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Abstract:

In this chapter, our specific focus is on the methodologies developed with the young co-creators of *Ilizwi Lenyaniso Lomhlaba* and their reflections on stories, power and meaning-making. We offer a critical consideration of co-production in the context of GCRF-funded research led by two forms of representation: participatory film-making and performance. The chapter introduces the project and builds a methodology of intersectionality and 'seeing power'. By attending to its importance in pedagogies and participatory processes, we offer reflections of how lived experience, conditions and dynamics come to the fore in the process, and how these young people make sense of power.

We consider regimes of power related to funding, legacies of dispossession and ongoing peripheralization at the same time as highlighting the achievements of young people's participation in formulating the stories of their world. We provide close engagement with the processes of training, partnership-building and forging creative campaigns with the newly formed co-creator collective, whose ethnographic films and performance contribute to voicing issues related to land, stewardship and futures.

In this chapter, we propose that the politics of stories can be understood through analysis of the process of a critical arts-based project co-created with young people in South Africa. Our aim is to approach issues related to structures of participation and how they inform pedagogies within the context of the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) supported project *Ilizwi Lenyaniso Lomhlaba*. This is valuable in order to conceive of 'seeing power' at work in youth focused participatory arts projects. 'Seeing power' as an aim is different to 'empowerment', or claims of 'giving voice' that have been problematized in participatory research. Although we draw on some ideas from curator and author Nato Thompson, by mobilising 'seeing power', we approach his conception critically, as we want to shift beyond a Marxist engagement with arts production (2015). We do not replicate his approach beyond the importance of figuring how modes of production (in this case the process of the project activity) and structures that resource (funding and institutions) feed into and shape how meanings are produced.

'Seeing power' is a consciousness-building project that is a way of meeting the Other and therefore an ability to adopt critique throughout life. In that sense, we are grounded in the approach of Morgan Ndlovu, writing from a decolonial perspective (2019). For him, one of the impacts of coloniality is its epistemological imperatives that, if replicated, dictate who counts as human, thus whose worldviews are worth knowing. More abstractly, that *how we know* is forged by these power structures, including language, education and what is valued. He foregrounds the imperative to firstly see colonial legacies (and how they manifest in the present) as well as post-Apartheid socio-political maneouvres, and secondly, consider what they mean as they play out in everyday life (2019). He uses performance terms (via the well-known work of Frantz Fanon and other decolonial thinkers), demonstrating that meanings are staged, asking how power is (re)presented, urging us to think about how representation reflects what we know. Or, in more theoretical terms, Ndlovu encourages engagement with the critical decolonial project of how the mediation of stories reflects epistemological positions that are bound up in the power dynamics that have constituted nation, language and custom.

We introduce our own critical approach to 'seeing power' that draws on Ndlovu (2019), which works on three different levels: firstly, how processes of participation make power visible without predetermining what this looks like and what is important to people. Secondly we consider tools for visibilizing or visualizing power through film and performance while also making room for other modes. Finally, we understand 'seeing power' as building a long-term critical faculty, a way of engaging with the social and the political that is larger than a single project using participatory arts. In order to attend to how our participants moved towards 'seeing power', we draw on reflexive interviews with participants that are concerned with their emergent understandings about film-making as well as the issues in their community. This close engagement with interviews and focus groups with the young people forms the main approach to how we work towards the project's contribution. As will become evident, the processes of making and doing engaged the young people in witnessing the performance of the 'heterarchies of power' (2019: 20) that Ndlovu identifies as critical in the South African context.

Introducing *Ilizwi Lenyaniso Lomhlaba*
Ilizwi Lenyaniso Lomhlaba means 'the true voice of the land' in isiXhosa. It is the name chosen by a group of young 'co-creators' in Graaff-Reinet, South Africa, for the participatory film and theatre programme they were recruited into by the established South African land rights NGO the Support Centre for Land Change (SCLC), the youth-driven activist organization

Youth-in-Power, and the authors. Graaff-Reinet is a major regional town in the eastern part of South Africa's vast, arid Karoo region. Like many such towns, it wears South Africa's social and political problems visibly: characterized by apartheid spatial dynamics, the racialized deprivation and under-resourcing play out on a daily basis the suburbs of uMasizakhe and Kroonvale. Where 'town' is the location of economic activity, dominated by white businesses and residences; the peripheral areas are home to Black and 'coloured' working class communities whose livelihoods involve farm-work, or are caught up in relation to the dominant economies of the town that circulate around agriculture. Graaff-Reinet is historically important in the region, but after several political mis-steps, longstanding drought and a local economic stalemate there is little sense of opportunity, stable employment or the chance for a different life (Cotterill, 2020). In this context, then, young people are peripheralized.

The 'co-creator collective' (or CCC) of *Ilizwi Lenyaniso Lomhlaba* came together as young adults (18-25) to achieve an ambitious programme of aims linked to the overarching work of 'Changing the Story', funded by the United Kingdom's Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF). The global project investigates how arts, heritage, and human rights education can support youth-centred approaches to civil society building, with a range of activities located in diverse 'post-conflict' contexts. Changing the Story activities in Graaff-Reinet were pitched as attempts to 'amplify' the 'voices' of young people in the Karoo region of South Africa in the context of struggles for land and environmental justice.

Because we were centring co-creation, care was taken in the design process to ensure that recruited co-creators took the lead in determining the project's identity and aims, and that the envisioned film-making, theatre-making, and social research toolkit would be managed by the young people of the CCC themselves. Our intention was to implement 'participatory methods' in order to produce, harness and stage the stories of people not usually centred in knowledge production, while at the same time seeking to challenge 'extractivist methods' (Denzin, Lincoln & Smith, 2008). In this chapter, we engage critically with these ideas, seeking to hold on to the ambiguities our work entailed, without submitting to the urge to resolve them, nor to recuperate them by subsuming how we dealt with power (broadly conceived and on an everyday level), which is, as Ndlovu suggests, a common tactic of neo-colonial white researchers (2019). Thus, while our intentions were rooted in commitment to decolonial activism, we are deeply aware of the framing of the project and our own positioning as white, English-speaking researchers located in well-resourced universities and embodying many layers of inherited privilege. We explore this as a valuable driver of reflexivity that builds a practice of 'seeing power' later in the chapter.

