

## **Geospatial Direct-Address Videos As Alternative Participatory Governance Device for Community Problem Identification and Decision-Making at a Subdivision in a City Located in Laguna**

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The Barcelona Conference on Arts, Media & Culture 2025  
Official Conference Proceedings

### **Abstract**

This study examines geospatial direct-address videos as an alternative participatory governance device for community problem identification and decision-making in a subdivision in Laguna, Philippines. Through a thematic analysis, the research assessed residents' and barangay decision-makers' perspectives using VeneKlasen and Miller's (2002) distinctions about power and Tufte and Mefalopulos' (2009) participatory outcomes. Short direct-address videos of residents were mapped geospatially in a digital platform and later shown to barangay officials to elicit responses. The findings revealed mixed dynamics of Power Over, Power With, and Power Within, demonstrating how digital video mapping enables proactive citizenship while also exposing structural hierarchies in community decision-making. The most observed participatory outcome was the improvement of competencies and capacities, indicating that barangay decision-makers recognized the potential of geospatial videos for enhancing transparency, collaboration, and participatory problem-solving. The study underscores the promise of audiovisual and locative media as alternative participatory tools for inclusive governance.

*Keywords:* participatory governance, geospatial video, thematic analysis, community participation, digital mapping

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## Introduction

This study investigates how video, when situated geospatially, may serve as a participatory medium for community-level problem identification and decision-making. With the proliferation of mobile technologies and the increasing accessibility of audiovisual recording, communities today have the means to represent their own realities and articulate grievances in a direct and embodied form.

In the Philippines, particularly within the barangay context, participatory governance often suffers from hierarchical communication patterns that marginalize ordinary citizens' voices. The researcher sought to explore how geospatial direct-address videos, which are short video segments of residents speaking directly to the camera from their neighborhoods, can act as a tool for participatory communication and grassroots governance.

This work contributes to the growing discourse on participatory communication by situating visual storytelling within a locative and digital framework. It recognizes that visibility, spatiality, and voice can mutually reinforce empowerment in community settings.

## Literature Review

Participatory video (PV) has evolved as a form of community-based media production aimed at empowerment and inclusion (Colom, 2010; Kyung-Hwa, 2016). It allows participants to represent their experiences, share concerns, and propose actions through collaborative video-making. The process fosters dialogue and reflection, reminiscent of Freire's (1989) notion of conscientization.

Related approaches, such as ethnovideography (Flor, 2005), emphasize researcher-facilitated video documentation of community life. Meanwhile, "cellphilms" (Dockney & Tomaselli, 2009; MacEntee et al., 2016) capitalize on mobile devices as accessible means of participatory visual research. These traditions highlight the capacity of video to democratize knowledge and stimulate civic participation.

The study also draws on concepts of discourse communities (Swales, 1990) and community conversations (Public Agenda, n.d.), which frame communication as an enabling condition for collective problem-solving. In the local governance context, digital and ICT-based mechanisms such as e-governance initiatives (Asian Development Bank, 2013; Shah, 2005) illustrate how technology may bridge citizen-state communication gaps.

Methodologically, the study was inspired by Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and the transect walk (Chambers, 1992), both emphasizing local participation, contextual learning, and visual mapping. Integrating these frameworks, the research positions geospatial direct-address videos as both communicative artifacts and analytical tools for examining participatory power.

## Methodology

The study utilized a qualitative design rooted in participatory communication and thematic analysis. Fieldwork took place in a subdivision within a barangay in a city located in Laguna, Philippines.

## Transect Walk and Data Collection

A transect walk, a participatory mapping activity, was conducted with a local guide to identify residents willing to record short direct-address videos. Each resident spoke about perceived community issues (such as drainage, safety, waste management, or infrastructure) while being filmed in front of the concerned site. The videos were captured using mobile devices, afterwards geo-tagged, and then embedded in an interactive digital map of the subdivision (developed with the help of a multimedia artist).

The resulting digital map served as a visual repository of residents' concerns, making visible the geography of local problems through spatially-linked testimonies.

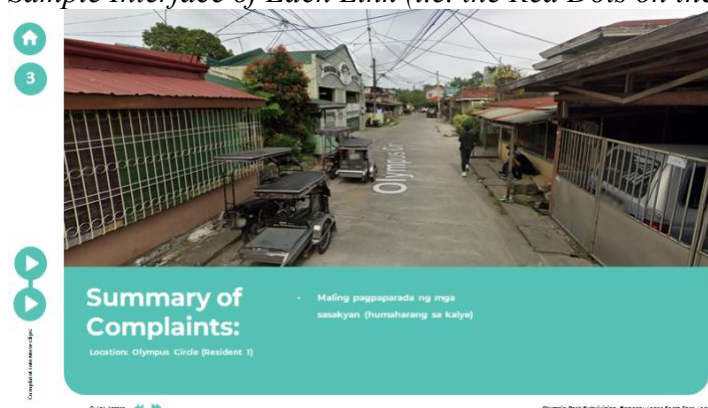
**Figure 1**

*The Interactive Map That Contains the Geospatial Direct-Address Videos*



**Figure 2**

*Sample Interface of Each Link (i.e. the Red Dots on the Map) When Clicked*



## Focus Group Discussion

The second phase involved a focus group discussion (FGD) with barangay decision-makers. During the session, the interactive map and videos were presented to elicit reactions, reflections, and assessments of the tool's potential in governance. Participants included

members responsible for administration, barangay justice (including a separate one that focuses on violence against women and children), peace and security, health, and the environment.

