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Seeing in Distance: Video Production among Rural South African Youth

Alex Vailati

This article is based on ethnographic research in KwaMashabane, a rural area in KwaZulu–Natal province, South Africa. It looks at the relationship between imagination and audiovisual production among a youth group. Through the use of collaborative video, the power relations that underlie audiovisual production are analyzed. The subaltern role of youth in the local context and the analysis of production processes reveal different levels of hegemony. If the authority of adults is still something that youth cannot challenge, it seems that neo-liberal symbols, images and narration are becoming the main rhetoric that influences their use of imagination.

YOUTH AND AERIALS

The word *Umhlabuyalingana*, which identifies the site of this study, means in the isiZulu language “the same landscape.” This definition refers to the particular homogeneity of the natural environment. The research site comprises a huge fluvial flood plain from the coast of the Indian Ocean to the Lebombo Mountains, the frontier between South Africa and Swaziland. If in the past this name was only descriptive, nowadays it has become a governmental category, Umhlabuyalingana Local Municipality.

During the 19th century a huge part of Umhlabuyalingana was an independent kingdom called KwaMashabane, obliged to pay tribute to the Zulu kingdom [Vailati 2011: 72], then one of the major political structures of southern Africa. These past conditions are still visible in contemporary groups and individual identity negotiation processes, mainly as a consequence of the former apartheid regime [Wright 2008]. During that period Umhlabuyalingana was part of a Bantustan, an ethnically based state in which social life was formally regulated by Zulu customary law [Mamdani 1996: 63]. Bantustans were political structures that allowed the process of segregation and control of black South Africans [Beall *et al.* 2004: 3]. After the democratic transition Umhlabuyalingana has remained one of the “deepest” rural areas in the whole country, and its infrastructural development remains a slow process. The landscape is almost the same still, though social change is rapidly increasing nowadays.

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In this context the social role of youth is a sensitive issue, strictly connected with the economic sphere. For the male youth with whom I have worked, a search for social recognition [Taylor 1992] is an important aim. Their model of a male adult is usually "accomplished" first through economic empowerment and marriage. Economic constraints in the local society often put male youths in a liminal condition in which they are not able to get married,¹ and in this way they become adults.

From a global point of view, youth in Africa has become in the last twenty years one of the most researched of phenomena. Usually focused on urban spaces, those studies seem in many case to underline the connections between the category of youth and modernity [Dlamini 2005; Honwana and De Boeck 2005; Seekings 1993]. Images of youths often fill pages of popular magazines, outlining specific representations. "Child soldiers," "urban gangsters," and the "lost generation" are some of the most common categories used to describe these images. Looking at more scientific literature we find that "youth" and "disorder" have often been related categories [Coleman 1961; Durham 2000; Hall and Jefferson 1975; Mead 1949].

One of the first studies on youth, made with the anthropological aim to "reach the point of view of the young natives," dates to 1928. Margaret Mead, among the most influential of anthropologists, described her motivation for studying "other" youth. She described the representation of U.S. youth as a "spectacle of a younger generation diverging ever more widely from the standards and ideals of the past" [Mead 1949: 9].² But what she found in Samoa was a different role of youth in the society. If in the United States youths are obliged to choose one of the many different models of adulthood before them, in Samoa there was only one recognized model and no social conflicts related to the "coming of age" process. Jumping to the contemporary world, it is interesting to read what influential anthropologists write today about adolescence in the Pacific Islands. Herdt and Leavitt in fact underline the role of conflicts and choices: "The principal causes of our adolescents' difficulty are the presence of conflicting standards and the belief that every individual should make his or her own choices, coupled with a feeling that choice is an important matter" [1998: 13]. It seems that what Mead described nearly a century back for U.S. youth is nowadays fitting perfectly into the life of "other" youth. Probably resulting from partial interpretations of social life in Samoa,³ this comparison clearly reveals that the word "youth" usually fits a social context linked with the perception of "disorder" or "conflicts."