We conducted two intensive training workshops that built group cohesion and introduced skill-sets. Broadly speaking, the first workshop focused on group cohesion and identity and storytelling, as well as social research and filmmaking skills, while the second focused on narrative and discourse analysis of the produced films using applied theatre methodologies. In the first workshop, co-creators workshopped their vision and mission. Here a sense that the stories themselves were a means for forging communities of participation, and the promotion of alignment with activist participation in the public sphere situated beyond the film as a 'final outcome', became apparent. In the exact wording of the participants:

> Our vision, through storytelling, is to create a space that practices land justice, tells stories, and empowers youth, to ensure dignity in the Karoo.

Our mission is to educate people, conduct interviews, film the stories, and put them out in public spaces, to get people to participate.

In between the two workshops, the CCC collaborated in smaller groups to identify people to interview, conduct film shoots, and edit the stories. The process was thus balanced between the formal training and an emergent youth-led collective approach that inevitably reflected the difficulties of group formation, but which nonetheless resulted in the co-production of over 40 short films. The second kind of outcome was a performance and festival that formed a platform for the stories. Film and performance were understood as ways to analyse interview data, to identify character and narrative and to build a way of understanding stories and their use in activist work.

In the chapter, we attend to some of the questions that are significant for deepening analysis of projects using arts for social justice, namely: how do existing power dynamics, social and material conditions inform the methods used within funded research projects?; and how do the participants come to know about the values and structuring forces of different art forms for representing lived experiences? The aims therefore contribute to wider arguments about epistemic justice (Ndlovu, 2019) as we offer examples of how the co-creators came to see the operations of power and injustice. In the context of South Africa, we find importance in an intersectional approach that reaches beyond simplistic replications of 'race' as conflated with poverty and suffering, which we later discuss as moving past the common framing of adding what Eliud Ngunjiri calls 'insult to injury' (1998). It is also crucial to the decolonial project, as Ndlovu (2019) points out. Instead, as the CCC declare in their vision, stories of participation can attest to the complexities of identities, belonging and communities. This means our first argumentative move is the justification of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) as the foundational approach for 'seeing power'.

Intersectionality as a way of 'seeing power'
In the context of critical legal studies, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw initiated an understanding of 'intersectionality' that has since been widely taken up in Black feminist work, and has profoundly affected a range of sociological work on power and identity. Crenshaw argued that from a legal perspective, race, class and gender do not act separately in how they can marginalize and interpellate subjects, but rather, they multiply and inform how discrimination, criminalization and social oppressions act, with the result that subjectivities need to be conceived of holistically, and in complexity. An intersection is irreducible to 'race' and 'gender' – it is always something more – as in the phrase 'more than the sum of its parts'. Nira Yuval-Davis called it 'a globally utilized framework for understanding the issues of social justice' (Yuval-Davis 2011: xi). Its value for an activist aligned project is clear in Crenshaw's promotion of intersectional analysis because it can build awareness of 'coalitions, or at least potential coalitions waiting to be formed' (1991: 1299). Crenshaw thus insisted on the value of seeing how race can be understood as structuring a coalition (1991: 1299), for instance between anti-racist men and women adopting feminist struggles, or feminists in coalitions with anti-racists, or class struggle working against ableism rather than splintering activist energies. In other words, the force and significance of intersectionality is not only in its capacity for *post-hoc* analytical parsing, but as a practiced, embodied, activist-aligned awareness of how the intersecting conditions faced by specific groups play out, are experienced, and represented. This is attractive for *thinking with* the processes of participatory film-making and performance so we can conceive of how, when and under which conditions the training opened up conversations about stories and power for the young participants. In the final section of this chapter we discuss how the CCC explore these issues, using reflection and dialogue from

