We the Ragpickers

A case-study of participatory video and counter-hegemony

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ABSTRACT

By a close reading of a participatory video documentary collaboratively produced by a non-government organisation (NGO) and a women ragpicker's union based in India, I analyse how the women's voices and self-representations discursively construct counter-hegemony. The question what can ordinary people do with a camera is a point of departure to study self-representations of marginalised communities that has wider political implications in the creative processes of image-making in participatory video. To this end, the analysis indicate that marginalised communities use the affordances of participatory video to deconstruct stereotypes, and voice their desire to participate in community-level decision making that directly affects their lives. Exploring interlocking concepts of voice and participation embedded in participatory video theory and practice, the analysis also makes visible the layer of mediation in self-representations of marginalised communities exercised by NGOs. The research makes use of social semiotics to investigate how these concepts are operationalised through the semiotic components of the documentary. The methodology also draws on perspectives from critical discourse analysis to position the documentary within the socio-cultural context of production. The discussion indicates how different critical lenses can be used to interpret the analysis, and thus expand the interdisciplinary field of participatory video in developing conjunctive frameworks for media engagement and political participation.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Amhi Kachra Vechak – We the Ragpickers

We the Ragpickers is a 15-minute participatory video documentary, a collaboration between six women from the *Kagad Kacha Patra Kashtakari Sangathan* (Ragpickers and Garbage Collector's Union) and three communication experts from *Abhivyakti*, a non-government organisation (NGO) working in communication for social change located in the Indian city of Nashik, 180 kms from Bombay. 'Ragpickers' are mostly urban-based informal waste workers in the public sanitation sector, who collect and sell recyclables such as plastic articles to earn a small daily wage (Natha Mote, 2016: 1).

The documentary is composed mainly of one-on-one interviews with women ragpickers, and group discussion scenes led by the participating women, which gives a picture of their multiple inter-connected issues like being stereotyped as thieves, solicited and harassed for paid sex, denied affordable housing and food subsidies, coerced by local police into giving bribes, and unhygienic living and working conditions. Poignantly, they relate how they are consistently ignored by the authorities when they try to initiate discussion on their problems. The most important scene in the documentary is the concluding group discussion, where the women identify the importance of visually capturing their problems, that could truthfully show authorities the reality of their lives, and move them to take action. Significantly, they also add how showing them engaged in group discussions identifying their problems would change stereotypes about ragpickers in audiences watching the film. The documentary's end credits feature shots of the women with cameras and sound equipment, recording interviews in a city slum. The women are credited for production roles in camera, sound recording, editing and scripting. *Abhivyakti's* name appears as a copyright logo with a credit for two technical facilitators, a producer and the name of the donor institute - *European Endowment for Democracy.*

This research aims to explain how marginalised communities use participatory video's affordances of voice and self-representation to construct a counter-hegemonic identity through this documentary. It also aims to reveal how such affordances are mediated by the NGO and tease out the politics of representation embedded in participatory video research and practice. Foremost, this study is driven by the motive to apply critical social theory to understand material processes like participatory video and the potentialities of visual methods to reveal hidden socio-cultural inequalities. The literature review indicates how participatory video content is seldom analysed, and this research is intended addresses that gap as well. It similarly indicates how participatory video practices since the 'Fogo Islands Communication Experiment' in 1967 (Corneil, 2012) have been widely implemented across various contexts and cultures – which means while this study draws from theories expounded by transnational practitioners, the analysis is contextual to the counter-hegemonic identity in India – the focus of this study. The study is guided by the assumption that NGOs leading participatory video interventions in India operated as 'rhizomatic media' part of 'trans-local networks' (Bailey, Cammaerts, & Carpentier, 2008: 5, 27) embodied by their 'horizontal alliances' (Carpentier, Lie, & Servaes, 2003:61) with global practitioners (see Singhal and Devi, 2013) and local grassroots organisations, anti-establishment documentary filmmakers, feminist activists and Dalit militant politics (Battaglia, 2015; Kishore, 2017). The study thus understands how participatory video mediates the creation of hybrid social and political identities 'where old habits are superimposed with 'new attitudes, values and modes of action' in a postcolonial context (Bhabha, 1994; Hall & Du Gay, 1996; Moalosi, Popovic, & Hickling-Hudson, 2007: 3). A combination of social semiotics and critical discourse analysis was used in this research because of its power 'to understand, expose, and ultimately resist social inequality' (Van Dijk, 2001:352). Finally, this study hopes to open the space for understanding and positioning participatory video intertextually in relation to associated visual genres and critical discourses.

This study is divided into **six chapters: the second chapter** frames the socio-cultural background for the research. The **third chapter** explains the theoretical concepts and builds their relevance toward formulating the research question. The **fourth chapter** presents the conceptual framework and the research question. The **fifth chapter** expands self-reflexively

on the use of methodological choices and outlines the analytical framework to operationalise the research. The **sixth chapter** consolidates the key findings and maps the interpretation to postcolonial critiques of participatory video practices (Kindon, 2003; Low, Brushwood-Rose, Salvio, & Palacios, 2012; Walsh, 2016).

2 CONTEXT

2.1 The Quiet Crisis

We the Ragpickers suggests that although the women's voices have largely fallen on deaf ears, they have not been suppressed into silence. It uses evocative imagery that constructs a gritty image of life on the margins that humanizes what has been labelled as India's 'quiet crisis' of public sanitation (Jeffrey, 2015: 807). In recent years, there has been a renewed focus on public sanitation in India following the launch of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's flagship project Swacch Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India Mission) in 2014 (Doron, 2018; Gatade, 2019; Jeffrey, 2015; Sen, 2016; Teltumbde, n.d.). While there was initial optimism for its policies across ideological lines, the campaign itself produced mixed results (Gatade, 2019). Its direct appeal was predominantly to non-resident Indians and the urban middle-class, among Modi's biggest financial supporters who frequently lament the state of public sanitation in India (Gatade, 2019; Jeffrey, 2015; Sen, 2016: 103-4). For example, the policies included incentivising and privatising the waste management sector, a neat fit with the neo-liberal discourse espoused by Modi's large supporter base (Gopalakrishnan, 2006). The mission however, does not address the growing consumerism and urbanisation responsible for creating huge amounts of waste to begin with (Doron, 2018). Electronic gadgets like mobile phones and laptops for instance, continue to be imported wholesale from the West and dismantled in hazardous conditions by women and children ragpickers (Shome, 2016: 253). Ragpickers generally work in large dumping yards outside cities in hazardous conditions, and are are almost never provided any safety equipment whatsoever, putting them at great physical risk (254).

The documentary provides an image of the unregulated and vulnerable labour force of more than 5 million ragpickers across India, whose demands for rehabilitation are absent in Modi's campaign (Gatade, 2019; Teltumbde, n.d.). The highly publicised campaign has also been critiqued for its failure to address the intricate connection between public sanitation to socio-cultural beliefs, 'especially the influence of gender-caste-class relations' (Doron, 2018: 13). The issues of women ragpickers, who number approximately half the labour force across various sub-castes in India, have similarly been ignored in academia and there is a need to contextualise the violence and control exercised over their bodies and minds at home, and while engaged in ragpicking work, by a patriarchal social order (Kadlak, Salve, & Karwade, 2019: 2). The few ethnographic studies of ragpickers indicate women are frequently subjected to physical and verbal abuse at work, stereotyped as 'thieves' since their work involves collecting plastic found from middle-class housing estates and public rubbish dumps, and lack opportunities to voice their concerns (compared to their male counterparts) to local policemen or low-level municipal authorities they have dealings with (Kadlak et al., 2019: 2; cf. Natha Mote, 2016; Salve, Bansod, & Kadlak, 2017). Studies show how ragpicking is a hereditary occupation of certain lower-castes who have been labelled as 'untouchables,' stringently confined to their inherited professions and discriminated against for centuries (Sharma, 2017). Notions of ritual purity and cleanliness dominate social hierarchies influenced by caste and occupation, and lower-castes are systemically denied opportunities for social or economic progress, education, healthcare, affordable housing and even struggle to get basic necessities such as clean water (Doron, 2018; Gorringe & Rafanell, 2007; Jeffrey, 2015; Kadlak et al., 2019; Louis, 2008; Natha Mote, 2016; Teltumbde, n.d.; Yengde, 2018). This denial also extends into the denial of representation in mainstream media, and participation in political, social, economic and cultural spheres effectively constraining collective mobility and individual freedom (Gorringe et al., 2017; Jeffrey, 2001; Paul, 2018).