South Africa is an exemplar for these processes, where "[t]he youth re-emerged as a central category in political opposition in the 1980s" [Seekings 1993: 20], owing to their political role in the anti-apartheid struggle. But this has not usually allowed them to take a role in the democratic institutions after transition. In this way, it seems that the structural-functionalist⁴ paradigm remains useful to interpret social reality. Youth still are viewed as an oppositional force, powerful and dangerous. In spite of this, when these youths become men they must accept the social conventions that they have tried to change. Sociocultural reproduction and social change are the two poles of this dynamism [Gluckman 1963; Turner 1967]. Youthful imagination, full of innovations received

through different media, must cope with the "culture" which, in Umhlabuyaligana, is defined by local actors as "what came from our forefathers."

In this sense the youth can be considered as aeriels. The research literature agrees to consider them as the most important recipient of social, cultural and technological innovations [Coleman 1961; Comaroff and Comaroff 2000; Durham 2000; Wulff 1995]. In order to analyze the relationship between disorder and innovation we need here to consider how those innovations are received by the youth and how this process brings about social change or a mere reproduction of the "adult society."

Collaborative video is the main method I have used to explore what we can call the "imaginary" of local youths. I worked for three months with a group of seven youths, range from 16 to 23 years old. My plan was to teach them how to make short videos. The process of production, based on the transference of authorship, would become the data for my analysis.

My initial proposal was therefore to teach some youths to use audiovisual tools; so I organized workshops with the aim of producing short video clips. The production process, in order to simplify the work as much as possible, has been divided into three main phases. The first concerned the formulation of an idea to work on. In this I encouraged young people to represent freely some aspect of their lives. The second phase was the shooting. Also, concerning the language used, I granted much freedom to my interlocutors, except for some initial indications. The third stage concerned the editing. Ethnography has provided the tools to observe and analyze critically the processes that are obviously constrained by power relationships between the researcher and participants [Pink 2007; Tomaselli 1996].

The initial meeting, when I presented the project, was attended by 50 youths. They ranged in age from 10 to 30 and almost all were students, with slightly more boys than girls; but it is interesting to note that the latter were younger on average. After telling them my intentions I tried to collect opinions from them and encouraged their participation. Considering how the project was structured in my mind, I expected answers that were if not enthusiastic, at least interested; yet their feedback was very different. None of them had ever thought of video-ing, actively using a camera. Most thought that I should have filmed some of their performance arts such as singing, dancing or acting.

However, no one seemed to be able to express the reason for their choice. Many talked about shyness; others said that I was proposing something unattainable. A young man however expressed an idea that seems to be the main reason for their response: it concerns the inability to "talk" through the video. He said, "I am poor and do not have money. I cannot do or say whatever I want. And if I could, people would be very jealous of that." The video was therefore perceived as a potential means of expression. Moreover, that young man's words seemed to confirm his inability to state his opinions publicly, and therefore his subordination to the adult sphere. Video, because of its potential to be reproduced anywhere, was perceived as a "seat" too prestigious for these young people [Goffman 1967: 42-45].

The "ethnography of collaborative filmmaking" here is the main tool used to grasp how imaginaries are constructed and represented among these youths. Collaborative video is a category that comes from John Grierson's experimentations

in Fogo Island in the late 1960s [the “Challenge for Change” program; Hardy 1979]. In this work, some Canadian islanders, under the guide of facilitators, had created some audiovisual productions. But for deep connections between ethnological observation and a collaborative video project, we have to look at the well-known work of Worth and Adair with the Navajo Indians [1970, 1972]. Their experiment was to teach to some Navajo Indians how to use the cine camera, but at the same time to use the filmmaking process as data for the researchers’ analysis. This experiment became a model for others, and led to one of the most relevant consequences of ethnological studies. Starting from the 1970s many anthropologists have worked on the phenomenon of the so-called appropriation of video technologies by natives [Turner 1992]. In these works the consequences of an anthropologist’s presence in the field are primary: a presence characterized not only by passive observation but also by active participation in the vicissitudes of the people studied. This active participation has sometimes brought about some positive or negative social changes [Ginsburg 1991; Michaels 1985; Michaels and Kelly 1984; Tomaselli 1989].

