a ‘heterogeneity of activities that could not be theorised as coherent or conceived as having something like an essence or unifying

³⁸¹ Kim, Jihoon. *Between Film, Video, and the Digital: Hybrid Moving Images in the Post-Media Age*. Bloomsbury Academic USA, 2018 p.10

³⁸² Krauss, Rosalind E. ‘A Voyage on the North Sea,’ *Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition*. Thames & Hudson, 1999, p.31

core' and instead lead to the production of work that 'occupied a discursive chaos.'³⁸³

Media theorist and historian Peter Weibel defines the 'Post-Media Condition' as one in which 'no single medium is dominant any longer; instead, all of the different media influence and determine each other.'³⁸⁴ Weibel goes on to suggest that in earlier artistic phases, such as the advancement of painting and photography, an effort was made by practitioners to explore the specific material qualities of each respective medium, whereas the post-media condition is understood only by the 'the mixing of the media', each intermingling to support and change one another.

Increased exposure to hybrid images that blend media, genres, structures and aesthetic references, in the form of television programmes, advertising and online videos, resulted in the production of similar videos by the participants of People Make Videos. Kim relevantly relates the production of art works that obscure 'established distinctions between different media arts, including cinema, video art and digital art' to an increased exposure to volatile images, with these new forms of hybrid image not only coexisting, but also influencing one another.³⁸⁵

Rather than attempting to replicate any single approach to moving image production, the participants of People Make Videos adapted and abstracted traditional and recognizable forms of moving image production. In doing so, the individual needs of the participants were met and remained uncompromised by any pre-conceived idea of

³⁸³ Kim, Jihoon. *Between Film, Video, and the Digital: Hybrid Moving Images in the Post-Media Age*. Bloomsbury Academic USA, 2018 p.11

³⁸⁴ Weibel, Peter. 'The Post-Media Condition.' *Mute*, 19 Mar. 2012, www.metamute.org/editorial/lab/post-media-condition. Accessed October 2017

³⁸⁵ Kim, Jihoon. *Between Film, Video, and the Digital: Hybrid Moving Images in the Post-Media Age*. Bloomsbury Academic USA, 2016, p.3

what a community video must or must not look like. This approach is exemplary of the contingency that defined 1970s community video projects. The hybrid images produced by the participants of People Make Videos are the result of a hybrid community video project, one characterised by its open nature and represented through the variety of collectively determined production processes and outcomes.

Ranciere proposes the useful term ‘dis-identification’ to describe the collective production of difference and heterogeneity in this way. Dis-identification can be understood as a subjective experience that disrupts any singular, presupposed expectation of a shared encounter. Instead, what is produced is a collection of differing possibilities for imagining and understanding individual responses to a similar experience. According to Ranciere, this does not produce an argument for what must happen or be achieved by a collective. It is ‘a multiplication of connections and disconnections that reframe the relation between bodies, the world they live in and the way in which they are “equipped” to adapt to it.’³⁸⁶ For this reason, processes of dis-identification, which, in this case, were made possible by a hybrid community video project, allow for ‘new modes of political construction’ and ‘new possibilities of collective enunciation.’³⁸⁷ I will return to Ranciere’s concept of ‘disidentification’ in my concluding section.

Unlike 1970s community video practices, which were characterized by collaborative production and intervention, the processes taken up by People Make Videos were collectively agreed upon but individually directed and they were self-reflective and experimental. While the processes that informed the production of these final videos

³⁸⁶ Ranciere, Jacques and Gregory Elliott, *The Emancipated Spectator*, Verso, 2011, p.72

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

were triggered by the reactivation of 1970s community video projects, their adaptation meant the videos that were produced remain distinct from their predecessors. Aside from the use of updated camera and editing technology, this was made evident by the contemporary themes of the videos, which were framed and presented as reflective of the personal experiences of the participants. The videos continued to share similar aesthetic tropes with some of the original 1970s community videos. However, the formal decisions made by the participants did not repeat previous incarnations but, in their hybrid form, remained responsive to the content of the videos and reflective of the contemporary context in which they were produced.

Outcomes and Intentions: Evaluating the Continued Efficacy of 1970s

Community Video Practices

The collaborative documentary is more nuanced or self-aware about the relations of mutuality existing between even those who are separated... even a fully realized and successful collaboration cannot fully undo the divides of difference, position, and victimization that define documentary.³⁸⁸

The statement above, from Alexandra Juhasz, speaks to the irresolvable tensions that exist when carrying out a project that grapples with complex modes of representation. To conclude this thesis I respond to the original question set out in my abstract: What do 1970s community video practices continue to offer? The intended outcomes of community videos projects are by definition, various, unknown, moveable and dependent on the participants, context and content of the video project. This means that any clear measures of success are often difficult or futile to ascertain. I asked the participants of *People Make Videos* what they learned from the experience of being involved in the project. The range of their answers illustrates this variety:

‘I would like to say that it is my first experience using video cameras with people, and I have learnt many things. I have enjoyed lots, and when I first came, I had no idea what to expect.’

‘You need structure, deadlines and time frames.’

‘It is good to exchange and explore with the people you are working with. They all have stories to tell.’

‘As contentious and complex as it has been to define the/a ‘community’ in relation to our video making, the outcomes hold a structural feeling that is both personal and collective to us as a group.’

‘Listen, learn and be open to others. It is a process and reflects life; you will learn a lot about yourself and gain new skills.’

‘Letting go in collaboration.’³⁸⁹

³⁸⁸ Juhasz, A. ‘No Woman Is an Object: Realizing the Feminist Collaborative Video. *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies*, vol. 18, no. 3 54, 2003, p.75/76

³⁸⁹ All quotations appear in: Webb-Ingall, Edward, *People Make Videos: A Manual for Making Community Videos*, Art Quarters Press, 2016.

The complication involved in measuring the success and efficacy of a community video project was touched upon at the end of chapter three of part one of this thesis. Neither the critique of community video by Caroline Heller or the response by Peter Lewis were able to offer a means to assess the outcome of a community video project without using an externally produced evaluative framework. It is the aim of this final chapter to propose a resolution to the problem of measuring the success or efficacy of a community video project based on an internally agreed upon set of measures, made possible, in part, due to the specific nature of a 'hybrid' community video project.

Reflecting on the role of radical political documentary, film theorist Chuck Kleinhans suggests the following: 'to witness, move and interpret is not enough. We must also produce documentaries which deal with why things are the way they are and how they might change and be changed.'³⁹⁰ Thomas Waugh uses the expression 'committed documentary' to describe politically motivated non-fiction films made to 'try to change' the world, where the film or video project is the realization of a utopian ideal, rather than an instrument for creating the change. Due to its relationship to other forms of activism, which tend to have one clear goal, there is often the supposition that the success of a community video project must be measured by a recognised, locatable and tangible change. For example, if a video project were about the need for safe play spaces for children, the success of the video would be based on the creation of a new play area as result of a video being made and seen. Or if a video project were initiated to look into policing in a certain neighbourhood, only when the police had seen the video and adapted their policies would a video project be deemed worthwhile. This equation is of course problematic and evaluates success in relation

³⁹⁰ Kleinhans, Chuck. 'Forms, Politics, Makers and Contexts: Basic Issues for a Theory of Radical Political Documentary,' in "*Show Us Life" Toward a History and Aesthetics of the Committed Documentary*. Ed. Thomas Waugh. Metuchen, N. J., and London: Scarecrow, 1984 p.320

to a set of principles outside of the control of those involved in the project. It also draws attention to a complex set of value systems that are projected onto community video projects, often by people not involved in the project. These systems include assumptions about who ought to decide what or how much change would be considered successful and on whose terms.