Despite the constitutional abolition of untouchability, caste-, gender-, and occupation-based inequalities remain socially and culturally entrenched evinced from the regular accounts of 'unimaginable violence' against lower-castes and other ethnic minorities across India (Banaji, 2018: 333; Bhatt, 2001; Chandra, 2016; Doron, 2018; cf. Ohm, 2012; Waghmore, 2012; Witsoe, 2013). Lower-caste women especially face constant surveillance over their bodies and minds,

and those seen transgressing stringent caste norms such as endogamy or talking back to upper-caste men are severely disciplined (Joshi, 1986; Paik, 2017; Rege, 1998). Similarly, lower-castes who are educated, interrogative, dissenting, socially and culturally mobile are perceived as capable of rupturing the order of caste-society, and continue to be silenced through harrowing atrocities ranging from lynchings, public executions, gang-rapes and sustained pogroms (Banaji, 2018: 334, 341; Desai, 2012; Jaoul, 2008; Teltumbade, 2007).

Oral, performative, and cultural practices are embedded in lower-caste led social reform movements to resist upper-caste hegemony for generations, and with the coming of technology and urban migration of lower-castes, grassroots activists are enabled to mobilise local-level organisations especially lower-caste women's unions to play a role in contemporary social movements (Mookerjea, 2010; Nayar, 2014; Paul, 2018; Paul & Dowling, 2018; Rai, 2015; Rangaswamy & Arora, 2016). The value of voice has gained credence in these movements as recent studies of social practices such as community level journalism and leisure activities identify a discursive link between political resistance and cultural representation through participation in new media platforms (ibid). Cultural self-representations have explicitly indicated discrimination faced by marginalised communities in everyday life (Paul & Dowling, 2018; Thirumal & Tartakov, 2011; Utrecht University & de Kruijf, 2015). The persuasive arguments made by these studies make a compelling case to analyse representations of marginalised communities as a performative space for an alternative, extra-parliamentary politics (Dahlgren & Alvares, 2013; Rodríguez, Ferron, & Shamas, 2014: 155).

3   THEORETICAL CHAPTER

This chapter parses analytical insights and gleans normative and critical evaluations of concepts from contemporary literature on participatory video and alternative media. The first section introduces participatory video as a concept; the second and third section expand on interlocking concepts of voice, participation, self-representation, and their specific application in context of formulating the research question. Grouped together, these form the

conceptual axes guiding the methodological choice, research design and analysis of this study.

The term 'NGO' encompasses a range of contested ideas, perspectives and applications and it is beyond the scope of this study to analyse it in depth (see Bebbington, 2004; Escobar, 1995; Kapoor, 2008; Thrall, Stecula, & Sweet, 2014). Here, NGO refers to a locally-based group or 'independent voluntary association of people acting together (for) communication for social change purposes' not linked to 'achieving financial profits or government office' (Thomas & van de Fliert, 2014:5; Willetts, 2002). In short, NGO is a 'progressive community organisation actively opposed to oppression [who] identify with democratic values' where 'community' refers to 'a group of people suffering from a common oppression' (Tomaselli & Prinsloo, 1990: 142).

3.1 Participatory Video

This section introduces participatory video as a concept, straddling the diverse range of scholarship in participatory communication and alternative media (Atton, 2015; Bailey et al., 2008; Carpentier, 2009; Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Couldry, 2015; Howley, 2013; P. N. Thomas & van de Fliert, 2014). In that sense, it introduces the possibilities and constraints of the sub-concepts constituting its research and practice. The participatory video approach by NGOs as 'a sociological intervention' (High, Singh, Petheram, & Nemes, 2012; Kindon, 2003, 2016, 2017; Low, Brushwood-Rose, Salvio, & Palacios, 2012; Elizabeth-Jane Milne, Mitchell, & De Lange, 2012:1; Riaño Alcalá, 1994; Rodríguez, 1994; J. A. Tacchi, 2009; Tomaselli & Prinsloo, 1990; Walsh, 2016; White, 2003; Yang, 2012) overlaps and diverges from the ethnographic filmmaking approach which is primarily positioned from the perspective of visual anthropologists and documentary filmmakers (Banks, 2001; Barbash, MacDougall, Taylor, & MacDougall, 1996; Battaglia, 2014, 2015; Gardner, 2006; Ginsburg et al., 2002; Pink, 2001, 2006; Turner, 1991). The discussion below presents insights primarily from the perspective of NGO-led interventions but draws on other disciplines wherever relevant.

The rubric of 'participatory video' covers diverse practices of the 'use of video in social settings' over fifty years of practice and carries no fixed definition (High et al., 2012: 35; Roberts & Muñiz, 2018), and in this research it is identified as a 'collaborative approach to working with groups' with no prior experience in filmmaking 'to shape and create their own film, in order to open spaces for leaning and communication and enable positive change and transformation' (Roberts & Muñiz, 2018: 2). Participatory video is deemed to offer a very specific advantage amongst other participatory communication methods which is its capacity for 'reflexivity' - allowing participants to rewind, fast forward, slow down or speed up footage to watch and hear what they have captured, which then becomes a starting point for initiating group discussions (Yang, 2012:100-115). It involves inclusive participation at the level of editing such as selecting shots from the rough footage to deciding what to communicate at community screenings where participants often lead discussions (Roberts & Muñiz, 2018: 2).

Participatory video is intended to develop a 'critical consciousness' about one's position in the symbolic environment or conscientisation that dually represents media as an 'agent of social [representation]' and 'agent of social change' that offers 'education and transformative possibilities' connected to citizenship participation in 'socio-political projects (aimed at social change)' (Atton, 2015: 153; Freire, 1974; Mowbray, 2015). The embedded theory in NGO-led participatory video interventions indicates that providing opportunities to participants to develop critical consciousness through their active involvement in all aspects of the production process ultimately leads them 'to reflect on the complex nature of oppression [to] negotiate their own well-being (Braden, 1999: 127; Freire, 1974; Kindon, 2003: 87)'. Roberts and Muñiz (2008) discuss the historic journey of participatory video as: 'version 1 (1960s to late 1980s)' - participants largely served as 'subjects' helping communication experts develop scripts about their lives, to 'version 2 (1990s to mid 2000s)' - participants had more control over mass-produced low-cost digital or video cameras but lesser participation in editing which was done in remote locations, and 'version 3 (mid 2000s onwards)' – participation was 'enhanced' because of increased media literacy, emergence of mobile cameras, free open-source editing software and low-cost powerful laptops (11-12). The interplay between

technology and affordances of participatory video such as voice, participation and self-representation suggested by this timeframe is important for this study.