Collaborative video is particularly interesting here because it helps us to clarify the role of “agency” in ethnological research. It can be defined as “a property of those entities (i) that have some degree of control over their own behavior, (ii) whose actions in the world affect other entities (and sometimes their own), and (iii) whose actions are the object of evaluation (e.g., in terms of their responsibility for a given outcome)” [Duranti 2004: 453]. Although the social sciences nowadays recognize the subject’s agency, still in many cases they fail to consider the researcher’s agency. Collaborative video, owing to its shared dimensions, allows consideration of the consequence of the researcher’s influence in the field. In this way the anthropologist is no longer considered a neutral observer, but becomes a “cultural broker” [Hedican 1995: 60–64] who, through collaboration with the locals, can achieve scientific aims and also connect different social and cultural contexts.

The role of anthropological theory and ethnological practice is important here. They can be useful platforms to rethink collaborative videos. If collaborative video is nowadays used mainly as an educational tool, in this article too, it is considered a main tool for research. First, it allows exploring the imagination and the reaction of a group of people to an innovation. Moreover, it is a way of analyzing the response to the “agency” of the researcher in the field and of exploring power relationships in the ethnological encounter. In this way, in Pink’s words, “visual anthropology research can simultaneously integrate and develop academic and applied agendas” [2007: 14].

UMABONAKUDE: SEEING IN DISTANCE

From many points of view, we can consider “youth” as a period in which the individual is “shaped from outside”; first, by the “adult society” which produces new members on the basis of socially recognized models of adulthood. These models nowadays have to challenge with others, as conveyed by media. In fact, we can find many “sites,” distant from a geographical point of view, which are

becoming increasingly “close” as a result of recent media revolutions. In these sites images and symbols are produced and then broadcast by the media. These processes, sometimes more than the influence of adults, strongly colonize the imagination of youth, who are the major recipients of innovations.

Imagination is one of the most relevant and complex subjects of the contemporary social sciences. It is a concept used both to explore the intimate connections between individuals and society [Castoriadis 1987: 115–164], and to analyse how global systems such as press or broadcasting influence particular societies [Taylor 2004: 83–100]. In both approaches imagination usually describes a double process. Following Marxist thinking this category is used to define ideologies that are useful to “hide” the real, materialistic condition of people’s lives. In this way images broadcast by television, for example, can be analyzed as a way of shaping people’s imagination and controlling them. Contemporary television is often described as the mirror of the capitalistic project that creates new, not necessary, needs [Appadurai 1996: 83].

The second process that the category “imagination” usually identifies is related to creativeness. Here imagination is an individual faculty that allow interpreters to reprocess symbols and images in order to create new, original discourses on society. This address, which is exposed clearly in Castoriadis’ [1987] reflection, seems to underpin one of the first anthropological studies on imagination. According to Appadurai, imaginative faculty “is no longer a matter of specially endowed (charismatic) individuals, injecting the imagination where it does not belong. Ordinary people have begun to deploy their imaginations in the practice of their everyday lives” [Appadurai 1996: 5]. Here imagination is considered as a faculty that, after the recent media revolution, is also used by ordinary people as a “starting ground for action” [*ibid.*: 7]. Imaginaries are not only collections of tales, images, and symbols [Taylor 2004] with a hegemonic influence but also the grounds for creativity and action.

While the imaginary has become an important research topic for several social sciences, in ethnography it still remains highly ambiguous. Also if this term is widely used within the discipline, it is still necessary to develop ethnological instruments to explore it. Following Appadurai, the aim of an anthropology of imagination could be the study of the repertoire of images, symbols and tales that are known to a specific group of people. Moreover, it is necessary to understand the relationships between ideologies imposed by economic and political systems and the individual’s daily use of the imagination. The focus of this article is the analysis of the “creative” dimension of imagination. The youths, as already stated, are often like aerials for images, narrations or symbols that come from other sites. Methodological experimentation is an essential step for this kind of investigation. For this reason I focus here on the relationship between the reception of audiovisual products and their production.

The analysis of the role of videos in a specific context requires a brief introduction on their diffusion processes. In South Africa radio, newspapers and television are the three most easily identifiable media. But if in many parts of the nation the introduction of these media came a long time ago,⁵ in other contexts, we can assist nowadays only in their diffusion. For those living in peripheral regions, television is still considered a new medium.