Su Braden sets out the following thinking in relation to measuring the success of a community arts project, outlining the need for any form of evaluation to originate from the community themselves:

A scheme is likely to be more successful if the community is really keen to adopt an artist in residence and if the artist wants to relate to the community and is capable of doing so. Again, the community should participate in the formulation of the idea, selection of the artist, and management of the scheme. Proposals should include ways of independently evaluating each scheme, and this implies that there should be some definition of objectives from the outset.³⁹¹

The measures of success or effectiveness listed by Liberation Films include the number and variety of people involved in a project or who attend a screening event, the level of engagement in discussion and the development of new relationships through shared concerns. Liberation Films describe this as ‘drawing a wider cross section of people together, in identifying areas of concern and in encouraging participation in working towards social change.’³⁹² They also place equal emphasis on entertainment and the stimulation of discussion towards social action. In their own words Liberation Films describe their aims as follows:

To help people seek an understanding of the society and community in which they live. To raise questions of control and responsibility in this society. Generally to help people understand the forces that control their lives, in such

³⁹¹ Braden, Su. *Artists and People*. London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1978, p.119

³⁹² Nigg, Heinz, and Graham Wade. *Community Media: Community Communication in the UK: Video, Local TV, Film, and Photography*. Zürich: Regenbogen-Verlag, 1980, p.138

a context and style that liberation is seen as a necessary step towards building a truly self-determining and socialist society.³⁹³

Some years after Liberation Films had disbanded, Geoff Richman, one of the founding members of Liberation Films, was asked about the effect of showing their work to small groups of people as opposed to utilising access to television to communicate with larger audiences. Richman's response was to draw attention to their key motivation of 'keeping alive ideas in peoples working practice.' He goes on to frame the motivation for community video in the following way: 'There is a ferment in society that people don't believe is there until it's given an environment. What sustained us was the idea that those people who have been in those little groups will do something that otherwise couldn't be done.'³⁹⁴

The suggestion that an outsider might feel like they can somehow 'enable' or help a community to change can be incredibly problematic in terms of what this then assumes of both the power available to those offering help and the lack of power held by those they intend to help. This can result in establishing a 'them' and 'us' dichotomy that eschews the potential for decentering and diffusing any power between the filmmakers, the participants and the audience. Similarly, the word 'animateur', which is often used to describe this approach to community video, brings with it the implication that someone or something exists that is in some way inanimate. This term presupposes a situation whereby the community video practitioner as animateur is responsible for bringing to life the lifeless through some kind of inspiration. On the contrary, the community videomaker should seek to destroy this notion and to make

³⁹³ Ibid., p.140

³⁹⁴ Dickinson, Margaret. *Rogue Reels: Oppositional Film Making in Britain, 1945-90*. London: British Film Institute, 1999, p.238

his or her contribution to society like any other worker.³⁹⁵ The use of the term amateur discounts the potential for a mutual exchange between the community video practitioner and the participants.

In fact, as I explained in the methodology section and demonstrated in section two, these binary positions of practitioner and participant can, and should, swap and slide, with success measured across value systems specific to each project and its participants. As Braden puts it, ‘the concept is rather that of recognising local cultural expression, making available the media of expression suitable to it in such a way that the dialogue between skilled artists and local communities re-establishes fluidity and relevance... establishing a strong and viable debate between the perceptions of the artist and those of the community.’³⁹⁶ For example, the participants’ desire to learn to use a video camera can be placed as equal to their desire to meet new people and learn about a neighbourhood. Similarly, running a community film show might be as important to the community video facilitator as it is for a local pensioner to have their voice heard or for a young person to see and hear themselves played back on a monitor.

Writing on the concept of ‘political mimesis’ and the use of documentary film as an organizing tool, film theorist Jane Gaines explicates the complex relationship between documentary filmmaking and ‘change’ to begin to understand how change might be measured and on whose terms:

Since the 1970s, a great deal of theoretical work as well as filmmaking

³⁹⁵ Braden, Su. *Artists and People*. London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1978, p.186

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.178

practice on the Left has been devoted to developing a revolutionary aesthetics - a combative form that poses the right questions in the intellectual struggle against capitalism. But with all of this work, we still know too little about the radical film and the politicized body of its spectator. We are hampered, of course, by the empirical questions: What do we count as change? How do we know what effects the film has produced? How do we determine where consciousness leaves off and action begins?³⁹⁷

The majority of community videos are distinct from other non-fiction moving-image projects because the relationship between the videomaker, the subject and the audience is clearly established. Each of these participants has an understanding of the outcome and mode of exhibition, which impacts on the mode of production. Similar to the processes used by community video practitioners in the 1970s, the approaches deployed throughout the People Make Videos project allowed for multiple points of feedback. For the People Make Videos project this meant that we were able to directly address the concern raised by Gaines of not knowing enough about the ‘politicized body of its spectator.’³⁹⁸

In her contemporary assessment of the Challenge Change project, Janine Marchessault proposes that community video projects tend to institute ‘access without agency,’³⁹⁹ and she suggests that most of these projects never managed to go beyond pre-existing social relations. By framing community video in this way, Marchessault affirms Heller’s critique, as both appear to rely on assumed and fixed assumptions about what would represent ‘success’. But what if accessibility and reflection, rather than intervention were in fact some of the agreed measures of success set by the participants of a project? The extensive discussion and space for reflection throughout the People Make Videos meetings created a shared sense of trust between the

³⁹⁷ Gaines, Jane M. *Collecting Visible Evidence*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota, 2006. p.88

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

³⁹⁹ Marchessault, Janine. *Mirror Machine: Video and Identity*. YYZ Books, 1995 p.19

participants and myself. From this position, and through regular feedback sessions, we together developed and agreed upon a collected set of intentions and measures of success for the project and the finished video. During phase one, these included learning how to use a video camera, practicing English language skills, meeting new people, representing the local neighbourhood in a way that the audience could relate to and take pleasure in, ensuring the final video included footage recorded by each participant involved in the project and finally, agreeing that before the video was screened publically each of the groups would be able to review it to make sure they were happy with the final edit. After the screening of *What would you make a film about?* took place, I invited a number of participants to use a video camera to interview audience members as they were leaving to respond to the ‘empirical questions’⁴⁰⁰ posed by Gaines, such as how they might have been changed by watching the video and how the experience of watching the video might have affected them. This was a technique used by Liberation Films after discussion screenings that encouraged audience members to provide feedback and become involved in the production of future community video projects. Following the second, final phase, the range of responses from the participants listed at the start of this chapter evidences the refusal of a singular, shared set of outcomes and mirrors the participants’ desire to produce individual and personal projects.

To return to Ranciere’s concept of ‘dis-identification’, he provides a response to the critique levelled by Caroline Heller against community video projects in the 1970s. This concept also provides a response to contemporary critiques of the efficacy of community video projects, such as Marchessault’s, which similarly rely on external

⁴⁰⁰ Gaines, Jane M. *Collecting Visible Evidence*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota, 2006. p.88

measures of success. Rather than relying on an externally identifiable method of evaluation, Ranciere proposes framing the participants of a collective project, such as a hybrid community video, as ‘dis-identified persons’. This allows for a varied and contradictory collection of individual reflections and responses to be accepted as the only feasible means of understanding the efficacy or validity of such a project.

Ranciere takes advantage of the inherent complexity involved in evaluating the effect of dis-identification. The impossibility of measurement itself completes ‘the process of dis-identification’ and makes space for the participants to construct ‘new forms of individuation.’⁴⁰¹

In my conclusion to the history of community video in section one, I describe the lack evaluative work that took place regarding the efficacy of community video during the 1970s. Since the 1990s, socially engaged art practices, which echo many of the intentions and practices of community video have become commonplace. A critical and analytical sphere has developed to assess the validity of this type of work on its own terms.⁴⁰² In ‘Conversation Pieces: The Role of Dialogue in Socially-Engaged Art,’ art historian Grant Kester seeks to evaluate work of this nature. It provides a framework for me to articulate and evaluate the efficacy of the reactivation of 1970s community video practices and the People Make Videos project.