Rodríguez (2000, 2001, 1994; Rodríguez et al., 2014) classifies two types of participatory video practices – 'video as a product and video as a process' where 'the quality of the final product is the main goal of video as product and the richness of the production processes itself is the priority for video as a process' (Riaño Alcalá, 1994: 151). In both cases as a product and process, there is an implicit relationship between 'communication expert(s) who make(s) contact with a community to make a video about an aspect of their life' (152). Video as a process involves 'communication expert(s) and community members [engaged] in all phases of production' (153). The process-product relation is not a binary relation in any case, and participatory video is frequently used as action research methodology in participatory monitoring and evaluation frameworks (PM&E) as well as an exercise to foster learning and 'critical action through group dialogue' (Lunch & Lunch, 2006; Roberts & Muñiz, 2018:3). Frequently when 'video processes that aim to tell a story to others' are employed 'final edited products are often achieved' (Riaño Alcalá, 1994:150). Also in certain cases personal or politically sensitive content restricts circulation whereas in other cases 'the primary objective is to communicate an advocacy message to an intended audience' such as the government or policy makers (Roberts & Muñiz, 2018: 4). Focusing on the latter, this research studies the discursive encoding of messages through self-representations of marginalised communities.

3.1.1 Critical Perspectives

A critical perspective of participatory video is crucial to this study to challenge the view that 'participatory video offers a transparent view of local participants, rather than a mediated representation' which is the crux of this research (Low et al., 2012: 56). Broadly speaking, participatory video is critiqued for replicating existing power structures within communities, bringing disrepute or ridicule on participant communities, patronisingly assuming communities lacked empowerment before the coming of video, appropriating local cultures to serve donor agendas and claiming ownership for co-produced content (Corneil, 2012; Gadihoke, 2003; Kindon, 2003, 2016; E-J Milne, 2016; Walsh, 2016; Yang, 2012; Zoettl, 2013).

'Giving the camera away' does not guarantee voice, political action or social transformation and there is an implicit hierarchy constructed by those advocating critical consciousness as a method of intervention, of regarding others as not being sufficiently critical enough (Ramella & Olmos, 2005; Zoettl, 2013: 211).

Kindon (2003, 2016) observes how researchers need to be careful of negotiating relationships with participants if 'hierarchical power-relations are not to be reproduced' noting in most cases the actual tools of production remain firmly in control of the technically proficient researcher and are 'used to capture, document and record 'the (constructed) reality' of a scene' (Kindon, 2003:144, 146). In Roberts and Muñiz's (2008) participatory video version 2, such equipment was often physically out of reach for communities allowing no active engagement with filmmaking tools after the intervention (11). Haraway (1991) similarly observes the restricted availability of these tools as responsible for reproducing 'visions (or a visuality) of social difference of hierarchies of class, race, gender, sexuality and so on' (Rose, 2001: 9). Scholarship thus complicates the notion of participatory video and links it to the politics of representation which permeates aesthetic and discursive choices that construct an 'image of' that also 'speak(s) in behalf of' relevant to the analysis (Low et al., 2012:55). Thus, critical perspectives of participatory communication cite the need to seek 'reciprocal methods that largely include communities into actual participation, [and] negotiate new roles for researchers and others' are relevant here (Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Low et al., 2012: 54). This study takes due note of these perspectives that emphasise how participatory video needs to be contextually situated to specific socio-cultural conditions that influence production and reception (Milne, 2016; Tacchi, 2009).

3.2. Voice and Participation

Voice is conceptualised as a social process of 'giving an account of oneself' which relies on individual and social subjectivity, shared symbolic and cultural capital such as language as well as material resources or a form that realises it (Butler, 2005; Couldry, 2015: 45). The concept of voice is relevant to this study, and I understand it in the two ways proposed by

Couldry (2003, 2015) as a value and as a process that combined involve a symbolic reconstruction of social identity through grassroots media for instance, and aid the formation of a distinct political awareness outside formal political structures (Couldry, 2015: 44; Riaño Alcalá, 1994; Rodriguez & Fields, 2002).

In the context of India, alternative media practices that are extending voice to marginalised communities are addressing the 'politics of speaking (in) which the right to speak is a privilege' associated with a hierarchical social order of caste, class and gender and in the case of participatory video access to means of production (Tacchi et al., 2009; Thomas, 2015: 141). Thomas discusses the 'devaluing of Voice' corresponding to 'older traditions of voice denial' that are reinforced through 'the crisis of voice' in modern democracy driven by market politics (Couldry, 2015; Thomas & van de Fliert, 2014:133). A Bourdesian analogy connects voice as 'participation in the field of cultural production' to participation in other larger fields 'embodied by political representative mechanisms' such as democratic institutions (Battaglia, 2015: 10; Carpentier, 2008: 4; Couldry, 2009). Thus, 'enabling structures that support (V)oice' remains a critical goal for social change and establishing two way communication between 'political society' and 'civil society' (Guha, 1997; Thomas & van de Fliert, 2014: 133).

One of the aims of participatory video in India to address 'long entrenched inequalities of representation' is giving a voice to marginalised communities to construct an identity that can be recognised by the mainstream, which legitimises their participation in decision-making (Couldry, 2015; Thomas & van de Fliert, 2014:135). Participation is a key construct that has multiple contentious interpretations and it underlies theoretical debates on voice, empowerment and agency that is frequently mobilised in development texts and practices (Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Hickey & Mohan, 2004; Low et al., 2012: 50-52; Riaño Alcalá, 1994). In this research, it is identified as a politically and ideologically charged concept 'which is complicated by the fluidity of all key concepts [such as voice, identity, agency] that are involved (in its) operation' (Carpentier, 2007: 105). Participation is regarded as a form of social training enabling the optimum development of the necessary attitudes and qualities required of citizens in a representative democracy (Bailey et al., 2008; Dahlgren, 2002: 4).

The paradigm of critical consciousness underpins the notion that 'direct democracy is based on participation, and participatory video is viewed as an invigorating way to activate participation [and develop] self-recognition and empathy [that are] powerful tools in creating the groundwork for social change' (Dahlgren, 2009; Thomas & van de Fliert, 2014; Walsh, 2016: 410). There is a radical positing of participation in discursive practices that seek to mitigate power inequalities and spur production of knowledge founded in 'non-authoritative collaboration' between parties (Bailey et al., 2008:13). Participatory video practice by NGOs strives 'to recognize voices of those excluded from political systems' that links 'representation in the political sense (by delegation) (and) to representation at the level of symbolization' (Ibid:4-9). The performative 'conditions of the operationalisation [of voice], its means (and) politics of possibility' connect to a broader emphasis in participatory video on the '[contextual] meaning and conditions for empowerment' (Thomas cited in Atton, 2015: 134).

3.2.1 Critical Perspectives

There is an implicit dimension of inclusion and exclusion of certain groups, embedded in the 'complex, shifting and negotiated' terms of voice and participation that are not just dependent on the economic situation of an individual or group but relate to a perceived ability to take up certain social roles and an acceptance or rejection of ICTs (J. Tacchi, Watkins, & Keerthirathne, 2009: 5). In a similar vein, Tacchi et al (2009:1) conclude from their empirical research that unless voice as participation somehow contributes to 'positive social change or to the processes and decisions that affect (the participant's) life' having a voice is of reduced utility from a development approach. Similarly, Mowbray points out the excessive (celebratory) logic of participation may turn 'small scale alternative projects into self-help initiatives without political relevance' (Fuchs, 2010; Mowbray, 2015: 25).