In Umhlabuyalingana there remain difficulties in the diffusion of these media. Electrification of the area was delayed: owing to the high cost of a connection, few households use electricity. Thus the presence of television or equipment for audiovisual viewing in the houses is rare. Few public places such as taverns are equipped with television sets, while in schools or clinics they are largely absent too. This diffusion process is parallel to that of the equipment to make audiovisual products. The cheapness of instruments for audiovisual production allows poor people to produce images and to let them circulate, however.

Furthermore, ethnographic research in Umhlabuyalingana has revealed an important social role of television. It is interesting here to start from the terms used locally to define television. In the isiZulu language it is *umabonakude*, which can be translated as "seeing something at a distance." As an informant stated, "it allows you to see other places that otherwise you would not be able to see." Implicitly, in the definition of the object, we find a characteristic that helps us understand what its role is in the local context. Television is a tool that, more than others, allows one to perceive "elsewhere" with extraordinary realism. If radio and the press, in local perception, allow a falsification of the object they represent, "moving images" are seen as evidence of the existence of "the real" object. This fits well here with defining the image of an object with indexicality, or the property to be linked, or in connection with a real object in specific space and time [Tomaselli 1996: 30].

"Seeing something in distance" is moreover a very important concept in the social life.⁶ Research on the social structure shows clearly that the extension of social networks is the main premise for individual empowerment. Young people in particular, whose role is usually not recognized by adults, need to be included in new, broad social networks in order to take advantage of any process of redistribution of resources. "Seeing someone on television" is often perceived as a way to feel in contact with him or her. This, as we shall see, appears even more evident when the audiovisual products are locally produced.⁷

Even the imagery of the people seems to be broadened by contact with audiovisual media. Exposure to them seems a major means by which an individual or a social group are able to perceive new symbols and images [Appadurai 1996: 35]. The images broadcast are furthermore objects of appropriation. Young people easily embody new symbols that become part of their everyday life.

If therefore the dissemination of visual media in KwaMashabane is a process that has just begun, the data described are particularly relevant here. First, audiovisual products are perceived locally as being more "faithful" to reality than any other medium is. Secondly, to see something on television is viewed as a way to be in contact with it. The analysis of the video production strategy of some local youths will show how this late affirmation of television can lead to the use of audiovisuals in an atypical way. Youths become not only observers of programs but also a part of them, processes that allow youths to "become part" of other people's imaginary.

PRODUCING IMAGINARIES

The social role of the youth does not allow them to "talk" freely, and so the video camera was perceived as an important medium. The initial plan to teach them

how to shoot aspects of local life then suffered a setback. In particular, I noticed a strong reaction to my words, "you can think with your mind and shoot what you want." Perhaps for the first time, I thought that this aim, often an imperative in many educational projects [Freire 1970], was not the best strategy for interaction with these young people.

In later meetings the number of participants dropped from fifty to ten. The project, after long negotiations, evolved in two directions. The first was the production, by some youths, of small clips describing aspects of their lives. The second was the production of a fictional movie. For this proposal the youths required that I be the director and they the actors. In subsequent months I noticed that while participation in the first group was poor, the second project was being supported enthusiastically. Participants were mostly students in grade 12, the last grade of secondary school. Their high commitment forced me to try to balance their time between the project we were carrying out and their need to study, to prepare for their Matric. exams.⁸ It was an important moment of their lives, and although their hopes of being able to continue their education were unrealistic their commitment to study was high. During the evening, school classrooms were often used by some independently organized students, to study by candlelight.

The film produced has been taken from a short story written by a teacher of a primary school. Thus the subject had not, despite my stimuli, been created by participants but taken from the "words of an adult." However, the development history, after having received authorization to proceed by the author, was a process almost entirely in the hands of my young interlocutors. The story that was selected concerned a married man who was unable to have sexual relations with his wife. At the suggestion of a friend, he goes to an *isangoma*⁹ healer, who can interact with the ancestors. He then identifies the cause of the man's illness and treats it. In conclusion, the protagonist, together with two friends, reaffirms the importance of "believe to the ancestors."