interviews to unpack the different layers of meaning they had come to recognize in the process of learning about, and making, their films and performance.
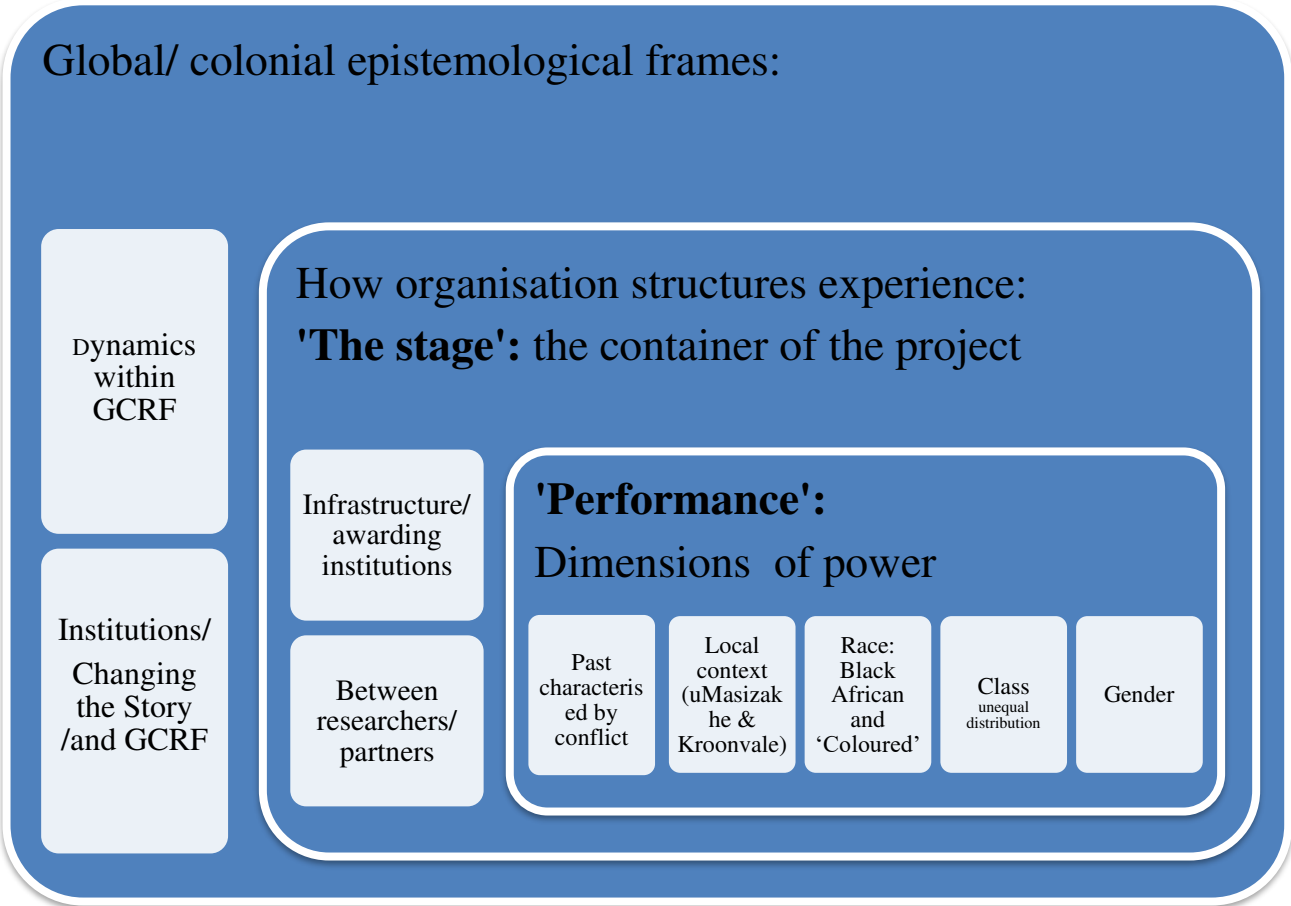
As Sirma Bilge declares, intersectional thinking 'must always account for different meanings, purposes, and audiences. Intersectionality does not create a shopping list of categories that can be deployed to shut down discussion of specific oppressions' (Bilge, 2013: 420). There is not a simplistic hierarchy of oppressions – as discussed by Audre Lorde (referred to by Briskin, 1990). Therefore, with such a lens, it is important to build awareness of where working beyond homogeneity or essential identities can forge a politicized alliance that overreaches the understanding of difference. Intersectionality asks practitioners and researchers to embrace the complexities and tensions of how different characteristics, modes and identities work together. This sense of *inter-* (between, among, mutual or reciprocal) asks that we build understandings of how identities, characteristics and oppressions interrelate, interlock and interject in the conversation. For Bilge, there is great opportunity in a practice that is intersectional as it can generate 'counter-hegemonic and transformative knowledge production, activism, pedagogy, and non-oppressive coalitions' (2013: 405). However, we want to guard against the logic of equivalence that can sometimes be deployed in articulations of oppression/ privilege, and that ends up forming a depoliticized intersectionality. We see the particularities of the young people and their participants in the specific context of this funded project as an opportunity to work with intersectionality precisely because it allows us to see power, and to represent it, in its practiced complexity.

Taking this forward in the chapter, then, we develop a means of thinking alongside the practice and pedagogy of our co-creators in *Ilizwi Lenyaniso Lomhlaba*. The chapter works through the intersectional considerations without wanting to consider them discretely or as separable. This enables a complexity of a multi-scalar picture: thinking through intersectionality at levels of power linked in to the local, the national, the global. As such, we offer the humble onion as our way into the experiences we noticed in the project. That is because it allows us to think of the different layers of power/empowerment and think about them as distinct but not entirely different – each layer is still part of the onion. Any specific understanding of discrete issues must be considered as of its place (located); inflected by the particularities of race and class as well as the cultural politics of gender and language. However, what becomes obvious as we try to represent the onions is an epistemological limitation: experiences of participatory projects are complex, embodied and processual. As so well covered in Black feminist standpoint theory, we do not undertake learning processes in a vacuum: we each bring ourselves, our histories, our experiences and privileges (or otherwise) into learning spaces (Collins, 2003). We will thus bring together the ideas that, in the nature of scholarly dissection, are explored separately, so as not to diminish the significance of difference. However, it bears remembering that the focus is on lived experience, embodied knowledges and therefore it is not possible to know the 'whole story'. To that end, we want to think together about how the different scales (micro-level and macro-level) may be understood – engaging the CCC to visualize how power is in operation.

Nato Thompson observes that 'often what one thinks of as 'seeing power' is, in fact, just an all too easy attempt to categorize the world into things and intentions we already understand' (2015: 74). While Thompson's approach is to engage how artists make visible existing power relations, we are invested in adopting some of his questions in order to operationalize how 'seeing power' can work. 'Seeing power' intersectionally furthermore means remaining vigilant of essentialism.

The table below offers an initial engagement with how layers of lived experience form the intersecting dimensions that firstly resource, and then go on to structure the project. These are to be understood as the funding, institutional and political infrastructures that dictate the nature, timescale and limitations of the project. The inner layer (labelled 'performance') separates out how different dimensions become visible at different moments.

The intersections of power occur on different levels, as we demonstrate in this table, using key terms from Ndlovu (2019).