Voice and participation alone are insufficient concepts to theorise the complicated process of social change (see Thomas, 2014) that involves collaborative decision making, extensive consultation, dialogic communication mechanisms and citizen mobilisation that aims to

reform the citizen-state relationship (Roberts & Muñiz, 2018). There is an uncritical equation of the 'subject's participation with her agency (that is) participation (as) evidence and actualisation of an agentic self' (Low et al.,2012:55). Contextual implications and socio-political frameworks are thus key to understanding the content of alternative media (Atton, 2015). The appropriation of the 'alternative media' by alt-right groups in some contexts have been pointed out for instance (Forde, 2015 cited in Atton, 2015: 293; cf.Hawley, 2017). The acceptance of dialogic communication through participatory communication in general also has to be contextualised to the project of hegemony where the 'state is always ready to enter into dialogue' to depoliticise a situation while playing out a long-standing strategy of crisis management (Howley, 2012: 207; Witsoe, 2013).

The widespread popularity and dilution of 'participatory methods in general in the 1990s and 2000s' and its growing symbolic power has been critiqued as 'the tyranny of participation' for 'co-opting a range of agendas other than those (of) the needs of the poor and oppressed' (Cooke & Kothari, 2001:120; Hickey & Mohan, 2004; Roberts & Muñiz, 2018:6). NGOs were often compelled to institutionalise participation and churn out prosaic and didactic participatory videos to meet requirements of research and program funding, in the process depoliticising radical notions of participation and 'legitimising top-down agendas of governments and funders' (Roberts & Muñiz, 2018: 6). Arguably the relationship between NGOs and marginalised communities can be positioned as being discursively inflected with these larger socio-cultural dynamics and power-relations.

Thus, this relationship mediated through reflexive filmmaking tools in participatory video, is thus rightly problematised in theoretical debate and practice (Yang, 2012). This foregrounds the question of why certain 'data has been omitted and why certain content might not have been shared or screened' important in the analysis of voices and the mediated construction of participation of marginalised communities (Dougherty & Sawhney, 2012:441). These concepts have been given central importance in this study taking due cognisance of the above critique, aligning with Thomas's view that at the basis of the project of fostering social change are localised means that encourage participation through enabling voices of

marginalised communities and channelise local 'communicative and performative traditions [that balance] speaking, listening and actioning' (Thomas, 2015: 137).

3.3 Self-representation

Participatory video research and practice concerns participants manipulating video technology to create representations of themselves. The concept of representation here refers to the real and imaginary worlds of 'objects, people or events' that encode meaning through semiotic language (Hall & Open University, 1997:25). The act of encoding and decoding meaning or knowledge through representation is a complex and negotiated process that creates multiple viewing positions or identities that relate to the 'public, social character of language' (ibid).

Participatory video can be seen as a 'class levelling medium' that through self-representations potentially put 'illiterate viewers and producers at par with their literate counterparts' (Tomaselli & Prinsloo, 1990: 141). In that sense, voice is embedded in self-representation becoming a 'personal expression of a social subjectivity' (Harris, 2009:546; Turner, 1991). Self-representation indicates a link to both 'critical consciousness' and the act of constructing psychological self-representations that is innately tied to a critical self-awareness or 'the ability as a subject to reflect on herself as an object (...) for herself [and] in the eyes of others' (Auerbach & Blatt, 1996:298; Freire, 1974). Self-representation in participatory video involves reflexive filmmaking processes such as taking a shot, watching it on screen, discussing and deciding best shots to be edited and so on that allow 'participants to see themselves in action' dually as filmmakers and subjects (Pink, 2001; Ruby, 2000; Yang, 2012: 102).

Participants are frequently motivated to use video to deconstruct stereotypes about themselves which fits with participatory video's aims to present non-hierarchical ways of seeing social difference (Hall & Open University, 1997: 9). Nair and White (2003) present a case-study of two short documentaries – *Trapped* and *Rural Women's Problems* produced by

the same NGO, the latter being a participatory video in collaboration with the rural women (who were the subjects of *Trapped*) with technical assistance from the NGO (210). Their study shows how 'the women did not want to be perceived as down-trodden (as represented in *Trapped*)' rather they wanted to truthfully portray the daily labour of their lives even in difficult times '(and) (*Rural Women's Problems*) carefully depicts (this) reality (...) without pity or apology' (211). Self-representation thus involves recontextualisations of social practices that provide 'authentic data' about participants' socio-cultural realities that can also challenge the 'unequal power-relations between researchers and participants' (Kindon, 2003; Yang, 2012).

Similar experiments in varying cultural contexts across the years with indigenous tribes in Latin America, migrant school children in Europe, rural women in India, marginalised youth in South Africa, remote islanders in Canada, can allow us to claim that participatory video has produced a regime of self-representations of communities distinct from their stereotypical depiction in mainstream media (Bailey et al., 2008:18; Datta, 2003; De Leeuw & Rydin, 2007; Kindon, 2017; Riaño Alcalá, 1994; Rodriguez, 2000; Turner, 1991; Watkins & Nair, 2008; White, 2003). The 'thick descriptions' (Geertz, 2008) provided in these many stories of empowerment and agency gained by participants indicate that participatory video 'promotes a more objectified notion of understanding the symbolic environment, socio-political institutional structures' and 'heightens a sense of control over the processes of objectification, through the instrumentality of the video camera' (Turner, 1991:88; Rodríguez cited in Tacchi et al., 2009:2). Self-representation is thus applied as a sociological intervention in participatory video making visible personal experiences of social relations to 'provoke(s) self and collective action' (Milne et al., 2012:1). This view is adopted while analysing self-representations in this study while being mindful of its contextual critiques given below.

3.3.1   Critical Perspectives

A critical aim of this research is to make visible the 'narrative structures and rhetorical moves' that exist as a layer of discursive mediation exercised by the NGO. Participatory video as a mediated product and process is intended to develop an empathetic relationship

between 'community and crew' to create self-representations consistent with the community's ideologies and struggles for survival (Tomaselli & Prinsloo, 1990:147). However, its use as a tool for development as top-down intervention led by 'researchers, activists, and practitioners working or funded by universities, NGOs, or donor agencies,' and participants are constructed as beneficiaries of interventions, being seldom fully or equally involved in all aspects of production (E. J. Milne, 2012: 259). Donor funding also entails an obligation to produce tangible and positive representations of participation which make rejection of participatory video by communities in some cases unacceptable, and does not provoke enough critical appraisal of processes (ibid).

Mediated representation is embedded in 'media logic' and routinely relies on conventions from reality TV to make 'marginalised communities intelligible to people in power' and suitable to 'goals of facilitators and NGOs' alike (Low et al., 2012:56). Similarly video technology is predisposed to existing 'rationalistic or logocentric tendencies,' and do not guarantee 'less interference or contamination from the researcher' (Buckingham, 2009: 633,648). The position of the facilitator(s) and the interpersonal dynamics created with participants is also clearly important (Wheeler, 2009:16). Participatory video is ultimately contingent to reception by audiences, and without 'appropriate (socio-cultural) contextualisation' of the content, audience experiences will be mediated by their own subjectivities (Pink, 2006:88). There is a reduced impact of participatory video products when they are presented to 'non-local or intercultural audiences' and instances have even generated negative responses to advocacy videos and participatory action research in general (Kindon, Hume-Cook, & Woods, 2012: 360). In certain cases, discourses of community welfare have been appropriated by narrow-interest xenophobic groups that compromises the inclusivity of participatory video (361). Self-representation is thus mediated by an 'unstable technology,' contingent on socio-cultural contexts of production and reception and embedded in the wider political-industrial order in which it is introduced (Buckingham, 2009; Ginsburg et al., 2002; Kishore, 2017; E. J. Milne, 2012: 126). The next chapter incorporates these critiques and focuses the theoretical threads introduced in this chapter into a conceptual framework.