⁴⁰¹ Ranciere, Jacques and Gregory Elliott, *The Emancipated Spectator*, Verso, 2011, p.73

⁴⁰² For example: O’Neill, Paul, and Mick Wilson. *Curating and the Educational Turn*. Open Editions, 2010, Huybrechts, Liesbeth, et al. *Participation Is Risky: Approaches to Joint Creative Processes*. Valiz, 2014, Helguera, Pablo. *Education for Socially Engaged Art: a Materials and Techniques Handbook*. Jorge Pinto Books, 2011, Kester, Grant H., and G. Kester. *Art, Activism, and Oppositionality Essays* from Afterimage. Duke University Press, 2012, Steedman, Marijke, editor. *Gallery as Community: Art, Education, Politics*. Whitechapel Gallery, 2012, Bruyne, Paul De, and Pascal Gielen. *Community Art the Politics of Trespassing*. Valiz, 2013 and Bradley, Will, and Charles Esche, editors. *Art and Social Change: a Critical Reader*. Tate Publishing in Association with Afterall, 2007

In this essay, Kester examines contemporary art projects that locate conversation and interaction as central to their production. He proposes the term ‘dialogical aesthetics’⁴⁰³ to describe projects that prioritise an exchange of differing points of view and varying interpretations of similar encounters. Kester explains the production processes that characterize these works in a similar way to how I have framed the reactivation of community video. He describes them as ‘active, generative processes that can help us speak and imagine beyond the limits of fixed identities and official discourse.’⁴⁰⁴ Rather than evaluating these works based on the production of a physical object, Kester proposes we look to the ‘condition and character of dialogical exchange itself.’⁴⁰⁵

Kester suggests that, like the effect of ‘dis-identification’, the aim of projects that involve a ‘dialogical exchange’ is not to achieve a consensus, but rather to draw the participants (maker and audience) into a shared, but not necessarily mutually agreed upon, understanding of a given situation. By participating in such an exchange, those involved will be equipped to ‘engage in discursive encounters and decision-making processes in the future.’⁴⁰⁶ Through the production of a video project, the participants of People Make Videos were encouraged to develop their own mode of self-representation to share their views and experiences with others. In doing so, those involved began to see themselves from other perspectives and were consequently able to develop a more ‘cynical’ and self-reflective position. Kester similarly describes what the participants (and in some instances the audience) experienced as a ‘self-critical awareness’ that, for some of them, can develop into ‘a capacity to see our

⁴⁰³ Kester, Grant H. *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art*. University of California Press, 2014, p.8

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

views, and our identities, as contingent, processual, and subject to creative transformation.’⁴⁰⁷

Kester proposes a three-tiered approach to evaluate projects where the intention is a dialogical exchange. Each of these tiers should be understood according to how successfully they address the following functions: first, ‘solidarity creation’, second, ‘solidarity enhancement’, and third, the ‘counter-hegemonic.’⁴⁰⁸ Each of these are characteristic of how I understand community video practices and will serve as measures of how I understand the relative ‘success’ or efficacy of the People Make Videos project. Kester’s use of the term ‘solidarity’ is pertinent when evaluating community video projects, where empathy and the development of mutual support within a group are central to the success of a project. This was made most evident in the hybrid nature of the final videos produced during the People Make Videos project.

An emphasis on the ‘counter hegemonic’ can be traced throughout the lineage of community video: from the rejection of institutional validation at the Arts Labs through to the critical position taken up by the West London Media Group or the collective consciousness raising that took place in Milton Keynes. It is important to note that neither of these concepts exists in isolation. Instead, they typically operate along multiple registers. Furthermore, this mode of evaluation should only provide one component of a larger evaluative system set out by the participants of any project, where the generation and value of subjective positions remain located in the realm of local, collective interaction.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

The first tier Kester describes is the quality of the relationship between the facilitator and the participants. For People Make Videos, I drew on my understanding of what made for a 'successful' community video project in the 1970s and measured the (e)quality of this relationship based on how fluidly the participants and I were able to position ourselves on the insider-outsider-hybrid spectrum. By the end of the final phase, the participants and I were engaging with and learning from one another equally with no clear leader, as evidence of both solidarity creation and enhancement *and* the development of counter hegemonic positions. For every question from a participant about the camera or an edit, there was a question from me about a particular part of the neighbourhood, or a decision about a specific sound recording.

One key measure of success of an outsider 1970s community video project was for the participants of a project to begin to self-organise and produce their own community video projects and, perhaps, to encourage others like them to do the same. This understanding of 'success' is also reflective of Kester's proposition of the 'counter hegemonic' as the intended outcome of projects engaged with a dialogical exchange. Following the completion of the final phase, two of the participants from the People Make Videos project, continued to borrow the video camera from The Showroom in order to create new videos. This was further illustrated when, towards the end of the People Make Videos project, the fluidity of roles in the group meant that I was able to propose that we develop a way to share what we had learnt from the project in order to invite others to do the same. This resulted in two outcomes that serve as examples with which to evaluate the People Make Videos project according to tier one of Kester's proposed methodology. The first outcome was the publication

of a free manual,⁴⁰⁹ the content of which was agreed upon collectively and developed from our understanding of what worked and did not work during our time spent together. In keeping with Freire's radical pedagogical approach and the updated idea of convivial research, the manual provides instructions on how to set up and run a community video group. It includes workshop exercises, pages to photocopy and use for storyboarding, suggestions for structuring meetings and organizing discussion screenings, all with a commitment to collaboration. The form of the manual was itself 'counter hegemonic' as it was aimed at further decentering the production of community video projects by making the processes used to make them as transparent and accessible as possible.



(Figure 20: The poster for the workshop and the cover of the manual)

⁴⁰⁹ Webb-Ingall, Edward, *People Make Videos: A Manual for Making Community Videos*, Art Quarters Press, 2016. Available on the memory stick included and accessible here: <http://www.theshowroom.org/publications/people-make-videos-a-manual-for-making-community-videos-1> 'This manual is a result of Ed Webb Ingall's Communal Knowledge project, which explored the history of community video practice in London from the 1970s, working with a range of groups and individuals local to The Showroom to practice and extend the methodologies to create new videos exploring ideas of 'community.'

The second outcome was a workshop that we organised, which was collectively facilitated by the participants of People Make Videos for a new group of ‘outsiders’.

We planned the workshop as a group, with each participant negotiating how they would like to be involved. It was advertised online as follows:

Are you interested in learning more about collective and collaborative video making? Sign up to this free one-off workshop run by People Make Videos to learn more about what we have been doing and to try your hand at being part of the video making process. No experience necessary. Free manual for all who attend.⁴¹⁰

I describe the outcome of this workshop in my assessment of the final tier of evaluation, which responds to the relationship between the participants and external communities.

The second tier that Kester describes is the level at which relationships develop between the participants themselves. For the participants involved in People Make Videos, solidarity and an anti-authoritarian position were both clearly demonstrated by the group’s focus on collaboration at all stages of production. Counter to how one might understand the desire to make individual video projects, the participants worked together to develop processes that acknowledged and allowed for differences between them and supported the collective production and editing of one another’s videos. This included one participant, who was more confident behind the camera, helping another make a video where they wished only to direct and appear in front of the camera (*Silk Cuts*, 2016). Another participant expressed a desire to support other members of the group by preparing and making food and assisting with sound recording, rather than producing their own video. The development of these inter-

⁴¹⁰ The Showroom. “People Make Videos Open Workshop.” *The Showroom*, www.theshowroom.org/events/people-make-videos-open-workshop. Accessed 17th April 2018

participant relationships was also made evident in the sharing of audio and visual material across the different video projects. For example, the sound recording of 'Maybe it's because I'm a Londoner' was produced by one participant for their video (*YOU UP FOR IT*, 2016) and was then subsequently used in a number of other different videos (*Home*, 2016 and *Work in Progress*, 2016). This shared and fluid approach to collaboration between the participants is further evidenced in the collective production and agreement of the beginning and end credits, which all of the individually produced videos include.

The final tier of evaluation that Kester proposes is the quality of the relationships between the participants and other, external communities. These most often take the form of audiences not involved in the production process, who are represented in the projects that are made and present during the playback events. This tier was harder to measure and evaluate as I spent less time with these external participants, but it involved the following procedures.

After their completion, the videos made as a result of the People Make Videos project were displayed as part of a month long exhibition in the same neighbourhood that they were made, with, for and about. Similarly, in the 1970s, community videos circulated in the neighbourhoods in which they were produced (for example the *News at West 10* project, *Starting to Happen* and *Things That Mother Never Told Us*). This mode of exhibition continues to provide a variety of different contexts for external communities to engage with work that represents varied impressions of a shared experience of living in the same place. To encourage an ongoing debate and create solidarity between the participants and the audience, we adapted the discussion-

screening format that was integral to 1970s community video practices. Following one of the community screening events we set up a ‘feedback booth’, where audience members could choose to have a conversation on camera with participants of the People Make Videos project and reflect on what they had just seen on screen. This idea was adapted from Liberation Films’ use of video cameras to encourage post-screening discussions as well as the opportunity for the residents in Milton Keynes to ‘phone-in’ and feel part of the action taking place on screen, following the broadcast of *Things that Mother never told us* (1977).



(Figure 21: Image taken at the one day workshop run by the participants of People Make Videos)

The one-day workshop described previously, created another way for the participants of People Make Videos to develop solidarity with the audience by sharing their experience and understanding of 1970s community video practices with a new group of participants, one with whom they shared the same neighbourhood. The six videos the group had previously made functioned as ‘trigger videos’ and were screened to

help the new group become familiar with what the People Make Videos group had been working on and learn how they had done it. Watching the videos together provided a shared experience, which the new group could collectively reflect on their neighbourhood as well as motivating the production of a further short video.