Table 1: Intersectional contexts for 'seeing power' as praxis

The table explores the set of power dynamics, though it is immediately clear that it is not a linear or chronological set of relations. We are not suggesting that there is a fixed or even shared understanding of the operations of power in the outer layer and how that impacts on the structuring conditions of the funding, which we discuss further below. Rather, the table represents how the form of the project (participatory film-making in the specific context of Graaff-Reinet) is structured by these dimensions of power. Although, as the latter half of the chapter goes on to explore, the CCC began to explore how power turns up in their films, we needed to be alert to how the charge of coloniality in the funding model as well as the appearance of two white English speaking researchers to attend to the vision of project. In the analysis of the CCC films, it is clear that our awareness of these intersecting and complex dynamics of power were a productive place to forge a common cause: but that needed to be generated out of the process and not imposed from the outset, or otherwise, we would run the

risk of imposing an external vision of social change that was not grounded in the lived experience of the co-creators.

Stages and performances of different relations of power

At the global geopolitical level, GCRF funding for Changing the Story is implicated in colonial systems of power-knowledge. These continue to reproduce colonial centres (such as London) as places from which the periphery (i.e. Graaff-Reinet) can be 'known' and from which 'development' must radiate. These demands are translated through what Ndlovu calls 'the stage' (2019), the project management structure of Changing the Story in the United Kingdom, which is the interpreting mediator for impact and outcome statements to align around specific knowledge projects and theories of change. These in turn articulate with another structuring 'stage': that of organized recipient universities and nongovernmental organizations, which impose their own institutional opportunities and limitations, while bringing the demands of other stakeholders into play when making decisions about the nature of their support for projects. Power relationships between these organizations (large, well-funded universities partnering with small, precariously funded civil society organizations) determine the agenda that is accepted, and can distort priorities and commitments of smaller partners eager to expand support for their work. Individuals' relation with their implementing organizations are also structured by unequal power. In this project specifically, the next layer is introduced by organizations with access to material resources implementing work with young people who seek also to acquire such access, across social and ethnic divisions, as well as those of age and level of organization. Finally, we use Ndlovu's articulation of 'performance' to refer to how dynamics of power between participants themselves 'show up' on the stage set by the project – along lines of gender, class, language, and other dimensions of identity. Often, they actively structure the conversation, ensuring that some voices are heard while others remain silent - a cogent demonstration of gendered assumptions about who has the right to speak. However, not all of these aspects of power are surfaced or visible in every moment. We came to realize that it is through active engagement, and transparent reflections about how power structures affect the shape and operation of the project that bring some of these issues into sharper focus.

Politics of stories

The theoretical and methodological commitment to how young people can begin to make sense of the complex, intersectional nature of human experience is always inflected through stories. South African cultural practices are shot through with stories and storytelling, fed by the oral traditions that shared cosmologies, mapped place and built communities' languages for naming the world (Mda, 1990; Salhi, 1998). There is much 'use' made of stories in the development sector in the form of participatory theatre and film, predicated on this long standing practice. One of the co-creators reflects on how she came to understand the significance of stories, sharing an insight that moves beyond simply finding stories as 'data'.

> To tell people's true stories, in order to find out how they really live and how they really feel…. I think we all have our way, we all have our stories to tell. If we didn't research, we wouldn't have known how to put a performance together, and people wouldn't connect with us. It's about listening to other people's stories.[1] (Tahn-dee Matthews, interviews, 24/08/2019)

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[1] TM: "om die ware stories van mense te vertel om uit te vind hoe mense rerig lewe en hoe mense rerig voel, ek dink nie ons almal het ons way – ons almal het ons stories te vertel, as ons nie research nie, gaan ons nie weet hoe om 'n act of 'n performance saam te sit nie, en ek dink nie mense gaan konnek met ons. Om vir ander mense se stories te luister". (interviews 24/08).

This notion of 'connecting' with people, and of a responsibility to accurately reflect them in the work of the CCC, was important for participants in the project. This understanding of the responsibilities that come along with representation provoke questions of who the audiences are for the stories, and in whose interests people's lives are being represented. Ngunjiri (1998) outlines the ambiguities of participation whereby NGOs use co-creation and participatory methodologies to highlight existing marginalization. He draws out the complexities of funding dependencies and campaigns for representation as 'marginalized' that seem to be predicated on replicating conditions of marginalization, calling this a process that adds 'insult to injury' (1998: 468). This can lead to a cycle of consciousness-raising, complaint, group frustration but little action resulting from awareness of marginalization. Taking this approach, research that is focused on the politics and pragmatics of representation in participatory co-creation needs to attend to these issues of recognition. We wanted to concentrate on how language(s) and culture make specific things legible or intelligible across dimensions of power.

This is where creative arts outcomes are neither merely about replicating stories people expect to hear (as discussed in Cooke et al, 2019); nor reproducing easily consumable narratives of suffering, dispossession and oppression. This point has particular resonance in the context of research into power differentials, particularly post-conflict, when outcomes can 'stick', as Sandlin et al (2018) observe:

> The experience of participating in research billed as "participatory" may, in itself, be oppressive to participants when the parameters are controlled by academic others and the "knowledge" produced may reinforce stereotypical views of their lives and their "problems" (Sandlin et al, 2018: 58).

It became important to discuss how the epistemological imperatives of the development sector (which resources research in the first place), may well underline existing 'deficit' models. They offer the perspective that what 'creates a gap between the ideals of feminist, anti-oppressive, and critical research and the way it is often enacted is power, which creates hierarchies of control that are created and re-created' (Sandlin et al, 2018: 65). Although it is never entirely possible to operate outside of this kind of structuring power, we anticipated that an intersectional and reflexive approach would engage the CCC in creative conversations that not only recognized injustices faced by their communities but also how stories themselves (and representations) come to inform awareness of *how we see*; and by extension, *how we know*. This is also discussed by Ndlovu who reflects on the direction of analysis beyond coercive Western, colonial epistemological perspectives that continue to structure schooling, language use and complicity in discursive 'framing of identity' (2019: 47). This reflexivity was pursued through focus group interviews conducted after the second training workshop, in which all CCC members contributed to filmed interviews with both of the researchers and with an 'open mic' session to share their reflections on making films and how they were beginning to see power.