4   CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This section briefly summarises and contextualises the concepts that inform the research question and develops an analytical framework extrapolated from the theoretical chapter. **Firstly**, the background section details the specific socio-cultural context of ragpickers as a marginalised community whose voices and self-representations are analysed in the research. **Secondly**, the concept of participatory video – its affordances and limitations (Roberts & Muñiz, 2018) and as a site of mediation of participation was explained. **Thirdly**, the tensions and difficulties in the existing discourse 'on the conceptualisations of voice and participation (...) participant's role in altering social relations of power (...), and the dynamics of representation' and its reception were presented (Low et al.,2012:50). In summation, the literature review suggests the interconnection between the struggle for gaining socio-political autonomy and cultural mobility and the desire for creating and participating in 'autonomous media' that marks participatory video as deserving of critical analysis (Mookerjea, 2010: 201).

Using this framework, this study **positions voice, participation and self-representation** as discursive concepts present in the mediated representation of the documentary. The **theoretical chapter synthesised** relevant ideas from interdisciplinary perspectives on participatory video that informs the research question of the study given below.

> How is counter-hegemony discursively constructed through voices and self-representations of marginalised communities in participatory video?

5   METHODOLOGY

The first two sub-sections of this chapter concern the chosen method, present its strengths and weaknesses and reflect on my position as a researcher. The third and fourth sub-sections expand on the sampling design and rationale, and presents a research framework.

5.1   Methodology

This section deconstructs the research question before discussing methodological choices. The question of hegemony directly relates to how the dynamic on-going process of identity-construction is constrained by 'multiple [ideologies] and structures of power (that) that regulate the behaviour and beliefs of individuals and groups' in society (Bailey et al., 2008:161; Hall, 2006). The study situates representation as a form of knowledge or identity-construction processes that contain and are contained by existing power-relations, and ideology is a set of particular representations routinely understood as 'common sense' operating on the basis of inclusion and exclusion of certain representations (Hall & Open University, 1997). The 'state of hegemony' is one where the dominant group through its ideologies or representations, institutions and hierarchies establishes its dominant position as natural (161) which nonetheless leaves spaces for resistant groups to challenge dominant power. Hegemony thus has to be constantly reinforced that is 'constructed, maintained, and exercised through institutions such as the media, the family, the education system, and religion' (162). Hall (1997) has commented extensively on the discursive effects of stereotypes or reductive representations of gendered, sexualised or racialised identities, which is relevant to the framing of counter-hegemony in this study.

Social semiotics, which makes possible 'political understandings, reading positions and practical possibilities' of audiovisual representations, was deemed to be the appropriate methodology (Iedema, 2001: 186; Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001). This approach 'involves a description of semiotic resources, what can be said and done with images, language and texts (and) how the things people say and do with (in) images can be interpreted' (Harrison, 2003; Jewitt & Oyama, 2001:136). The key analytical strength of social semiotics is the availability of multiple approaches to analyse how representations transform across varied social activities (van Leeuwen, 2005). For instance, it is widely used to analyse how mainstream discourses on public health, neoliberalism and racism function multimodally across media channels such as news journalism and television documentaries and how they are made specific to the particular semantic field (Chouliaraki, 2008; Dijk, 1988; Fairclough, 1995; Iedema, 2001; van Dijk, 1995). The term 'discourse' here refers to spoken, written and

visual language use that is ideologically mediated and constructed, and present in the 'objects of critical social analysis (in) material-semiotic forms' (Fairclough, 1995:54; Gee & Handford, 2012). Social semiotics shares a theoretical foundation with other methods in discourse analysis and analyses how semiotic elements through intertextual narrative and conceptual conventions construct representations, identities and positions of characters, events and readers [or viewers] (Fairclough, 1995; Iedema, 2001; Jewitt & Oyama, 2001; Rose, 2001; Van Leeuwen, 1991; Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001).

The analysis will take close account of semiosis produced by visual, textual and dialogue elements, different meaning-making modes in the documentary which 'technically become the same at some level of representation' (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001:2). The semiotic analysis classifies the semiotic features from the documentary as 'product(s) of cultural histories and cognitive resource(s) used to create meaning in the production and interpretation of visual messages' (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001: 136-8). Watching a documentary unfolding in time and space induces a 'resemiotization' of '[semiotic] devices [and] the discourse structure of the text by means of inferences and abductive reasoning' (Iedema, 2003:30; Wildfeuer, 2014: 13,15). Social semiotics follows an ambitious aim 'to (link) sociopolitical intertextualities [or discourses] to the ways in which [they] hang together from one second to the next (in the documentary)' (Iedema, 2001:186; van Leeuwen, 1991:76).

This leads me to combine social semiotics with the theory and method of critical discourse analysis (CDA) that analyses text, discursive practice and socio-cultural practice that scrutinises the intertextuality of 'semiotic and discursive genres articulated together' in the documentary (Fairclough, 1992, 1995). Intertextuality refers to the mediation between the text and the larger socio-cultural world through practices of production and reception that is 'discursive practice' (ibid: 55). At a broad level of critique, intertexuality interprets and explains how discursive practice is mediated through existing power-relations and social structures (Fairclough & Wodak, 2005:271-80; Van Dijk, 2001: 353; Wodak & Meyer, 2001). Thus, CDA studies the causes and effects of language that 'we may not be aware of under normal conditions' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1977) and makes visible ideological assumptions and power-relations underpinning its use (Fairclough, 1995: 55).

The research uses the approach identified by Fairclough (1995:37,55-57; Gee & Handford, 2012) to understand two composite elements analysed in any research of media text - (1) communicative event – *chain* of disjunctive spatio-temporal events that comprise a discursive type (text); (2) *order* of discourse – constituted by all the discursive [texts] in the specific social domain. To contextualise, the documentary here is a unified multimodal 'resource,' (Rizwan, 2014: 200) a product in a *chain* of various production and reception processes such as NGO-community meetings, training in video equipment, looking at footage, community screenings, post screening discussions and so on. As a text in itself it comprises an *ordered* and hierarchical arrangement of some of these discursive activities and gives them a finite arrangement with a *beginning, middle* and *end* (Iedema, 2001:187, 2003: 31). This approach allows me to position the text discursively within a wider socio-cultural perspective and disentangle the diffuse relations of power encoded in the documentary's semantic and discursive constructions of voice and self-representation (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). This multi-methodical approach aligns with Van Dijk's argument for 'more eclectic and interdisciplinary applications of CDA' that allows for a synthetic blending of existing sociological knowledge with visual methodologies to study representation (Given, 2008; Iedema, 2001; Jewitt & Oyama, 2001.; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001; van Leeuwen, 1991; Wodak & Meyer, 2001:96). This directly leads to my motive in choosing this particular method to analyse the documentary as a 'political statement, which demands an informed reading and reply' (Iedema, 2001:186).

5.2   Reflexivity

In this section, I justify the choice of the above method, indicate weaknesses and strengths in relation to alternative research methodologies, and reflect on my position as a researcher. Within discourse analysis, a socio linguistic approach would have paid close attention to ideological complexes contained in utterances like nominalisation, categorisation and so on (Fairclough, 1995: 24-28). However, a pilot study for this research using a socio linguistic approach revealed its near one-track focus on uncovering power-relations contained within linguistic components of discourse alone, meaning visual analysis and socio-cultural relations remained relatively unstudied. The analysis mainly interprets the 'samples of the

text as a corpus of statements constituting a discursive object of research' (Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2008:10).

Empirical methods like on-site ethnography or interviews with the women participants would have yielded rich data and contributed significantly to the analysis, yet were ruled out due to time and financial constraints. Given the analytical focus on investigating discursive representations this method was deemed unnecessary, but would prove useful in a study without logistical constraints. Content analysis of various alternative media texts would have served as complex data for analysing different themes and concepts, yet would not have yielded insights into the discursive construction of voice and self-representations as they regard texts as artefacts and not social constructs (Matthes & Kohring, 2008; S. Thomas, 1994).