The subject of the narrative therefore puts emphasis on items of local life that can be defined as "traditional." The title chosen for the short film is also interesting. "*Mhasikholelelwe emadlozini*" which translated means "Let us believe in our ancestors." It seems to emphasize the need for a cultural system linked to their ancestors. Once again, there is no desire to express anything representative of the young people's lives: the protagonist is an adult married man who consults a traditional healer. We may also note that during the movie screenings a recurring comment from adults was about the fact that the lead actor often uses language more typical of a youth than of a man. In this way they underline the need to use recognized codes of behavior. The fact that a married man, in a public context, was using a locution typical of youth was not tolerable. Thus one adult, using the words contained in the movie's title, asked "How can we respect our ancestors?"¹⁰

The content of the film was also significantly different from the youth's favorite television programs. Most of the participants, when asked about their preferences, indicated the South African Broadcasting Company's serial "Generations,"¹¹ which portrays the lives of middle-class residents in Johannesburg. This serial usually shows "modern objects" that are beyond the reach of rural youth: luxury apartments, cars, futuristic offices and trendy nightclubs. Among the boys,

gangster movies were often identified as their favorite programs. Usually set in urban or semi-urban sites, they often present crime as a way of social redemption [Tager 2002]. Considering this, the fact that none of these “symbols or objects” has been included in the video is significant. The few symbols of “modernity” included were also seen to be “wrong” or “unsuitable” by adults.

To understand these dynamics, we need to investigate the characteristics of the audiovisual media. As described above, they incorporate the dual property of being indexical and “showing far objects.” These concepts found a clear response in the discussions undertaken with the project’s participants. For example, StG described the characteristics of the video in the following words: “When yesterday you have shot me I was near the clinic. In the video, people can see that I was near the clinic. Using other media you lose the dimension of context.” The uniqueness of moving images for StG was therefore described through their contiguity with the place where they were produced; hence the impression of the realism of audiovisual as compared to other media. Binding an object or a person to a context becomes a guarantor of the authenticity of what is represented. If radio and newspapers are perceived as easily falsifiable, television allows viewers to “see things far away,” preserving the realism and authenticity of the object shown.

The video is in fact perceived as a medium that transcends geographical boundaries and potentially allows access to distant sites. V, in talking about the potential of the project we were doing, said: “A DVD can be duplicated and carried around the world. Anyone can see us. The project is important for people here, because we can be seen everywhere. That is why people now say that we have been successful.” These words, pronounced with excitement, demonstrate clearly the great importance of “being seen” by people. As already shown above, the expansion of their social network is one of the most pressing needs for these young people, especially for males. This is a way in which they renegotiate their social roles and create new affiliations that may be significant in the future.

This need for recognition is well expressed also by the way they use the video camera. As one young man stated, “the video camera became a part of the development.” My presence in Umhlabuyalingana has been seen, since the beginning of fieldwork, as a promise for empowerment. The perception of the video camera has been linked with this promise. What is interesting here is that this empowerment is not seen as directed on the collectivity, as much of the literature about collaborative video has stated [Ginsburg 1991; T. Turner 1992]. Empowerment is perceived by these youths as an individual achievement.¹² The first choice of the young people—to be filmed instead of filming their community—is indicative of this need. As some explained, they wanted to “advertise themselves.”

My findings also reflect the debates about youth in African societies; for example, the ambiguity between the roles of active members of society who produce new ideas, and passive members who are “made” by a world dominated by adults [Honwana and De Boeck 2005: 3]. Similar political processes, results of the encounter with audiovisual technologies, happened among the Ju’/hoansi [Durington 2004]. For many years they have been in close contact with audiovisual tools but have not developed their own representational strategy. Moreover,

video for the Ju'/hoansi has sometimes been an instrument for individual enrichment. Also in my work the participants have tried to use the video camera for their individual empowerment rather than to express new ideas. The youth of Umhlabuyalingana, obviously for different causes as compared to the Ju'/hoansi, prefer to be the subject of representation rather than the producers of something that reflects their ideas.