An example here is the co-produced naming of the project, which elicited some assumptions that we would need to complexify. What constitutes the 'true voice of the land'? Work such as this must expose and explore the structures 'that operate behind any gesture within communities' (2005: 75). Thus, what might be objectively 'true' needs to be specific and understood through the individual, intersectional experience. The devastating drought, for example, affected the poorest communities (especially Black working class and unemployed households) disproportionately while middle class, town-dwelling, and white people could maintain a decent standard of living with some adjustments. These issues are experienced

differently along race/gender/class/ability intersections. There can thus never be a singular 'true voice' of the land.

In the next section we zoom out to place storytelling in the methodological context of participatory film-making, in order to position the claims for film's epistemic approaches. 'Seeing power' is a complex project of learning how to see, and then how to make sense of what is seen.

Co-creation: Participatory film-making

Participatory film-making sits within a growing trend of visual methods in social sciences and humanities (Knowles & Sweetman, 2004; Pink, 2001; Rose, 2001). These are often interdisciplinary approaches within communities in order to bridge an epistemic difference between what Wendy Luttrell and Richard Chalfen term 'insiders' and 'outsiders':

> who come together to explore areas of shared concern. The nature of the collaborations between 'insiders' and 'outsiders', whether researchers, educators, social activists or professional photographers, may vary widely, but there is a general sense that people will welcome the opportunity to use modern camera technology as a means to express themselves, what they know and how they wish to be seen (2010: 197).

In this sense, the promise of the camera is that it enables participants to take up a right to self-representation. In an echoing community hall in Kroonvale, one of the shyest co-creators explains, tapping into this kind of idealism:

> "You can have your say, say what you will – about the land – you have the right to speak" (Emile Lomberg, interviews, 24/08/2019).

Emile is speaking to what he realised about film-making specifically, though this insight about the right of representation is also valued in other participatory methods. Participatory film-making is difficult to define, given that it may be practiced by expert film-makers focused on technique; or indeed, deployed for the purposes of its intent to explore subjects important to the participants through a hands-on process. In other words, the place and significance of film-making includes 'a focus on skills and values, rather than on methods and techniques' (Milne et al, 2012, 45). As Milne goes on to say, as a research method, this can mean researchers need to attend to a 'messy, complex bricolage' (2016: 5). Discussion of these forms can rest on claims of transformation, emancipation and 'giving voice', raising the following issues and questions:

> the hidden politics of participatory video and the values upon which it rests; whether participatory video is a tool for neo-liberal colonization; the emancipatory and participatory nature of the method(ology), particularly where it is externally imposed on communities or inadvertently perpetuates marginalising discourses; the assumption that participatory video 'gives voice' and shifts power inequalities inherent in the research process; claims to increased agency and enhanced well-being of those involved (2016: 3).

Participatory filmmaking must avoid assumptions that it by definition equates with emancipation and agency. Sophie Harman reminds of the significance of 'transformative' intentions in methods that explicitly focus on storytelling, representation and 'giving visibility to the hidden voices' so that the prevalence of 'coded, gendered and racialized' stereotypes can be challenged (2019: 24). Nonetheless, what we noticed in practice was that the form of filmed interviews does not untether participants from replicating the conditions of

marginalization that render certain people unheard or marginalized in wider society. This is where we see the need for a grounded analysis of how power is inflected in the work. Otherwise, we felt, we would repeat the pitfalls noticed in much participatory research of outcomes adding 'insult to injury'. This dilemma was highlighted by one of the participants:

> You can't just put into the story what you want to… People just put pleasant things into stories, instead of the truth! You have to get to the point! (Junaid Oliephant, group workshop, 10/06/2019)[2]

This correlates with actor Anna Deavere Smith's discussions that informed our training sessions, where she asks 'Who has the right to see what? Who has the right to say what? Who has the right to speak for whom?' (1993: xxviii). Thompson's point about how stories replicate assumptions can be 'just an all too easy attempt to categorize the world into things and intentions we already understand' (2015: 74). In other words, as the project progressed, we needed to think about how young people could be encouraged to ask questions that did not only replicate the vectors of power that were already visible to them, and indeed, in plain sight of the interviewees. How could our film-makers move towards representing what they *did not yet know*? How might we enable them to be open to stories that did not simply repeat a given story? An example here by another of the CCC speaks to this dilemma:

> If I can give an example, there were people who couldn't answer, and people who could give a quick answer. Some already 'had' their story, and so it was easier for them to tell it… (Emile Lomberg, interviews, 24/08/2019)[3]

Emile highlights the dilemma of the new researcher: how to enable people to move beyond the legitimization of particular stories they perceive will be valuable to feel comfortable to share partial, or even contradictory, stories that do not behave in ways we may anticipate. This concept is central to our understanding of 'seeing power', which is a means of eliciting experiences and stories that demonstrate how complex issues of locatedness, gender, race and class are. In fact, as Emile highlights, if the stories come too easily (for instance, if they are glib and superficial) the tellers are probably not moving beyond easy tropes. Instead of 'seeing power' being an analytical tool that brings discrete ideas into sharp view, we are arguing that 'seeing power' is useful when it brings these complex, perhaps messy, intersections into view. That can happen when we as interviewers see what is not quite revealed to us, or when we are able to capture something of the difficulty of stories that are complex and conflictual precisely because lived experience is multiple and intersectional. We move into some of the specific ways the CCC engaged film-making to make visible what they were beginning to understand as interesting.