It is arguable the chosen method is a top-down approach, and if applied without self-reflexivity could replicate existing social hierarchies in research. The question posed by Spivak on the politics of who represents the subaltern is starkly relevant and acknowledged in the analysis (Spivak & Harasym, 1990). Despite its multiple advantages, the chosen methods have some limitations applicable to this research. Firstly, semiotic analysis views representation choices as not arbitrary decisions made by producers, and analysts use selective sampling design that help build a specific argument (Iedema, 2001). The focus on representation alone then does not take into account the actual material conditions of production such as logistical constraints on the NGO, the technical proficiency or resistance from certain groups. Secondly, it can be argued that semiotic analysis makes something visible that is already obvious or apparent, despite the strong interpretive component implicit in the analysis (ibid: 200). Thirdly, the methods and analysis mainly present interpretation of the 'text' and not categories of viewers and their readings important to understand reception of representations (201). CDA specifically has been critiqued for its fixation on systemic-functional linguistic frameworks and neglect contextual analysis for the sake of studying textual functions (Blommaert, 2001; Flowerdew, 2008: 196-7; Herzog, 2016).

However, I believe this method offers a 'means to understand and manipulate what might otherwise remain at the level of vague suspicion and intuitive response' (Iedema, 2001: 201). Additionally, social semiotics views that the analyst's subjective interpretation is 'a strength rather than a failing' (Iedema, 2001: 186). The multi-method approach has been adopted to acknowledge and overcome both the limitations of a 'single reading' of the text, and the primarily 'descriptive framework of visual analysis' (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001: 154; Mitchell, 2011). The aim of analysis to understand how 'specific [semiotic] tools of [creating] representations are used to construct and communicate identities' (Halverson, 2010: 2359) favours a multi-theoretical research methodology. This analysis also offers academic value as the audiovisual signifier bears significance for its relevance in identity construction theory in pedagogical experiments and media studies as providing a representative space for 'people [who are] performing, defining and exploring their identities' (Ibid: 2353; Willett, Burn, & Buckingham, 2005).

Participatory video in general remains 'a relatively understudied set of practices' despite the existence of video infrastructure for decades (Milne et al., 2012:1). Shirley White (2003) has observed the lack of reflective space in academic scholarship on the significance and potentialities of participatory video (High et al., 2012:35). Claudia Mitchell (2011: 79) also specifically problematises the notion of analytical tools that can be used to sample research data from participatory video content. Tomaselli and Prinsloo (1990:151) similarly cite the lack of 'analysis using the codes of popular culture and everyday experience' to study participatory video products. These methods also make possible a research framework to contribute to the gap in existing literature.

As mentioned above, the subjective position of the analyst is of importance in social semiotics and CDA which means my social, linguistic, cultural, caste background duly informs the analysis. In addition, I am also positioned by 'how (I) see certain social allegiances and values as being promoted over others' (Iedema, 2001: 187). Importantly, my association with the NGO Abhivyakti led me to watching this film and interacting with some of the women participants several years ago. These first hand encounters motivated me to work on the possibilities of participatory media in resisting deep rooted socio-cultural

inequalities in India. Given this background, it is possible to have a researcher bias since 'conducting research into pressing social issues, the researcher has his or her own interests and agenda' (Stibbe, 2013: 115).

Here, I align with the view presented by van Dijk (Wodak & Meyer, 2001) on CDA research consistent with the 'best interests of dominated groups (which) takes from the experiences and opinions of such groups seriously, and supports their struggle against inequality' (97). Similarly, CDA 'unlike other scholarship (explicitly) defines and defends its own sociopolitical position' (96). Adopting semiotic techniques and perspectives from critical social theory, I conduct an objective analysis that makes no 'truth claims for its findings' rather 'provides systematic evidence and base(s) political (arguments) on them' (Iedema, 2001:187).

5.3   Research Design and Sampling

Studies of participatory video products also provide invaluable ethnographic descriptions of interventions but do not investigate the role of representations produced through collaboration in depth (Milne et al., 2012; V. Thomas & Britton, 2012; Tomaselli & Prinsloo, 1990). To this end, the section below gives a rationale for the design and details how selected samples align with the concepts relevant to answering the research question.

A set of criteria applied for 'studying artistic' components in collaborative video productions by youth in South Africa was found particularly useful for data sampling (Elizabeth-Jane Milne et al., 2012). These included - 'persuasiveness' (the sincerity and integrity of the production), 'evocativeness' (capacity to draw emotion), 'action orientation' (ability to promote discussion or action on an issue) and 'reflexivity' (self-awareness of the producers as subjects) (Milne et al., 2012: 7; Raht, Smith, & MacEntee, 2009). The research design was guided by a mindful assumption that effects of 'discursive meanings [operate] at multiple scales: cultural, political, [social] and psychic' between the fluid (complex and disrupted) boundaries of discourse and everyday life (England, 2004: 296-7; Hall & Open University,

1997). The research design also selected data with the intention of 'tracing [connections where] discrimination and oppression are being resisted' (ibid: 296).

The design to sample data consisted of three components: (i) Using voice to deconstruct stereotypes (Mookerjea, 2010); (ii) Mediation of self-representation through editing/montage (Bordwell & Thompson, 2012; Halverson, n.d.; G. R. Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001) and (iii) Political discussion in group dialogue (Dahlgren, 2009). To this end, a scene featuring **four interviews (04m05s-08m50s) –** two with women participants, one with an adult woman ragpicker and another with a male pre-adolescent ragpicker, analysed **how stereotypes are addressed**. Next, I have selected the **introduction scene (00m01s - 03m55s)** that features a montage, analysed **how self-representations are mediated through editing**. Finally, a **group discussion scene** between women participants that segues into a **one-on-one interview** with a participant that concludes the documentary **(11m05s – 15m25s) contextualises political discussions through in participatory communication**.

As made explicit above, the sampling choices have been made self-consciously to support the argument, and are not necessarily representative of the entire documentary which includes scenes where this method could prove unsuitable for analysis. The precedence given to the women's interview over the introduction scene is also a self-conscious choice to position their importance in this study. Similarly, I have translated and transcribed the documentary (from its source language Marathi into English) isolating audio and visual elements to understand 'closely what is being said, or told' or shown (Mitchell, 2011:80). Despite being a native Marathi speaker, this process entailed 'various degrees of formal and semantic loss,' and was guided by the 'translator's interpretation [to] proliferate cultural differences so that the translation can signify in the receiving situation' (Venuti, 2007: 30). The samples have also been chosen for their coding possibilities for this research, and exemplifying discursive possibilities and limitations of participatory video.

5.4   Research Framework

The research framework (Table 1) was put together using different frameworks from multimodal studies and CDA. To reiterate, the research design criteria developed into three themes for analysing the selected scenes for:

(1) Addressing dominant stereotypes through voice

(2) Mediating self-representation through video

(3) Participating through political discussion

5.5   Table 1

Level	Descriptive Framework	Analytical Framework
Text	1. Describe how interactions between language and semiotic modalities constitutes the representation level the documentary (Fairclough, 1995:58) 2. Provide conjunctive relationships between the 'visual and verbal (that) analyses what the text is trying represent for the viewer' (van Leeuwen, 1991)	1. Identify specific spatio-temporal and linguistic features of the text that represent the social world of the characters for viewers (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 68; Jewitt & Oyama, 2001) 2. Analyse narrative and conceptual devices - point-of-view, contact, demand, distance, salience (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001:142-43; Van Leeuwen, 2001: 103, 109)
Discursive Practice	1. Describe '[intertextual] choices [made by producers that] provide[s] a key to understanding how discursive practice mediates between text and socio-cultural practice and positions characters and viewers' (Fairclough, 1995: 59-60, 61;Jewitt & Oyama,	1. Identify 'semiotic [and discursive] elements' as 'choices made to construct [and] question social roles and social behaviour and thus enact, perform [or resist] social practice' (Gunnarsson, 1997: 202)

	2001:141) 2. Provide '(r)econtextualisations of social practices that allow participants to critically reflect on 'issues of power and gender violence in their daily lives' (Yang, 2012:107)	2. Analyse 'montage' techniques as mediating representation and setting-up character-camera-viewer positions (van Leeuwen, 1991)
Socio-cultural Practice	1. Describe semiotic and discursive meanings as per a sequential order of the communicative event and order of discourse (Iedema, 2001; Jewitt & Oyama, 2001) 2. Provide '(M)acro-sociological [interpretive] analysis of social practice' (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 66)	1. Identify '[representations of] social life (...) that prevents social wrong from being addressed' (Fairclough cited in Gee & Handford, 2012:14) 2. Analyse 'whether the discursive practice reproduces or restructures the existing order of discourse and what consequences this has for the broader social practice' (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 69,70).