Following this screening, a series of exercises using the video camera, developed by the original participants and explained in the manual, created an opportunity for both groups to work together to explore the neighbourhood and produce a new video over the space of an afternoon. To make this video, each participant took turns leading the rest of the group to a particular place nearby that they were familiar with. When we reached the chosen destination, we collectively planned and agreed upon a way to document that place with the video camera. The participant who selected the location recorded the soundtrack directly onto the footage, which was made up of a descriptive or poetic voice over. The finished video was a collection of snapshots taken around the neighbourhood, each with an aesthetic reflective of how that particular place was experienced by the participants.⁴¹¹ One participant focussed on collecting footage of the participants' hands and feet gesturing and moving together in time, another invited each member of the group to take turns videoing the eyes of the person next to them.

This final exercise evidences Kester's concluding proposal that 'dialogical practices require a common discursive matrix (linguistic, textual, physical, etc.), which their participants can share insights and forge a provisional sense of collectivity.'⁴¹² At the same time, it is important to recognise the limits of this sense of collectivity; while the

⁴¹¹ The participants at this workshop collectively agreed that this video was only allowed to be seen by the people involved with its production.

⁴¹² Kester, Grant. 'Conversation Pieces: The Role of Dialogue in Socially-Engaged Art.' www.ira.usf.edu, www.ira.usf.edu/cam/exhibitions/2008_8_Torolab/Readings/Conversation_PiecesGKester. np

participants and the extended audience were able to understand and frame their identity through Kester's idea of 'solidarity with others,'⁴¹³ the mediated production of a video allowed for the individuals involved to recognise the 'contingent nature of this identification.'⁴¹⁴ Kester defines this tension, which is characteristic of projects of this kind, as moving tentatively between 'essentialist closure'⁴¹⁵ and 'rootless sceptism.'⁴¹⁶

I have been able to make an evaluation of the People Make Videos project based on the quality of dialogical exchange across three tiers of exchange by focusing on the creation of solidarity and the development of counter hegemonic strategies. This was made possible due to my understanding of 1970s community video and the time spent developing hybrid relationships between the participants, including myself. For each tier Kester proposes, I have been able to draw on multiple of examples where solidarity and a counter hegemonic position were not only integral, but also prioritised. A similar evaluation method would be possible for smaller-scale, short-term community video projects where the intentions and motivations of each participant are clearly articulated and processes that value solidarity, empathy and horizontal learning are deemed as important as the production of a finished video.

⁴¹³ Ibid.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid.

Conclusion:

The historical analysis I carried out in section one has enabled me to conceptualise the origin of 1970s community video as an approach to moving image production with its own distinctive methodology and aesthetic. Through writing this history, I have attempted to carve out a space for it alongside other, similar, non-fiction moving image practices that were occurring at the same time that it was developing, as well as subsequent activist and collaborative film and video practices.

This historical analysis has enabled me to draw out the origins of community video, as well as to identify the production processes that characterise this specific approach to facilitating, producing and screening collaborative video projects. Consequently, in the middle section, I propose a methodology for the reactivation of 1970s community video, which formed the basis for the People Make Videos project described in section two. This process of historical analysis and the subsequent reactivation of 1970s community video has allowed me to understand what community video continues to offer as an approach to the collective production of moving images today.

During the pilot phase and phase one of the reactivation process, I worked as an outsider to establish the People Make Videos group. Together, with the participants, we developed a familiarity with one another, an understanding of collective production processes borrowed from 1970s community video and a confidence in front of and behind the video camera. Through an extended period of time together, phase two of the People Make Videos project provided the opportunity for me to

reflect on a 'hybrid' community video project and for the participants to collectively develop individual approaches to community video production. Hybridity allowed for the introduction of experimentation into the People Make Videos Project and it permitted a dialogical space for praxis and self-reflection. The processes that the participants developed, and the videos they made, created an alliance based on the recognition of difference that located the participants as similar, but not the same. This evidences the way that community video projects are able to hold the concept of 'community' to account through a varied and critical engagement with the very processes and inhabitants that serve to construct it. My final evaluation of the People Make Videos project makes clear the importance of developing an internally recognisable set of measures of success or efficacy that prioritise inter-participant, cross-community collaboration and solidarity. When implemented, these criteria are able to call into question didactic and authoritarian modes of production and representation.

Throughout my research into community video it has appeared in the margins, as an adjacent practice to the radical film collectives of the 1960s and the experimental video artists of the 1970s. However, the utopian hopes that community video practitioners had for new video technology, their grounding in leftist and grass roots politics and their vehemently anti-aesthetic position all appeared to anticipate contemporary concerns about autonomous media representation and the urgent need to develop new forms of self-representation. At the same time as offering a possible solution, community video proposed a problem; due to its treatment (by both funders and many practitioners) as a largely ephemeral practice, there was very little information explaining what it was and only a few videos remained in circulation.

The work of this thesis has sought to counter this marginalisation and resolve the following two questions: What was community video and what might it continue to offer? In order to do this I have positioned community video within a wider non-fiction and political filmmaking canon and, through its reactivation, proposed its continuing relevance as a mode of collaborative video production that prioritises the experiences of the subject located in front of the camera at the same time as positioning them behind it.

Appendix:

(Figure 07: Original List)

LOOKING BACKWARDS IN THE
PRESENT, A LIST, A PROVOCATION
OR
SOMETHINGS I HAVE LEARNT ABOUT THE
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE
FACILITATOR AND THE PARTICIPANT IN A
COMMUNITY ARTS PROJECT

1. There are roughly three kinds of community arts project:
 - Those initiated, made by and for the participants – usually with a sense of urgency from within. For example Squatters making tapes to protect their housing or Tenants associations making films about the state of their home to show to the council.
 - Those initiated by outsiders invited in to work with them on a specific project or theme or to share a skill of some sort. For example young people learning to use video cameras or artists helping organize a community festival.
 - When artists with no prior relationship invite themselves into a community with the assumption that the chosen community would in some way benefit from their expertise or knowledge.
2. In order for those projects described as the 'outsider invited in' to be 'effective' there must be some slippage between how the roles of insider and outsider are defined – the participants/insiders need to develop a sense of being not simply just the subject but also the author *and* the facilitator/outsider needs to develop a relationship or a stake in the aims of the participants
3. The relative success of a project is based on the depth of the relationships formed – by this I mean knowing the participants and them knowing the artist.
4. Measures of success must be shared, along with intentions, at the start of a project, these may well change as a project develops and any changes to either of these must be made clear and communicated to the group.
5. Outcomes - if the measure of success or the intention is the creation of a tangible object – video, text, performance, sculpture – the authorship and ownership of this object must also be agreed upon at the start of the project.
6. Both facilitators and participants should propose outcomes and there should be room for these to change and develop as a project progresses.
7. Measures of success should be according to the needs of individuals involved and based on a value system agreed by all participants. For example learning to use a video camera, having a conversation and a cup of tea and being asked ones opinion and listened to on camera might be equally 'valuable' depending on the needs of the individual.
8. Multiple spaces and moments for feedback should be built into any project and the forms which feedback takes should be varied and sensitive to the specific needs of the participants.
9. A shared language must be developed between all participants and facilitators.
10. Time is key - the relationship between the length of time spent on a project and its efficacy are inextricably linked.

(Figures 08 and 09: Annotations by the artist Olivia Plender and annotations by curator Anna Colin)

LOOKING BACKWARDS IN THE
PRESENT, A LIST, A PROVOCATION
OR
SOMETHINGS I HAVE LEARNT ABOUT THE
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE
FACILITATOR AND THE PARTICIPANT IN A
COMMUNITY ARTS PROJECT

There are roughly three kinds of community arts project:

- Those initiated, made by and for the participants – usually with a sense of urgency from within. For example Squatters making tapes to protect their housing or Tenants associations making films about the state of their home to show to the council.
- Those initiated by outsiders invited in to work with them on a specific project or theme or to share a skill of some sort. For example young people learning to use video cameras or artists helping organize a community festival.
- When artists with no prior relationship invite themselves into a community with the assumption that the chosen community would in some way benefit from their expertise or knowledge.

2. In order for those projects described as the 'outsider invited in' to be 'effective' there must be some slippage between how the roles of insider and outsider are defined – the participants/insiders need to develop a sense of being not simply just the subject but also the author and the facilitator/outsider needs to develop a relationship or a stake in the aims of the participants

3. The relative success of a project is based on the depth of the relationships formed – by this I mean knowing the participants and them knowing the artist.