'Seeing power' in *Ilizwi Lenyaniso Lomhlaba's* films
The films document material conditions of place and class by framing the lived experience of interviewees. The CCC needed to learn about the importance of framing and choices of how the camera and editing afforded intelligibility. How people expressed their stories through interviews was always through language, but their testimonies were spoken against specific semiotic backgrounds. Making films means enacting a politics of representation. Where the

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[2] "Jy moenie net insit wat jy wil insit nie […] nou sit mense in wat mooi is, in plaas van die waarheid! …die waarheid is basies om op die punt te kom…"

[3] "As ek 'n voorbeeld kan maak, daar was mense wat nie kon antwoord nie en mense wat vinnig geantwoord het, party het alreeds 'n storie gehad en dit was makliker vir hulle om te vertel…"

film-makers choose certain shots for scene setting, context shots of dusty roads, or plastic litter fluttering on bushes, these rich visuals tell much about how the young people construct and author meanings in the films in multi-dimensional ways, moving beyond the language of interviews. One of the co-creators reflects on their intentions with storymaking:

> I wanna make impact. Life-changing stories. Motivational stories. Stories that build people. Stories that encourage people not to give up. Stories that make impact for the rest of people's lives, something you can watch and say even ten years from now, but "I once heard a story, maybe let me try to take something from that story and take it in my life, so that I can use it". It's important to tell stories and be able to impact someone else's life, not only just by thought but by action. That person might sit down and think about it, and be like "Khunjie's story inspired me". So I can do better. And I am going to do better. I want those kind of stories. (Khunjuzwa Mangaliso, interviews, 24/08/2019).

In this discussion, we see the motivations of the young people to make an impact and to inspire people to change their lives. Khunjuzwa's words offer a sense of the long gestation of the power of stories, reminding us that simplistic evaluation of 'change' or 'transformation' is built on a logic of power that foregrounds what is readily visible. That reminds of the warning about what 'sticks' (Sandlin et al, 2018), as we know that often sentimental or 'easy' stories rely on given responses. This is bound up in Ndlovu's critical understanding (2019) of how modes of self-representation can easily perform digestible subjectivities that can replicate the hierarchies of coloniality. However, in Khunjie's view, stories may be profoundly valuable in getting at some of what is at stake in choosing to participate. For her, the power of inspiration can trickle slowly, speaking to the importance of different epistemic values. This is also true in the context of the research: where the pace of inquiry might value 'easy-to-digest' impacts, this awareness that change and development happens over time is significant precisely because it speaks to the tension of research projects framed as 'producing change'.

Stories are told and they are heard, they are produced and they are received. This back-and-forth dynamic builds a relationship of witnessing. In the interviews, the CCC were primary witnesses but there are assumptions about wider audiences that come through in how people constructed their stories, or in some cases, felt pressure and were unable to consider how to represent themselves. This is for a number of reasons, including how intersecting power dynamics are set up in the use of unfamiliar technology and the abstraction of online dissemination. This is especially true in the context of barriers of expense for data costs in South Africa, meaning that the internet's promise of fair 'access' is far from universal.

The CCC was thus obliged to consider these as ethical issues, along with how the aesthetics of mediation and their choices during editing and performance choices also reveal how stories contain, as well as produce, power. Finally, the use of aesthetics demands attention to affect, not least because of the subject matter itself. As an epistemological approach, working with film and performance means the CCC needed to reflect on the importance of social connections with other people. This can be seen in a reflection by one of the group:
> Because now you know the stories. You walk past somebody[4] but it's just OK, bye. When you ask them about their lives, about how they live, you don't even know that your neighbour has been through all of that. […] All of us are not seen; not all of us

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[4] "Jy loop verby iemand…". Extract is presented in English but was spoken in a mix of English and Afrikaans.

have a voice;[5] we judge people but we don't know these people. (Tahn-dee Matthews, 24/08/2019)

Both Khunjie and Tahn-dee offer a sense of themselves as newly engaged in thinking about their fellow community members as people with rich stories. They *see them differently.* Their comments signal a sense of consciousness. They are reflecting on how their engagement with community members demands a recognition of the many layers of stories (oppressions, multiple identities, as well as joys) that operate in everyone's lives.

Thompson says that 'seeing power' is necessary where the arts are generated through participation and co-creation, with a drive toward social change (2015). He asserts that arts and research production need to account for social conditions as well as the material structures that make international projects possible. In addition, it's useful to surface how power operates at the level of building partnerships, including existing relations with project partners and dynamics of race and class that form access or barriers to access, which he terms 'gatekeepers' (also visualised in table 1). In our project, the framing by the project partners was often in tension with the legitimate and pressing stories that our participants wanted to tell.
This aesthetic difference also suggests the significance of audience. CulTo name one example: an early decision to link this project into the second author's existing research project on racial projects within environmentalist discourses led to the project's design including a focus on the campaign against hydraulic fracturing ('fracking'). Environmental protection infuses the sustainable development goals that animate the GCRF's approach; furthermore, local partner SCLC is the leader of the #BanFracking campaign in the Karoo. Fracking was thus a good tactical choice for getting partners on board. But by the time the project was implemented, fracking was no longer a highly contentious or priority issue for young people or the community members they interviewed. We had the strong sense in workshops, filmed interviews, and other creative outputs that 'fracking' was a word that we and SCLC had put into people's mouths.

This was a moment to recognize that as much as a focus on the 'local' can deflect attention from systemic injustices and wider inequality so too can top-down topic-setting. The material conditions of the community gave context for the informing stories (including persistent drought, landlessness, campaigns against fracking as well as legacies of under-resourced communities). In the earlier interviews that insisted on discussions about fracking, standard opinions were often repeated back to the camera with little resonance or passion, while when people reflect their own concerns, the aspects of power that are important to them come through more clearly. For instance, in a scene about lack of housing, several women complain about the local governance of their area and its failure to provide adequate housing for Black working class people. As they talk to the camera and one another, organize for a building to be erected, and testify to what is important to them, we begin to see other forms of power, including the cultural role of religion and gender, and how that shapes their community.[6] 'Seeing power' recognizes that there are different modalities that inform their perspective as they describe the dangers they face in the structures of everyday life.