6   FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first three sections present scene descriptions that contextualise the overall analysis of each theme identified in the research framework above. The fourth section offers a discussion and conclusion that consolidates the analysis, summarises the research, reflects on absences in this study and provides indications for further research.

6.1. Addressing dominant stereotypes through voice (04m05s-08m50s) (Appendix 1.1)

6.1.1 Scene Description

This scene consists of three interviews of women recounting their experiences of physical and sexual harassment while doing ragpicking work. This is reflected in the following dialogue from the first interview with an adult woman ragpicker:

> Men from banglas (middle-class housing complexes) call me to their house, tell me
they   want me to pick up some scrap...but really they have nothing to give. Instead they

forcibly   keep me back in their houses, ask for my name, where I am coming from and proposition me.

The second interview continues the theme of sexual harassment when a woman participant recalls an incident when she was solicited on the street and describes how she refuted his advances:

He came up behind me on his motorcycle and said 'stop, stop...I want to talk to you.' I said (angry tone) 'why the hell should I talk to you? I don't know you.' He said 'I will give you   money...stop.' I replied 'stuff your money! Get lost unless you want a thrashing   from me!'

In the third interview, a woman participant relates how security guards from the *banglas* accost her for trespassing. Often this leads to violent physical confrontation and she is forced to dump their plastic collections which results in a loss of income. The woman participant describes this situation as 'a state of humiliation' (Appendix 1). She recalls:

We go home in this state of humiliation and look at our young one's hungry faces who ask (soft tone) 'mother have you sold trash today? Can you give us some money to eat bread and butter?' How do you expect me to tell them how I was beaten up, my trash stolen by this watchman who called me a bitch and a whore (censored) at a bangla where I went today? (pauses) I give them 5 rupees and ask them to share food between siblings and I go to bed hungry...that is how delicate our situation is.

The woman's dialogue cuts to a voice-over after the first line and four shots illustrate her speech: three extreme long shots of empty streets and buildings in a residential colony followed by a close shot of a young boy sleeping on the floor in one of the houses. The woman's line on children segues into the next interview with the young boy. This interview is a single mid-length shot of a male pre-adolescent framed in the middle of a slum lane, where he is surrounded by other boys his age curiously looking into camera. The boy describes how he is caught and roughed up sometimes and falsely accused of stealing. He is then asked whether he goes to school, to which he responds:

I go to school, but I need money to buy books and pens (I) have to sell trash...do I have a choice? (interrogative tone)

This question leads to the next scene of a group discussion where the women reference how their children are also stereotyped like them.

6.1.2 Analysis

At the level of representation, the 'frontality' of the women's direct gaze aligns with the camera's eye-level signifying a 'relation of symbolic equality' creating 'maximum involvement (with the viewer who is) directly confronted with what is in the picture' (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001: 136). The women's reference to their issues contextualises the visual 'contact' with viewers which makes a demand for attention and makes an 'offer' of certain

important counter-hegemonic information (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001; Nichols, 1991). This suggests a relationship between the character and the camera gaze (equated to the spectatorial position) and builds a form of 'direct address' between characters and viewers (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001: 146). The frontal gaze and the 'long 'turn at talk' in each shot emerges salient in this scene and the 'proximity or closeness' it offers to the women allows for an uninterrupted reading of their facial expressions and tones representing them as primary agents or 'characters (...) endowed with an evident (...) batch of [counter-hegemonic] traits, qualities and behaviours (ibid:143; Iedema, 2001: 186, 190).

At a discursive and socio-cultural level then, the women are intertextually positioned as being able to counter stereotypes about themselves. This constructs their distinct counter-hegemonic position in the text and influences its dominant reading (Stuart Hall, 2001: 58). The women's experiences of being solicited for paid sex across different classes signals how patriarchy exists across class and space barriers and functions as an 'institutional embeddedness of different forms of male power' (Gottfried, n.d.). The use of voice-over as a 'montage (...) to explain an aspect of the action,' is an intertextual device drawn from genres such as news reportage and expository documentary film (Bruzzi, 2006; Nichols, 1991; van Leeuwen, 1991). The two long shots of the *banglas* symbolically reconstruct how ragpickers are kept at an 'arm's length' from the mainstream, representing their tense relationship with these spaces where they face violent effects of stereotypes and where they earn their livelihood (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001: 146). Similarly, the closer shot of the sleeping child signals a 'personal relationship' with ragpicker's position (ibid) and strengthens how the documentary intertextually shifts the point-of-view to the participant's so they directly communicate with audiences.

The interview of the young boy carries forward the 'direct contact' from the preceding sequence that establishes the continuity of gaze as a visual feature despite this shot's wider magnification that frames other non-pertinent characters. The boy's occupation as a ragpicker points to socio-economic relations in the profession where children are routinely employed to supplement family income (Seth, Kotwal, & Ganguly, 2005; Shome, 2016). At a discursive level, the inclusion of his interview intertextually contrasts the overall 'discourse

on child protection' in the documentary that 'reinforces the idea that children are weak, vulnerable and in need of (adult) protection' (Alldred, 1998). His reference to 'having no choice' but to sell trash from a socio-cultural position can be read as the 'existence and perpetuation of caste-based public sanitation profession(s)' (Gatade, 2019; R. Jeffrey, 2015). To put it in perspective, though 'caste' here is not explicitly alluded to, a close reading indicates it is a 'responsible agent' elided in discursive representation or 'an invisible prejudice, which the passage of time has allowed to merge unobtrusively in the background of historical discourse' (Fairclough, 1995: 59; Guha, 1997).

The above analysis indicates how the 'recontextualisation of a certain theme (by participants)' provokes their reflexive use of video 'to purposefully intervene in their own lives' and address stereotypes from their daily experiences (Yang, 2012: 106). This sequence reflects how women engaged in ragpicking work are confronted by a patriarchal social order that devalues their physical presence. The socio-cultural analysis also addresses the discursive link of identity to space and the conflation of class and caste discrimination in urban India (England, 2004; Fernandes, 2004; Rangaswamy & Arora, 2016; Sundaram, 2009). It is a criminal offence to discriminate against lower-castes and marginalised tribes and classes, and caste-discrimination is frequently subsumed under the rhetoric of class and space in postcolonial India (C. Jeffrey, Jeffery, & Jeffery, 2004; R. Jeffrey, 2015; Natrajan, 2011).