4. Measures of success must be shared, along with intentions, at the start of a project, these may change as a project develops and any changes to either of these must be made clear and communicated to the group.

5. Outcomes - if the measure of success or the intention is the creation of a tangible object – video, text, performance, sculpture – the authorship and ownership of this object must also be agreed upon at the start of the project.

6. Both facilitators and participants should propose outcomes and there should be room for these to change and develop as a project progresses.

7. Measures of success should be according to the needs of individuals involved and based on a value system agreed by all participants. For example learning to use a video camera, having a conversation and a cup of tea and being asked ones opinion and listened to on camera might be equally 'valuable' depending on the needs of the individual.

8. Multiple spaces and moments for feedback should be built into any project and the forms which feedback take should be varied and sensitive to the specific needs of the participants.

9. A shared language must be developed between all participants and facilitators.

10. ~~Time is key~~ the relationship between the length of time spent on a project and its efficacy are inextricably linked.

11. CREATE AN ATMOSPHERE WHERE THE GROUP CAN DISCUSS THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THEM (INCLUDING THE ARTIST). I.E. BACKGROUND, SKILLS, EDUCATION, DESIRES, NEEDS ETC. ACKNOWLEDGE THESE DIFFERENCES & DECIDE ON STRATEGIES FOR HOW TO WORK TOGETHER.

Annotations:

WHAT ABOUT THE ROLE OF ARTS ORGANISATIONS?

BY WHOM? DOES AN INVITATION FROM THE LOCAL COUNCIL OR AN ARTS ORGANISATION STILL COUNT AS BEING INVITED IN?

BE REALISTIC ABOUT WHAT YOU CAN DO IN THE TIME THAT YOU HAVE. CHILDREN WITH HEALTH PROBLEMS ARE THE NORM IF YOU ONLY HAVE A DAY TO WORK TOGETHER ON A PROJECT THAT TAKES A DAY.

SPENDING TIME TOGETHER WILL CHANGE THE ARTIST AS MUCH AS THE PARTICIPANTS.

SET OF

DISCUSSED

LOOKING BACKWARDS IN THE
PRESENT, A LIST, A PROVOCATION
OR
SOMETHINGS I HAVE LEARNT ABOUT THE
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE
FACILITATOR AND THE PARTICIPANT IN A
COMMUNITY ARTS PROJECT

- 1) There are roughly three kinds of community arts project:
 - Those initiated, made by and for the participants – usually with a sense of urgency from within. For example Squatters making tapes to protect their housing or Tenants associations making films about the state of their home to show to the council.
 - Those initiated by outsiders invited in to work with them on a specific project or theme or to share a skill of some sort. For example young people learning to use video cameras or artists helping organize a community festival.
 - When artists with no prior relationship invite themselves into a community with the assumption that the chosen community would in some way benefit from their expertise or knowledge.
2. In order for those projects described as the 'outsider invited in' to be 'effective' there must be some slippage between how the roles of insider and outsider are defined – the participants/insiders need to develop a sense of being not simply just the subject but also the author and the facilitator/outsider needs to develop a relationship or a stake in the aims of the participants.
3. The relative success of a project is based on the depth of the relationships formed – by this I mean knowing the participants and them knowing the artist.
4. Measures of success must be shared, along with intentions, at the start of a project, these may well change as a project develops and any changes to either of these must be made clear and communicated to the group.
5. Outcomes - if the measure of success or the intention is the creation of a tangible object – video, text, performance, sculpture – the authorship and ownership of this object must also be agreed upon at the start of the project.
6. Both facilitators and participants should propose outcomes and there should be room for these to change and develop as a project progresses.
7. Measures of success should be according to the needs of individuals involved and based on a value system agreed by all participants. For example learning to use a video camera, having a conversation and a cup of tea and being asked ones opinion and listened to on camera might be equally 'valuable' depending on the needs of the individual.
8. Multiple spaces and moments for feedback should be built into any project and the forms which feedback take should be varied and sensitive to the specific needs of the participants.
9. A shared language must be developed between all participants and facilitators.
10. Time is key - the relationship between the length of time spent on a project and its efficacy are inextricably linked.

c-16/2/16 20:21

Comment: This first kind of project tends to have strong local, grassroots and activist components (as your example shows straight after, but I do think these three words need to feature in the definition).

c-16/2/16 19:24

Comment: I would define this. Then as in local communities, as in community artists, or both? The idea of artists inviting other artists and of peer-to-peer mentoring is important in the history of the community arts movement (and art history in general).

c-16/2/16 19:25

Comment: I would introduce the figure of the commissioner at this stage. It seems to me that artists don't invite themselves in a community as much as they get invited by commissioners to meet themselves in a given community. If we are talking about legitimacy, consideration of how long the commissioner has been active in this community, and how, is also important here.

c-16/2/16 20:22

Comment: This is a huge topic. To avoid repetition – and without wanting to be self-promotional – some aspects of this topic are covered in the contributions I have put together for this same issue of Stages in collaboration, with 5 other people. We talk about the benefits of being an outsider, authorship and embedded participation, among other subjects.

c-16/2/16 19:53

Comment: I think this is really nicely and concisely put. 'Depth' is more all-encompassing and complex than 'trust', which tends to take centre stage in discussions about success.

c-16/2/16 20:46

Comment: I would place further emphasis on evaluation for want of a better word. Taking stock of what has been learnt in the process and of what should be repeated or avoided in the future, is key to the flourishing of any collective project.

c-16/2/16 20:36

Comment: Time is indeed key. So key I would have it higher up on the list.

c-16/2/16 20:39

Comment: The terms 'antagonism' and 'tension' are absent from this list, despite often occupying a core position in such projects. I would advocate for their productive and transformative potential.

Recording Contribution Clearance Form

TITLES (S) People Make Videos Project

All videos made as part of this project can be used for any and all research purposes by Ed Webb-Ingall

RECORDING DATE (S): Various dates between 2014 and 2016

LOCTATION (S) The Showroom Gallery and surrounding area

DETAILS OF CONTRIBUTION: Participation / Digital Photographs / Discussions & Group Activities

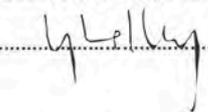
1. I AGREE TO ED WEBB-INGALL USING MY CONTRIBUTION FOR THE PEOPLE MAKE VIDEOS PROJECT FOR RESEARCH AND EDUCATIONAL USE
2. ANY ADDITIONAL USE OF THE WORK, INCLUDING PUBLIC SCREENINGS CAN BE ARRANGED ON AN INDIVIDUAL BASIS

SIGNED ON BEHALF OF PEOPLE MAKE VIDEOS

Birdman:
Dirmuid:
Ismail:
Jessica:
Kazi Noor Jahan:
Robert:

DATE..... 8.6.2018

I ACCEPT THIS ENGAGEMENT (S) & UNDERTAKE TO OBSERVE THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS SET OUT HEREIN.

SIGNED..... 

DATE..... 8.6.2018

NAME AND ADDRESS OF CONTRIBUTORS:

The showroom
63 Penfold street
London
NW8 8PQ

Bibliography:

- Agamben, Giorgio. *The Coming Community*. Translated by Michael Hardt, University of Minnesota Press, 2013.
- Andrews, Chris Meigh. "Interview with Catherine Elwes." *www.meigh-Andrews.com*, 24 July 2000, www.meighandrews.com/writings/interviews/catherine-elwes.
- Armes, Roy. *On Video*. Routledge, 1988.
- Bailey, Ron. *The Squatters*. Penguin Books, 1973.
- Bauer, Petra, and Dan Kidner. *Working Together: Notes on British Film Collectives in the 1970s*: Focal Point Gallery, 2013.
- Beckett, Andy. *When the Lights Went out What Really Happened to Britain in the Seventies*. Faber and Faber, 2010.
- Biggs, Simon. "Using Video as a Therapeutic Tool." *Journal of Centre of Advanced TV Studies*, vol. 8, 1980.
- Biren, Andi, and Audrey Bronstein. *Basic Video in Community Work*. Inter-Action Imprint, 1975.
- Bishop, Claire. *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. Verso Books, 2012.
- Bishop, Claire. *Participation*. Whitechapel, 2010.
- Blom, Ina. *The Autobiography of Video*. Sternberg Press, 2016.
- Bonner, Paul. "Broadcast Access Television and Its Future Development." 1976. British Broadcasting Corporation Mimeo.
- Boyle, Deidre. *Subject to Change: Guerrilla Television Revisited*. Oxford U.P., 1997.
- Boyle, E. "Speech to the House of Commons. Debate on Grants to the Arts." FACOP and New Activities File. Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design: British Artists' Film and Video Study Collection., London, 1970.