When we then look to how the CCC managed these informing power dynamics, we must also find a means of thinking about how power is inflected in their artistic intentions: the forms,

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[5] "ons almal word nie raakgesien nie, ons almal het nie 'n voice nie, ons…"

[6] This scene is in a film 'Women in Arms' made for a Women's Day event with activists from the Eastern Cape. It is unlisted.

choices and outcomes that were explored in framing the stories. For instance, we noticed a difference in how the CCC aestheticized their own experiences (in stylish shoots with artistic risks) that was often quite different from the style of the interviews with older people (farm workers, elders, teachers and other members of the community). In their own films, they experiment with aestheticizing themselves, a freedom to perform a new identity, or to be part of a subculture. However, reading the films across intersecting dimensions, it can appear that they feel less free to play when representing other people, where we see some anxiety about veracity. In the films, that means the frames and representations are more sombre and focused on the person, their story and what they direct attention to, while the CCC films provide a taste of place and being in place as they show young fashionistas in a rural landscape; or CCC participants within Graaff-Reinet town centre's iconic square and usually a dynamic original hip-hop tune produced by one of the group.

tural forms always have one eye on intended audience, and in this project we had at least three layers of audience: firstly a local one made of peers and supporters in the local areas of uMasizakhe and Kroonvale; secondly a provincial audience reached in staged events to disseminate youth activist voices organized by SCLC; and thirdly, participation included a potential for global reach which the young people found significant, but which remained fairly abstract for them (until their inclusion in Changing the Story's International Film Festival, June 2020).

Our participants' attempts to elicit 'the true voice of the land' required that the team were given time: stories did not emerge in the timeframes set by institutional time. This reflection needs to be inflected through intersectionality: layers of privilege makes participation easier for some, which goes along with a degree of confidence that correlates with educational backgrounds. We also needed to remain aware of the accessibility of activities (including the technical dimensions that presuppose a certain level of digital literacy); as well as the inflection of gender, race and class that mean time and timing do not operate equally for everybody. For instance, if they are to participate in a shoot, participants need access to transport to get them to the location. Their capacity to navigate expectations and deadlines are predetermined in some ways by accessing resources to participate. Likewise, participants who live far away may struggle to turn up to regular meetings on time because they need to negotiate how to get there. Although the project team concentrated on flexibility, there were some occasions 'institutional time' did not coincide; such as when our proposed festival outcome was delayed to accommodate needs of the group but which then meant the researchers could not be present. In the table, we look at how 6 different modes of meaning come through how the CCC start to see power.

material (place and body)
intelligibility (language and images)
representation (multi-dimensional authoring of meaning)
witnessing (reflection on meaning through Other)
mediation (awareness of choices)
affect (reflection on emotions and impacts of arts outcomes)

Table 2: Participatory film and different levels of 'seeing power'

In focus group discussions, the group conversed about what they had learned from conducting interviews, reflecting that there are all kinds of barriers to accessing the 'true stories' that they had anticipated. Sometimes, those barriers related to time and the interviewee's capacity to accommodate the film-makers.

> We never really had time to go back and ask questions of the interviewees. Most of the interviews I did was with teachers and people who are really busy. So when it is a wrap up it's a wrap up. (Tahn-dee Matthews, interviews, 24/08/2019).

But as the interviewers shared, there was also often an interesting dynamic that emerged with the camera, saying:

> *Tahn-dee Matthews:* I also noticed that people talked about relevant issues before we started the interview, and then when we put up the cameras they...
> *Sibongile Bulu:* ...they black out, they were shying away...
> *Sadé Jaftha:* They know now that they are in front of the camera.[7] (interviews, 24/08/2019).

This exchange offers a lively account of how 'knowing' that they are to be captured on film makes the interlocutors aware of the power of mediation. As they continued to discuss the issue, these CCC members give specific examples of where the film-making formed a barrier to an elder in the community. In the preceding conversation he clearly 'had' a story, but as it came down to the shoot, and when the camera was set up, there was something about the format, the technology, the formality perhaps, that meant that he became unwilling or unable to share his story.

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[7] "Hulle weet nou hulle is agter die kamera"

> *Sibongile Bulu:* There was one grandpa he spoke there and then he spoke no problem, but when we started interviewing him, he couldn't answer a straight question there, he couldn't say anything.
>
> *Khunjuzwa Mangaliso:* There was this old man who was all fired up. Comes the camera – what!? And then he just refrained from talking about what he was talking about before. (interviews, 24/08/2019).

The camera becomes a silencing machine, rather than a value-neutral mediator of 'true stories'. By thinking about this moment, the young people were conceiving of how the elder sees power – where although he has a story to tell, he encounters difficulties trusting how his story will be used. The CCC went further in their thinking about what may have formed a barrier for some of their proposed interviewees. They reflect on the imagined audiences, and the implications for where stories can lead, and how they can be turned against those that tell the stories.

> *Zamuxolo Matha:* They don't know what the films will be used for, even though we do our introductions, they don't feel safe.
>
> *Patricia Pietersen:* People are afraid. If it's said on social media…[8]
>
> *Khunuzwa Mangaliso:* Scared of the feedback, the backlash… scared of the ears that will hear and the reaction. (interviews, 24/08/2019).

The cultural significance of stories across different groups in South Africa is important, and for this particular interviewee, the legacies of how his race and class served to silence him to white landowners and privileged policy-makers means he is accustomed to feeling unsure of whether he has a right to his story or not, and in particular to whether his story being public will have unintended consequences for him or not. This is not simply a generational mistrust of media, but rooted in experiences of public discourse being controlled and maintained by powers-that-be (formerly rich, white owned media that is replaced by a media that is more 'diverse' but that does not serve the interests of the poor working class majority). The fact is that one group of people continue to have so much power over another that they hold their economic wellbeing in their hands and the working class interviewees therefore don't want to offend them. There are high stakes to participation. The interviewee's feeling of uncertainty and fear arises from still having this power relation. These comments signal the significance of affect – how hopes and fears about the content of stories as well as the emotional labour that is a part of sharing stories become important. Some of this emotional labour must also be understood from an intersectional perspective.