Finally, during my fieldwork I had to negotiate the aims of my project. Usually collaborative video projects intend to empower the local people with new skills. When I first proposed the project to the local youths, I remember I used the words, "Maybe the video can be useful to express what you think with your own mind." Slowly, during the fieldwork, I started to think that this could maybe raise the intergenerational gap, which seems to constitute a major critical issue in the local community. During its democratic transition South Africa's rural areas were exposed to huge transformations. What the youth seem to communicate with their strategic use of videos is their desire to achieve their aims, but without transforming or changing the rules of society, which they seem, in the present day, to recognize. The social change¹³ that my presence has imposed has become, by using collaborative videos as a research tool, an object of negotiation.

THE POLITICS OF VISUAL REPRESENTATION

The relationship between imagination and social recognition is therefore important for this analysis. Dreams, for example, are considered one of the most significant topics linked to imaginative faculties. An article written in the late 1950s already had analyzed the contents of a large sample of dreams collected in rural Zululand. The author described how, while women generally report dreams about maternity, men mostly dream about their cattle [Lee 1958]. Cattle and children were, as they still are, "desirable objects," for men and women respectively, necessary to acquire social recognition. However, the author observes that in the society in which he was doing research family structure was already wide-ranging and changing. The men usually migrated to urban centers while the women were left alone in rural areas, often assuming, at least from an economic standpoint, the role of their husbands. Having children was no longer a way of increasing their social prestige. Women continued to dream, and to narrate, the "traditional" way for women to become important persons.

Lee concludes therefore with a particularly emblematic passage, that "[m]odern Zulu women, handling cattle daily, and often very jealous of the life situation of men, are unable in their dreams to take over the symbols which, by traditional social sanctions, are the prerogative of males" [*ibid.*: 270]. There was therefore a kind of "delay" or disconnect between the dreams' symbols and those that underpin the social reality in which they live. In the article cited, that information is interpreted through Freudian psychoanalysis. Dreams are an expression of the unconscious, which in turn is the most stable "deposit" of the cultural past of a group [*ibid.*: 281].

Leaving aside this psychoanalytic approach, the data that Lee describes have particular relevance if compared with the video produced in Umhlabuyalingana.

Most of the images in the video produced are taken from the “recognized” adult world. All the chosen subjects were, in the youths’ words, “part of our culture.” The interpretation of this phrase is very complex. “Culture” seems to be, for these youths, every object in continuity with the life of the previous generation. Starting from this emic definition, I consider here as “cultural” all that can connect these youths’ lives with those of their fathers. In this way I can state that all symbols of “modernity” were absent from their films. Moreover, their contents do not show new ideas or symbolic objects: the imaginary they want to express remains “traditional.”

Their desire for modernity, contrary to what was seen in their films, is high. What is interesting here is that in the representations that they have produced, all these desires were not imaged but the strategy by which they used the video, as an instrument of self-empowerment, appears as a way to cope with these desires. A tension between the social and symbolic structure therefore emerges. The youths desire to acquire these “modernity’s fruits” that lie in their imagination, yet usually they choose to offer a representation of themselves that is not far from what their local society prescribes.

Two possible interpretations may be used to analyze this phenomenon. The first concerns the perceived function of the video in connection with the low chance that a young person has to “talk.” In particular, the content of films would be the consequence of the inability of a youth to express opinions contrary to those of adults. The young people therefore prefer to use, in this case, images conventionally accepted. The risk of “talk” of new objects that are still ambiguous for many people remains too high.

A second interpretation, however, is linked to one of the most noticeable characteristics of many contemporary South African contexts. Culture, in an emic sense, is understood and handled as one of the most precious of goods [Comaroff and Comaroff 2009]. The exploitative use of the videos is particularly emblematic of these processes. Following this path my interlocutors show, as well as items approved as part of local culture, what a hypothetical observer might expect from a video made in Umhlabuyalingana. In other words, what an external observer might like to “buy.”

The relationship between the imaginary and what the young people tend to express in the movies is meaningful. While the imagination seems a free resource, the first expression of individual freedom we can find in the processes of image production is elements related to those social dynamics that implicitly govern and constrain the imaginative faculty of individuals and therefore their scope for action. The production of the imagination is regarded here as an eminently political act.