- Braden, Su. *Artists and People*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978.
- Bradley, Will, and Charles Esche, editors. *Art and Social Change: a Critical Reader*. Tate Publishing in Association with Afterall, 2007.
- Brian Hoey. *The Video Show*. The Serpentine Gallery, 1975.
- Bruyne, Paul De, and Pascal Gielen. *Community Art the Politics of Trespassing*. Valiz, 2013.
- Bruzzi, Stella. *New Documentary: a Critical Introduction*. Routledge, 2011.
- Buston, John. *The Report of the Community Arts Working Party*. The Arts Council, 1974
- Butler, Judith. *Notes toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*. Harvard University Press, 2015.
- Callahan, Manuel. "Convivial Research." *Convivial Research and Insurgent Learning Workshop*, cril.mitotedigital.org/convivialres.
- Clayton, Sue, and Laura Mulvey. *Other Cinemas: Politics, Culture and Experimental Film in the 1970s*. I.B. Tauris, 2017.
- 'Community Arts Committee Report.' Community Arts Committee, 1975,
- "Convivial Research." *Convivial Research and Insurgent Learning Workshop*, cril.mitotedigital.org/convivialres.
- Cork, Richard. "Every Man His Own TV Star." *The Evening Standard*, 3 May 1975.
- Cork, Richard. *Everything Seemed Possible: Art in the 1970s*. Yale University Press, 2002.
- Coward, Rosalind. *Liberation Films Distribution Catalogue*. Liberation Films, 1978.
- Curtis, David. "Lives Remembered." *The Times*, The Times, 10 Feb. 2015, www.thetimes.co.uk/article/lives-remembered-2959w65fttf.

- Dickinson, Margaret. *Rogue Reels: Oppositional Film Making in Britain, 1945-90*.
British Film Institute, 1999.
- Doggett, Peter. *The Art & Music of John Lennon*. Omnibus Press, 2005.
- Dovey, Jon, et al. *The Videoactive Report*. Videoactive, 1985, *The Videoactive Report*.
- Dowmunt, Tony, et al. *Inclusion through Media*. Goldsmiths, 2007.
- Dowmunt, Tony. *Video with Young People*. Inter-Action, 1980.
- Dowmunt, Tony. “‘A Whited Sepulchre, Autobiography and Video Diaries in ‘Post Documentary’ Culture.’” *Goldsmiths University London*, 2009.
- Dusinberre, Deke. “An Audio Documentary of the Early Years of the LFMC, A New Constitution.” *British Artists' Film & Video Study Collection: Aural History*,
www.studycollection.co.uk/auralhistory/intro.htm.
- Elliott, Gregory, and Jacques Ranciere. *The Emancipated Spectator*. Verso, 2011.
- Ellis, John. *Documentary Witness and Self-Revelation*. Routledge, 2012.
- Enzensberger, Hans Magnus, and Michael Roloff. *Raids and Reconstructions Essays on Politics, Crime and Culture*. Pluto Press, 1976.
- FACOP. “The Need for an Artists Council.” *Circuit*, 9, 1969.
- “The Film Makers Co-Op and the First English Underground Cinema 1966-70.” *The L.F.M.C. and the First English Underground Cinema 1966-70*,
bak.spc.org/subversion/lfmc.html.
- Fischer, Michael. “Ethnicity and the Post-Modern Arts of Memory.” *Writing Culture: the Poetics and Politics of Ethnography: a School of American Research Advanced Seminar*, edited by James Clifford and George E. Marcus,
University of California Press, 1986.
- Foster, Hal. *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*. New Press, 2002.

- Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Continuum, 2010.
- Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Penguin, 1993.
- Gaines, Jane M. *Collecting Visible Evidence*. Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2006.
- Gilbert, Jeremy. *Common Ground: Democracy and Collectivity in an Age of Individualism*. Pluto Press, 2014.
- Goldsmiths University. *LCVA - London Community Video Archive*, the-
lcva.co.uk/about.
- Grant, Barry Keith, and Jeannette Sloniowski, editors. *Documenting the Documentary: Close Readings of Documentary Film and Video*. Wayne State U.P., 2014.
- Greaney, Patrick. *Quotational Practices. Repeating the Future in Contemporary Art*. University of Minnesota Press, 2014.
- Groombridge, Brian. *Television and the People a Programme for Democratic Participation*. Penguin Books, 1972.
- Hall, David. “ ‘Video Report’ .” *Studio International*, Jan. 1976.
- Hall, David. “The Video Show.” *Art and Artists*, 1975.
- Hallas, Roger. *Reframing Bodies: AIDS, Bearing Witness, and the Queer Moving Image*. Duke University Press, 2009.
- Hallin, Daniel C. *The "Uncensored War": The Media and Vietnam*. New York Oxford UP, 1986.
- Hardt, Michael, and Antonio Negri. *Commonwealth*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009.
- Hatfield, Jackie. “Interview with Sue Hall and John Hopkins .”
[Http://Www.rewind.ac.uk](http://www.rewind.ac.uk), 17 Nov. 2004,
www.rewind.ac.uk/database/searchrewind.php?table_name=REWINDArtistD

etails&function=details&where_field=Artist_Name&where_value=Sue+Hall/John+Hopkins&Section=Details.

Haynes, Jim. "Jack Henry Moore Obituary." *Www.theguardian.com*, The Guardian, 23 Apr. 2014, www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2014/apr/23/jack-henry-moore-obituary.

Helguera, Pablo. *Education for Socially Engaged Art: a Materials and Techniques Handbook*. Jorge Pinto Books, 2011.

Heller, Caroline. "The Resistible Rise of Video Culture." *Educational Broadcasting International*, vol. 11, no. 3, Sept. 1978.

Herbert, Stine, and Anne Szefer. Karlsen. *Self-Organised*. Open Editions, 2013.

Herman, Steve. "The Broadcasting of Low Gauge Video." *Centre for Advanced Television Studies*, no. 2, 1981.

Hewison, Robert, and John Holden. *Experience and Experiment: the UK Branch of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1956-2006*. Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, United Kingdom Branch, 2006.

Hopkin, John. "Memorandum Re: Visual Record Of Events." 1969. British Artists' Film and Video Study Collection.

Hopkins, John, and Et al. *Video in Community Development*. Ovum 1972.

Hopkins, John, and Sue Hall. "List Of Completed Video Production 1969-1979' ." British Artists' Film and Video Study Collection. CSM, London, 0AD.

Hopkins, John. "Arts Lab London ." *Friends*, Mar. 1970.

Hurley, Robert, translator. *To Our Friends*. Semiotext(e), 2015.

Hutchison, Robert. *The Politics of the Arts Council*. Sinclair Browne, 1982.

Huybrechts, Liesbeth, et al. *Participation Is Risky: Approaches to Joint Creative Processes*. Valiz, 2014.

- “Jack Henry Moore - Obituary.” *The Telegraph*, Telegraph Media Group, 25 Apr. 2014, www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/10788743/Jack-Henry-Moore-obituary.html.
- Jaffe, Louis. “Videotape Versus Film: Half Inch, 16mm, and Super 8.” *Radical Software*, vol. 1, no. 3, 1971. Spring, radicalsoftware.org/e/volume1nr3.html.
- James, David E. *Allegories of Cinema: American Film in the Sixties*. Princeton University Press, 1989.
- Johnson, Fred. “Vox Pops - The BBC's Community Programme Unit.” *Independent*, June 1990.
- Juhasz, A. “No Woman Is an Object: Realizing the Feminist Collaborative Video.” *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies*, vol. 18, no. 3 54, Jan. 2003. muse.jhu.edu/article/51165.
- Juhasz, Alexandra. *AIDS TV: Identity, Community, and Alternative Video*. Duke Univ. Press, 1995.
- Kelly, Owen. *Community, Art, and the State: Storming the Citadels*. Comedia Pub. Group in Association with Marion Boyars, 1984.
- Kerrigan, Frances. *Theories and Practices of Video Work*. Middlesex Polytechnic: Media Research Group, 1975, *Theories and Practices of Video Work*.
- Kester, Grant. “Conversation Pieces: The Role of Dialogue in Socially-Engaged Art.” [Http://Www.ira.usf.edu](http://www.ira.usf.edu), www.ira.usf.edu/cam/exhibitions/2008_8_Torolab/Readings/Conversation_PiecesGKester.
- Kester, Grant H., and G. Kester. *Art, Activism, and Oppositionality Essays from Afterimage*. Duke University Press, 2012.