Much of the emphasis thus far has been on film-making, as this was a new skill for the young people. In the training, they were also introduced to participatory performance making, whereby they would structure a short performance out of the real life stories they had captured in their interviews. This was an opportunity to craft a research-informed outcome in the form of performance in a return to the immediacy of oral forms and enabling a less formal relationship with veracity in representation because by definition we had young people imagining and re-staging the stories of those that had been interviewed. The performance materials were informed by the work of actor and activist Anna Deavere Smith, who uses testimonies and interviews to inform performances of conflict, race relations and ongoing power struggles in communities across the United States. One of the training sessions drew on her dedication to dignity in the pursuit of what she calls 'the voice of America' (1993). We used this work in the manual the young people were offered to guide their self-organized

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[8] "Die mense is bang. As ons dit sê op social media…"

rehearsals. The questions she poses as a starting point for pedagogies signal some of the issues later discussed by our participants:

> To develop a voice, one must develop an ear. To complete an action, one must have a clear vision. Does the inability to empathize start with an inhibition, or a reluctance to see? […] Who has the right to see what? Who has the right to say what? Who has the right to speak for whom? (1993, xxviii).

These perspectives raise important questions for participatory research as well as for working with interview materials in creative modes. Being asked to reflect on how they were using film-making and performance, some participants mentioned:

> *Sibongile Bulu:* People get to see with their eyes, listen to what you said, a great platform to tell stories.
> *Waltozine Jacobs:* It's also good to identify… to get people's emotion. They can see the emotion, to be visible, to see the emotion… (interviews, 24/08/2019).

Though it's clear that the CCC were convinced the process asked them to 'see power' and move towards 'the true voice of the land', there was a further dimension that came into view when interviewees were told about who would be audiences for their work.

> *Tahn-dee Matthews:* When people found out it would be online…
> *Waltozine Jacobs:* ...if it's to be more 'political'… they are afraid…[9]
> *Tahn-dee Matthews:* The guy at XXX High also didn't want to speak – he said he didn't want to step on people's toes…[10]
> *Siibongile Bulu:* They think about what they say because they don't want to tell the truth… they are scared to tell the truth… (interviews, 24/08/2019).

In this exchange the CCC point out the limitations of film-making as a presumed mediator of 'the truth'. They highlight the anxieties that go along with disenfranchised people whose perspectives on what must be changed have been ignored and denied so that the 'truth' of their living conditions and their personal experiences would be seen to be an affront to the powers that be. It was not always clear who or what constituted the powers that be – in one case, a co-creator mentioned a presumed white English speaking audience. This point speaks to one of the aims in this chapter to consider how participation makes power visible. From the CCC interview reflections, participation in the project renders a sensation that, despite the prevailing conditions of power that continue to oppress and peripheralize these young people, there is nonetheless a new-found right to see power, and to speak about it.

'Seeing power' and epistemic injustice
Ndlovu's reminder that much research protects and maintains the epistemological status quo by highlighting agency (he refers to this as 'drama' or 'performance') over structure (he terms this the 'stage'). Uncritical replication of the status quo enables beneficiaries of coloniality to remain stable (2019: 43). He refers to this as a 'deliberate (mis)recognition of agency' (2019: 43), and demands a decolonial approach to power that engages strategically to analyse power, meaning making and coloniality's endurance. He foregrounds the need to engage with 'colonized subjects [about] the possible pitfalls of their actions, rather than deceiving them by

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[9] "As dit meer political sou wees… hulle is bang…"
[10] "Hy get gesê hy wil nie op mense se tone trap nie…"

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focusing on that which cheers them up […] as though their behaviour will ameliorate their circumstances' (2019: 44). The CCC's reflections on their processes of engagement within communities signals a growing awareness of this complexity such as empty promises of freedom through participation. Instead, this fledgling youth-led organisation took the opportunity to start conversations with people in their community about the range of factors outlined in table 2 as material conditions through to affect. This goes some way towards challenging what Ndlovu sees as the crisis of Western subjectivity that fails 'to travel philosophically to the epistemic worlds of others' (2019: 44). Their participatory film-making puts into practice the principles of 'seeing power', giving viewers a means of travelling to these different worlds, and, to return to the significance of intersectionality in doing so, to forge politicized alliances that are critical for decoloniality. This is not a claim to have reached epistemic justice, of course, as their continued work in their communities shows there is a long way before the self-representation (or agency) of communities can intervene into the stages of power (structure). Participatory film-making, in these contexts, ought to remain one tool amongst many in the decolonial moves towards social change.

Intersectionality reminds that power operates against and through different identifications – and as such it is in motion and relational. Power is not fixed nor does it show up in predictable ways. 'Seeing power' moves beyond communities' recognition of existing formal powers exercised by the state. As the CCC interviews demonstrate, 'seeing power' is a methodology of reflecting on how stories come into view, and how we make sense of things that connect, or are in tension. This is an epistemic imperative that moves beyond the scope of a single project, considering our aim: 'seeing power' as a mode of building a long-term critical faculty, a way of engaging with the social and the political that is larger than a single participatory arts approach.

The CCC experienced meaning making by engaging with technical skills of film-making, and learning about how specific lines of questioning can open up or close down insights about change, activism and power. In particular, they show awareness of how epistemic force of legibility upheld by the technology: who is seen?, what are the politics of being seen in that way?, and who is watching that is able to make sense of these representations? From these reflections, they move towards a view of 'entanglement' (Ndlovu, 2019: 60); the complex necessity of self-representation within a decolonial epistemological approach. 'Seeing power', following Ndlovu's thinking (2019: 45), must account for that relationality; and also the relational dimension of what we have called 'audience' whose own power to see can often inform and inflect what they see based on what is intelligible to them. Mirzoeff has claimed the importance of 'visual imagination, visual thought and visualizing combine to make worlds that we live in and seek to change' (2015: 285). 'Seeing power' is a means of doing just that.

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