Young people in KwaMashabane are often excluded from the public sphere [Taylor 2004: 83–100]. Having no political weight they are constrained to use the language and the conventions typical of the public sphere—the outcome of discussions between adults—with the purpose of gaining access to it. For these youngsters, “self-alienation or heteronomy of society is not ‘mere representation’ or the society’s incapacity to represent itself in some other way than instituted on the basis of and by an elsewhere” [Castoriadis 1987: 373]. However, it is interesting to consider the different roles, from the perspective of young people, of these levels

of “otherness.” Adults, “others” that are considered as relatively close, enforce the code of conduct that defines social relations. This can be seen as an act of reproduction of the local social structure. The second otherness instead consists of what could be observed through audiovisual products. They seem to transmit another kind of rhetoric, more typical of neo-liberalism. It forces them to produce representations that supply what the market demands today. These are the two poles between which the dialectic behind the use of imagination seems to revolve.

If Freire’s aim [1970] was to ensure that those without a voice could be able to speak, now we must forefront other new levels of hegemony. The contemporary imagery is increasingly built not only on the context in which the actors live but also on the flow of information produced generally in close connection with neo-liberal power. Hence the need, arising from the analysis proposed in this work, for “A new architecture for producing and sharing knowledge about globalization that could lead to the establishment of a new pedagogy that can bridge the distances and help to democratize the flow of knowledge” [Appadurai 2000: 16]. Architecture that could be based, as is assumed here, on the analysis of how the imagery is produced by a specific group of people.

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NOTES

1. The institution of *lobola*, the payment of the bride price, is important. Nevertheless, the affirmation of a market economy made it very difficult for a young man to find the capital required to produce the *lobola*.
2. Mead was one of the so-called Culture and Personality School. One of its principal aims was to describe the influence of culture and society on the construction of personality. This was a reaction to the universalistic affirmation that has been offered by Freudian psychoanalysis, of which the Oedipus complex is the most famous example. If, in Freud’s opinion, it was a universal characteristic of human personality, for Malinowski it only appeared in specific societies [Malinowski 1929]. From this perspective Mead’s study in Samoa is a deconstruction of the social category of youth, usually perceived as universal.
3. Before the affirmation of structural functionalism, “other” societies have often been seen by social anthropologists as free of social conflict. This is a result of a process of “exoticization” of otherness.
4. Here I referred to the huge corpus of studies produced within the Rhodes-Livingston Institute in Lusaka. Starting from 1938 and for some twenty years, many social scientists have examined the issues of social change and conflict in Africa [Schumaker 2001].
5. South Africa, compared to other African countries, was one of the last nations to create a national broadcasting company. The South African Broadcasting Company was created only in 1976. In the 1970s the need to control this medium was seen as primary.

- In fact at that time great progress had been made in satellite TV. During the apartheid regime, the reception of images from the United States, for example, was dangerous for the apartheid regime [Tomaselli *et al.*, 1989].
6. In isiZulu, the verb *ukubona*, meaning “see,” is often used to underline a physical contact. For example, the widely-used greeting *sawubona* means literally “I see you,” but is also a way to recognize the physical presence of a person.
 7. Here I am referring, first, to the so-called “family cinema” or “home movies” that identifies all non-professional audiovisuals produced within the family, usually to document family celebrations or particular moments of some individual’s life. Nowadays these productions are becoming important data for research [Odin 1995; Vailati 2012; Zimmerman 1995].
 8. Matric. is the exam that concludes secondary school. It is an important moment in a youth’s life because good results could allow him/her to enter a university.
 9. *Isangoma* is the term for traditional healers who are connected to one or more ancestors.
 10. Here the concept of respect is important. *Inhlonipho*, which means “respect” in isiZulu, identifies a complex code of communication. A young man, for example, must talk to an adult, using specific words that are regulated by *hlonipha*. Every interaction is in this way analyzable in terms of power relations.
 11. *Generation* is one of the best-known serials broadcast in South Africa.
 12. Space does not allow me to stress the complex dichotomy of individual–collective. Anyhow, I can state here that individual empowerment in the local society is often linked with the dynamics of redistribution.
 13. I state this considering that all anthropological research, as well as intercultural contacts, produce some effects on the field situation. For a broad reflection on this topic, Freire [1970] can be valuable. His concept of “fear of freedom” is useful to link the result of my research to broad political reflection on the relationships between youth and society. Freire is also useful for understanding the effects of external agents on a local context.

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