- Kester, Grant H. *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art*. University of California Press, 2014.
- Kidel, Mark. "The Video Show." *The Listener*, 15 May 1975.
- Kim, Jihoon. *Between Film, Video, and the Digital: Hybrid Moving Images in the Post-Media Age*. Bloomsbury Academic USA, 2018.
- Kirk, John. "Felix Dennis Appears on the David Frost Programme." *YouTube*, YouTube, 22 July 2010, www.youtube.com/watch?v=WxjnfDToQmA.
- Kirk, John. "Frostbite 1970." *Vimeo*, 21 Apr. 2018, vimeo.com/87537287.
- Knight, J., and P. Thomas. *Reaching Audiences: Distribution and Promotion of Alternative Moving Image*. Intellect, 2012.
- Knight, Julia. *Diverse Practices a Critical Reader on British Video Art*. University of Luton Press, 1996.
- Krassner, Paul. *Confessions of a Raving, Unconfined Nut: Misadventures in the Counter-Culture*. Simon & Schuster, 1993.
- Krauss, Rosalind. *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition*. Thames & Hudson, 1999.
- Krauss, Rosalind. "Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism." *October*, vol. 1, 1976, p. 50.
- Landry, Charles. *What a Way to Run a Railroad: an Analysis of Radical Failure*. Comedia, 1985.
- Lesage, Julia. "The Political Aesthetics of the Feminist Documentary Film." *Quarterly Review of Film Studies*, vol. 3, no. 4, 1978.
- Lewis, Peter. "'The Resistible Rise of Video Culture' a Comment by Peter M Lewis." *COMCOM*, 1978.

- Lorenz, Renate, editor. *Not Now! Now!: Chronopolitics, Art & Research*. Sternberg Press, 2014.
- Lunch, Nick, and Chris Lunch. *Insights into Participatory Video: a Handbook for the Field*. Insight, 2006.
- Magagnoli, Paolo. *Documents of Utopia the Politics of Experimental Documentary*. Columbia Univ. Pr., 2015.
- Malik, Sarita. "Community Filmmaking & Cultural Diversity: Practice, Innovation and Policy." *Community Filmmaking & Cultural Diversity: Practice, Innovation and Policy*, www.communityfilmmaking.com/. accessed 12th February, 2018
- Malik, Sarita, et al. *Community Filmmaking. Diversity, Practices and Places*. Taylor & Francis Ltd, 2017.
- Manghani, Sunil. "The Pleasures of (Music) Video." *Music/Video: Histories, Aesthetics, Media*, edited by Gina Arnold, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2017.
- Marchessault, Janine. *Mirror Machine: Video and Identity*. YYZ Books, 1995.
- Martin, Bradley. "Editorial." *The International Times*, 7 Apr. 1969.
- Martin, Bradley. "International Times Archive." *IT - International Times Archive*, www.internationaltimes.it/archive/index.php?year=1967&volume=IT-Volume-1&issue=12&item=IT_1967-04-28_B-IT-Volume-1_Iss-12_008.
- McInnes, James. *Video in Education and Training*. Focal Press, 1980.
- McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding Media: the Extensions of Man*. Abacus, 1974.
- Meigh-Andrews, Chris. "Catherine Elwes Interview." [Http://Www.meigh-andrews.com](http://www.meigh-andrews.com), www.meigh-andrews.com/writings/interviews/catherine-elwes.
- Meigh-Andrews, Chris. *A History of Video Art: the Development of Form and Function*. Berg, 2006.

- Meigh-Andrews, Chris. "Transcript of Interview with Sue Hall & John Hopkins."
Http://Www.meigh-Andrews.com, 7 Feb. 2005, www.meigh-andrews.com/writings/interviews/sue-hall-john-hopkins.
- Miami Theory Collective, editor. *Community at Loose Ends*. Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1991.
- Miller, Sherry. "Early Portable Video." *Www.experimental-tv-center.org*, Apr. 1992, www.experimental-tv-center.org/two-texts-concerning-portable-video#Early%20Portable.
- Montmann, Nina, editor. *Scandalous. A Reader on Art and Ethics*. Sternberg Press, 2014.
- Moore-Gilbert, B. J., and John Seed. *Cultural Revolution?: the Challenge of the Arts in the 1960s*. Routledge, 1992.
- Moran, Albert. *Film Policy: International, National and Regional Perspectives*. Routledge, 1996.
- Naficy, Hamid. *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*. Princeton Univ. Press, 2001.
- Nancy, Jean-Luc, and Robert D. Richardson. *Being Singular Plural*. Stanford Univ. Press, 2000.
- National Film Board of Canada. "VTR St-Jacques." *National Film Board of Canada*, 1 Jan. 1969, www.nfb.ca/film/vtr_st_jacques.
- "NEWSREEL Distribution Catalogue - 1972." *Www.arsenal-Berlin.de*, www.arsenal-berlin.de/en/living-archive/news/single/article/3873/3082.html.
- Nichols, Bill. *Introduction to Documentary*. Indiana University Press, 2017.
- Nichols, Bill. *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*. Indiana Univ. Press, 2010.

- Nigg, Heinz, and Andy Porter. "John 'Hoppy' Hopkins." *Ww.the-Lcva.co.uk*, 2017, www.the-lcva.co.uk/interviews/58db835cf6aab40c5cfa3748.
- Nigg, Heinz, and Graham Wade. *Community Media: Community Communication in the UK: Video, Local TV, Film, and Photography*. Regenbogen-Verl, 1980.
- Nigg, Heinz. *Rebel Video: the Video Movement of the 1970s and 1980s: London, Bern, Lausanne, Basel, Zurich*. Scheidegger & Spiess, 2017.
- O'Malley, Jan. *The Politics of Community Action. A Decade of Struggle in Notting Hill ...* Spokesman, 1977.
- O'Neill, Paul, and Mick Wilson. *Curating and the Educational Turn*. Open Editions, 2010.
- "Penfold Community Hub." *Notting Hill Housing*, www.nhhg.org.uk/penfold/.
- "People Make Videos Open Workshop." *The Showroom*, www.theshowroom.org/events/people-make-videos-open-workshop.
- Pines, J. "Left Film Distributors." *Screen*, vol. 13, no. 4, Jan. 1972, pp. 116–127.
- Rabinowitz, Paula. *They Must Be Represented: the Politics of Documentary*. Verso, 1994.
- Rascoroli, Laura. *The Personal Camera: Subjective Cinema and the Essay Film*. Wallflower, 2009.
- Rayns, Tony. "Scanning Video." *Time Out*, 9 May 1975.
- Rees, A.L. *A History of Experimental Film and Video*. British Film Institute, 1998.
- Roberts, Andy, and Susan J. Blackmore. *Albion Dreaming: a Popular History of LSD in Britain*. Marshall Cavendish Editions, 2012.
- Rose, Gillian. "The Cultural Politics of Place: Local Representation and Oppositional Discourse in Two Films." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, vol. 19, no. 1, 1994.

- Ruby, Jay. *Picturing Culture: Explorations of Film and Anthropology*. The University of Chicago Press, 2000.
- Russell, Catherine. *Experimental Ethnography: the Work of Film in the Age of Video*. Duke University Press, 1999.
- Sainsbury, Peter. *The Production Board and Video*. London: British Film Institute, , 1976, *The Production Board and Video*.
- Sandbrook, Dominic. *State of Emergency: the Way We Were: Britain, 1970-1974*. Penguin, 2011.
- Science as Culture*. Free Association Books, 1987.
- Sekula, Alan. "Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary(Notes on the Politics of Representation)." *The Massachusetts Review*, vol. 19, no. 4, 1978, pp. 859–883.
- "*Shared Goals*" Document. Community Arts Committee and the Association of Community Artsists , 1975, "*Shared Goals*" Document.
- Shaw, Jackie, and Clive Robertson. *Participatory Video: a Practical Guide to Using Video Creatively in Group Development Work*. Routledge, 1997.
- The Showroom. "People Make Videos Open Workshop." *The Showroom*, www.theshowroom.org/events/people-make-videos-open-workshop.
- Sitney, P. Adams. *The Avant-Garde Film: a Reader of Theory and Criticism*. New York University Press, 1978.
- Sloterdijk, Peter, and Andreas Huyssen. *Critique of Cynical Reason*. Translated by Michael Eldred, Minnesota, 2001.
- Software, Radical. "Meta-Manual." *Radical Software*, radicalsoftware.org/e/volume1nr3.html.
- Sony Annual Report*. Sony, 1970, p. 6, *Sony Annual Report*.