### Thematic Analysis

The transcripts were analyzed using two analytical lenses:

1. VeneKlasen and Miller's (2002) distinctions about power: Power Over, Power To, Power With, and Power Within, to describe power dynamics reflected in participants' responses.
2. Tufte and Mefalopulos' (2009) participatory outcomes, including Improvement of Competencies and Capacities, Increased Feelings of Ownership, and Actual Influence on Institutions, to identify the extent of perceived participatory change.

This dual framework allowed the study to map how both residents and officials articulated agency, empowerment, and collaboration

### Results and Discussion

#### Residents' Perspectives

Residents identified a range of recurring issues, ranging from waste management, clogged drainage, road deterioration, and neighborhood security. Their video testimonies often expressed frustration toward slow responses from authorities but also optimism about community cooperation.

The direct-address style amplified the immediacy and sincerity of each message, establishing visual intimacy between speaker and viewer. The act of speaking to the camera, rather than to the researcher, symbolically reclaimed communicative agency.

Three major power dimensions were observed:

- *Power Within*: Residents displayed confidence and pride in articulating their experiences, reflecting self-recognition and personal ownership.
- *Power With*: Several invoked collective action, citing neighborhood cleanups and watch programs as examples of cooperation.
- *Power To*: A few expressed a capacity to act to resolve a specific community issue.
- *Power Over*: Some expressed powerlessness due to bureaucratic inertia, indicating persistent asymmetry between citizens and authorities.

These findings suggest that participatory visual media, even in limited form, can foster critical self-awareness and symbolic empowerment.

#### Barangay Decision-Makers' Perspectives

Barangay officials expressed interest in adopting the method as a supplementary feedback mechanism. The videos' clarity and location-specificity made them valuable for administrative monitoring.

However, the most recurrent power dimension among officials was Power Over, reflecting their institutional control and top-down approach. Yet, traces of Power To emerged as they

discussed how the videos could improve competencies in assessing and addressing community concerns.

In terms of participatory outcomes, Improvement of Competencies and Capacities appeared most frequently, followed by Increased Feelings of Ownership. The former points to a professional learning process among decision-makers; the latter indicates a modest attitudinal shift toward shared responsibility.

### **Bridging Perspectives Through Geospatial Media**

The interactive map served as a dialogic interface, connecting experiential data (residents' narratives) with bureaucratic insight (barangay evaluation). The interspersing of the videos and the digital map re-imagined traditional communication flows, making citizen voices visible in a format that is legible to governance structures.

The results affirm that visual and spatialized storytelling can act as a boundary object that mediates between ordinary and official discourses. Yet at the same time, it also reveals that empowerment through media remains partial unless accompanied by structural reforms in local decision-making culture.

### **Conclusion**

Geospatial direct-address videos combine audiovisual immediacy with spatial precision, presenting a novel medium for participatory governance. They transform citizens from passive complainants into active documentarians of local realities.

The study's findings emphasize that such participatory media can expand the communicative interface between citizens and local authorities, making governance more transparent and inclusive. However, their transformative potential depends on institutional willingness to engage and act upon the information produced.

While the approach empowered residents symbolically and dialogically, the persistence of Power Over among officials underscores the need for deeper structural participation. Scaling up this method could involve partnerships between universities, NGOs, and local governments to institutionalize geospatial audiovisual mapping as part of barangay development planning.

Future research may refine the model by integrating quantitative mapping analytics, crowdsourced data, or longitudinal monitoring of community issues. Overall, geospatial direct-address videos represent a convergence of media, geography, and civic engagement—an approach that reimagines communication as a participatory pathway toward better governance.

### **Acknowledgements**

The author extends heartfelt gratitude to his family, Maria Theresa Lijauco-Descartin, Ricardo Cernal Descartin, and Anna Lizzina Descartin-Igno, for their unwavering support; to his adviser, Dr. Grace Javier Alfonso, and committee members Dr. Alexander G. Flor and Dr. Jean A. Saludadez for their invaluable guidance; and to the residents and barangay officials who participated in this research.

Special thanks also to Ernest Rhoan Suede for developing the interactive map, to Maria Rita Rewady Lijauco, for accompanying the author during the data collection phase, and to Denise Faith Belizario for her constant encouragement. The author also acknowledges his late grandfather, Oscar Lijauco, whose unsung legacy as an artist has served as a consistent source of inspiration. Also, special gratitude to, and prayers for, two of the authors' community respondents, who have already passed away since the presentation of this paper.

But above all, the author gives thanks to the Lord, for His sustaining grace and inspiration.

### **Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies**

During the preparation of this paper, the author used ChatGPT to assist in refining clarity, structure, and formatting in accordance with the IAFOR Conference Proceedings style guidelines. After using this tool, the author reviewed and edited the content as needed, and takes full responsibility for the publication's content.

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