“Sony Global.” *Http://Www.sony.net*,

www.sony.net/SonyInfo/CorporateInfo/History/+sonyhistory-b.html.

Spielmann, Yvonne. *Video: the Reflexive Medium*. MIT Press, 2008.

Steedman, Marijke, editor. *Gallery as Community: Art, Education, Politics*.

Whitechapel Gallery, 2012.

Stoney, George. “The Mirror Machine.” *Sight and Sound*, 1971.

Unknown. “The Development of Community Arts with the Arts Council.”

Community Arts Working Party, 1974.

Unknown. “AVW Newsletter, Issue 5.” May 1975.

Unknown. ‘*Community Arts: The Report of the Community Arts Working Party*.’ Arts

Council of Great Britain, 1974

Unknown. *The Context for the Community Arts Committee’s Request to the Arts*

Council Council for an Increase in Allocation for 1978/79

Unknown, “Covent Garden.” *International Times*, 28 April 1967

www.internationaltimes.it/archive/index.php?year=1967&volume=IT-

[Volume-1&issue=12&item=IT_1967-04-28_B-IT-Volume-1_Iss-12_003](http://www.internationaltimes.it/archive/index.php?year=1967&volume=IT-Volume-1&issue=12&item=IT_1967-04-28_B-IT-Volume-1_Iss-12_003).

Unknown. *Film and Video Extra*, 1973.

Unknown. *Film and Video Extra*, 1975.

Unknown. “Jack Henry Moore - Obituary.” *The Telegraph*, Telegraph Media Group,

25 Apr. 2014, [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/10788743/Jack-Henry-](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/10788743/Jack-Henry-Moore-obituary.html)

[Moore-obituary.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/10788743/Jack-Henry-Moore-obituary.html).

Unknown. “A Letter Regarding the Establishment of the Community Arts

Committee.” Received by The Arts Council , Victoria and Albert Archives,

London, Apr. 1975, London.

- Unknown. *Minutes of the Community Arts Committee Meeting*. Arts Council of Great Britain.
- Unknown. "Origination Formats and Machines." *Www.experimentalstvcenter.org*, www.experimentalstvcenter.org/book/export/html/5853.
- Unknown. "Video Work." *The Association of Video Workers*, 1976.
- Unknown, "Video - BBC to Broadcast Video Cassette as Part of Disco 2." *Friends*, Oct. 1970.
- Unknown, "Video - the Frost Hijack." *Friends*, 11 Dec. 1970.
- Unknown, *The Video Show*. The Serpentine Gallery, 1975.
- "VTR St-Jacques." *Www.nfb.ca*, www.nfb.ca/film/vtr_st_jacques/.
- WACAT. *Walworth and Aylesbury Community Arts Trust*. The Arts Council, 1976, *Walworth and Aylesbury Community Arts Trust*.
- Wade, Graham. *Street Video*. Blackthorn Pr., 1980.
- Walker, John A. *Left Shift: Radical Art in 1970s Britain*. Tauris, 2002.
- Waugh, Thomas, et al. *Challenge for Change: Activist Documentary at the National Film Board of Canada*. MQUP, 2014.
- Waugh, Thomas. *The Right to Play Oneself: Looking Back on Documentary Film*. University of Minnesota Press, 2011.
- Waugh, Thomas. "*Show Us Life*": toward a History and Aesthetics of the Committed Documentary. Scarecrow, 1984.
- Webb-Ingall, Ed. "The Video Show: A Festival of Independent Video." *The Moving Image Review & Art Journal (MIRAJ)*, vol. 6, no. 1, Jan. 2017, pp. 52–66., doi:10.1386/miraj.6.1-2.52_1.

Webb-Ingall, Edward. "Drawing Lines across History: Reactivation and Annotation."

[Http://Www.biennial.com/](http://www.biennial.com/), www.biennial.com/journal/issue-5/pdf/drawing-lines-across-history-reactivation-and-annotation.

Webb-Ingall, Edward. *People Make Videos: A Manual for Making Community*

Videos. Art Quarters Press, 2016.

Weibel, Peter. "Post-Media Condition." *Www.metamute.org*, 19 Mar. 2012,

www.metamute.org/editorial/lab/post-media-condition.

White, Eric Walter. *The Arts Council of Great Britain*. Davis-Poynter, 1975.

White, Shirley A. *Participatory Video: Images That Transform and Empower*. Sage

Publications, 2003.

Willener, Alfred, et al. *Videology and Utopia: Explorations in a New Medium*.

Routledge, Taylor Et Francis Group, 2016.

Willis, Janet, and Tana Wollen. *The Neglected Audience*. BFI, 1990.

Filmography:

* Video can be found at www.the-lcva.co.uk

Akomfrah, John and Lina Gopaul. *Handsworth Songs*. Black Audio Film Collective, 1986.

Albany Video. *August 13: What Happened?* 1977.*

Allan, Catherine, et al.. *Self Health*. 1974.

Anderson, Lindsay and Karel Resiz. *March to Aldermaston* . 1959.

Ashur, Geri. *Janie's Janie*. 1970.

Ballantyne, Tanya. *The Things I Cannot Change* . National Film Board of Canada, 1966.

Basement News/Hackney Gorillas. *Please Adjust Your Eyes*. *

Bell Reichert, Julia and James Klein. *Growing up Female* . 1976.

Chopra, Joyce and Claudia Weill. *Joyce at 34* . 1972.

Dowmunt, Tony. *Into the Darkness*. WACAT. *

“Felix Dennis Appears on the David Frost Programme.” *YouTube*, YouTube, 22 July 2010, www.youtube.com/watch?v=WxjnfDToQmA.

Gorney, Carry. *Sweet 16*. Inter-Action/Channel 40, 1977. *

Gorney, Carry. *Things That Mother Never Told Us* . Inter-Action/Channel 40, 1978. *

Graft On!. *Forming a Resident's Association* . 1974.

Graft on!. *Song of Long Ago*. 1975. *

Hall, Sue and John Hopkins. *How to Use a Portapack*. 1978. *

Hall, Sue and John Hopkins. *Squat Now Whilst Stocks Last*. 1974. *

Hall, Sue. *Ben's Arrest* . 1974.

Hoey, Brian. *VIDEVENT*. 1975.

InFilms. *The Amazing Story of Talacre* . 1971. *

Inter-Action. *Inter-Action Media Van* . 1974. *

Julien, Isaac. *Who Killed Colin Roach?* Sankofa, 1983. *

Keiller, Patrick. *London*. 1994.

Keiller, Patrick. *Robinson in Space* . 1997.

Kinoshi , Dave and Menelik Shabazz. *Step Forward Youth* . 1977. *

Kirk, John. *Frostbite 1970*. *Vimeo*, 13 July 2018, vimeo.com/87537287.

Klein, Bonnie. *VTR St-Jacques* . National Film Board of Canada, 1969.

Liberation Films. *All You Need's an Excuse* . 1972. *

Liberation Films. *End of a Tactic*. 1968. *

Liberation Films. *Fly a Flag for Poplar* . 1974. *

Liberation Films. *Starting to Happen* . 1974. *

Liberation Films. *A Woman's Place* . 1971. *

Low, Colin. *The Fogo Island Experiment* . National Film Board of Canada, 1967.

Oval Video. *Fight the Cuts* . 1979.

Pinhorn, Maggie. *Open Door: East End Channel 1*. 1973. *

Ruttman, Walter. *Berlin: Symphony of a Metropolis* . 1927.

Tower Hamlets Arts Project. *E1 Festival*. 1974. *

TVX. *Do You Love Me?* 1970.

TVX. *Video Space*. 1970.

Venet, Joel. *Community Video 1980* . Liberation Films, 1980. *

Vertov, Dziga. *Man with a Movie Camera*. 1928.

West London Media Workshop. *The Battle for Powis Square*. 1974. *

West London Media Workshop. *Murcheson Tenants*. *

West London Media Workshop. *News at West 10*. 1977.

West London Media Workshop. *Black Homelessness*. 1978. *

White, John and Geoff Stow. *Pepys Estate - Organising*. 1974. *

White, John and Geoff Stow. *Pepys Estate Repairs Campaign*. 1974. *