The intertextual use of explanatory yet evocative visuals to illustrate the dialogue on hungry children discursively recreates images reminiscent of 'scene(s) of suffering' common in conventional ethnographic documentary films that construct identification through empathy with the impoverished conditions of the subject and simultaneously induce 'a socially distant spectatorship with respect to the marginalised subject' (Bruce, 2016: 2). The censoring of expletives signals the containment of the woman's narrative within the boundaries of acceptable speech surveilled by the NGO possibly with an eye to its negative reception by communities, authorities or donor organisations (Hughes, 1992). The women are also not identified by their names in captions - a standard practice across multiple audio-visual genres which this documentary borrows from. This confuses identities between 'participants'

and 'non-participants' or the 'filmmakers,' 'subjects' or 'researchers' since no clear identification exists at the level of text and affects its reading.

6.2. Mediating self-representation through video (00m01s – 03m55s) (Appendix 1.2)

6.2.1   Scene Description

The documentary opens with montage set to a melancholic classical music track that visually represents the spaces and actions reprising a day in the life of a ragpicker. Women ragpickers are shown manually going through trash in large dumping yards accompanied by their children, separating recyclable dry waste into large plastic sacks, carrying full plastic sacks on their heads to a scrap merchant's shop and selling it for a few currency notes. The scene intercuts slowed down footage of establishing long shots of the dumping yards, with descriptive pans, zoom in and outs, close shots of ragpickers picking up wet trash with their bare hands, closer shots of ragpicker's faces, mid-length shots of young children looking into camera. The following captions appear in bold on lower-third part of the screen:

We spend our lives rummaging through trash trying to find the rags to patch the destinies of our broken lives. We are searching for a meaning for our tattered lives in this rubbish. To find a piece of bread and wipe the tears of our young one's we roam around...

The montage concludes with a freeze frame of a close shot of a ragpicker's hands counting money then the screen fades to black. The following intertitle in bold font appears on the centre of the screen:

We challenge you to change your thinking about us. Now see the reality of our lives through the third eye of the camera...

The scene sets up the series of interviews analysed in the above section.

6.2.2 Analysis

At the representational level, this scene aptly represents the sequential theme – the mediation exercised through the arrangement of multimodal semiotic elements such as slowed down footage, text, dynamic and descriptive visuals and the deployment of montage 'as an image of the theme' of the documentary itself (Hodge cited in Miller, 2014: 38; Rizwan, 2014). Discursively, the theme of resistance marks the end of this sequence, the use of melancholic music juxtaposed to affective imagery and heavily metaphoric captions otherwise connote helplessness, inevitability and vulnerability reinforced through closer shots of ragpickers and children (Van Leeuwen, 2001). The 'third eye' in the final caption has

mythical references in India symbolising destruction of evil and self-consciousness simultaneously (cf. Babb, 1981; Doniger, 2011; Pande, 2014).

This scene also clearly represents a diegesis – a compressed framing of real time-space into cinematic time-space through editing (Iedema, 2001). The slowed-down footage calls for attention to visual elements and foregrounds the mediation exercised through postproduction (Kishore, 2017; Mak, 2012). There is an extension of the textual content into the visual, a 'confirming paradigm in 'direct address' documentaries that metaphorically 'restates the verbal content and provides the diegesis' (Nichols, 1991; van Leeuwen, 1991: 92). This scene offers 'iconographic signs that designate character-event [identities]' such as the constant placement of ragpickers and trash in the same frame, the closer shots of their actions that objectifies them to a certain extent (Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001: 95; 144). Similarly, long shots and camera pans dwarf the ragpicker in the huge expanse of the dumping yard equates them to trash - a 'disguised symbolic motif' whose presence in the image has a naturalistic purpose that 'mingles with real [people] and is implement[ed] on the same level of reality' (Van Leeuwen, 2001: 109). All the same, these images also confront the viewer with the reality of ragpicker's working conditions where they are seen going through piles of trash without any safety equipment.

At the discursive level, the scene's salient aspects are the use of intertextual devices like montage, intertitles and captions that illustrate the visual content and 'conform to a tradition of dialectical, political filmmaking' of using 'intertitles to juxtapose meaning [over a] sprawling and un-chronological subject matter' within the structured discourse of the documentary genre (Bruzzi, 2006: 15, 243). The reproduction of images of ragpickers and their children working in the dumpyard elaborates on the theme of poverty encoded through the conventional use of intertextual 'techniques of realism' (England, 2004). The documentary thus operates in a liminal space offered by the 'shock aesthetics (of suffering) and [emotions of] empathy and gratitude (in) positive image campaigns' (Bruce, 2016: 5; Chouliaraki, 2010:110). In this sense, the NGO's recontextualisation of ragpicker's work through montage makes visible subjective, 'institutional and epistemological agendas,' that influence researchers and facilitators of participatory communication working for NGOs

with donor funding (Thomas & van de Fliert, 2014:48). The use of representational conventions developed by mainstream media is arguably antithetical to the construction of counter-hegemonic positions of the women, since 'conventionality (genres and their intertextual application) becomes the site where (dominant) social meanings are most active' (Hodge cited in Miller, 2014: 37).

At the same time, the use of shaky handheld visuals, lingering pans and zoom-in and outs signal another kind of mediation between the women and the viewfinder of the camera (Rodriguez, 2001).This signified their 'change (in relationship) with video technology' and their increased familiarity with the camera, and marks a beginning of their participation through audiovisual literacy (ibid: 154). This situates the video between Roberts and Muñiz's participatory video version 2 and 3 between an inhibited and enhanced involvement of participants in the production process (Roberts & Muñiz, 2018: 11). A closer reading of the text through this analysis indicates there are 'ideological effects and semantic implications of withholding and granting access to equipment' (Tomaselli & Prinsloo, 1990).

6.3. Participating through political discussion (11m05s – 15m25s) (Appendix 1.3)

6.3.1   Scene Description

The scene presents the six women participants engaged in discussing how stereotypes affect them socially and economically. They also discuss their children's vulnerability to being denied opportunities to progress because of the shared stereotype. The women discuss how the authorities (colloquially referred to as *sarkar* or 'government') have proven seldom helpful or approachable in the past to discuss community-level problems. A woman recounts:

The open sewers are overflowing in the basti (neighborhood)...when it rains the sewage goes inside our houses...we have to clean up our house, put dry clothes on the floor...this takes us the whole night and then we sleep...if not we go to the CBS (Central bus station) and sleep there. We have tried to talk to them before but they haven't listened.(pauses) I hope those watching this film will think about our situation and do something (confident tone)."

This discussion transitions into the next shot of a woman participant in a one-on-one interview recounting her experience of participatory video:

When we were shooting this film, we had some (bad) experiences of this sort. When we were shooting in the Deolali camp area, and a passing policeman stopped us. The camera was in my hand, and they immediately grabbed it from my hand, and asked me where I have stolen it from.

And I felt really bad then...because we are doing good work but people haven't changed their perspective about ragpickers. They are not ready to change their mindset....so what can we do? (pauses) Then we had a group discussion about it and we realised that we need not be afraid

anymore...because whatever we are doing now is being captured in this device and we can show it back to them. So (confident tone) we have no reason to be afraid. We want to show them what we go through and that is the reason why we have picked up the camera.

This dialogue segues into the end credits featuring the women in crew roles such as camera person, editing, sound recording and scripting that is illustrated by a sequence of visuals of women in groups shooting with cameras in slum lanes and dumping yards and watching footage on a computer screen.

6.3.2 Analysis

The group discussion represents the women as a dynamic unit discursively connecting different issues to their cultural stereotypes. This is complemented by dynamic camera movements such as pans, zoom-ins in an unedited shot focusing on different women sitting in a semi-circle, while taking turns speaking to the camera. This scene carries forward the direct-address point-of-view established throughout the documentary. Their resolve to show the documentary to authorities conveys their conviction of making a difference through the film. The reprisal of the 'montage as explanatory aspect' similarly reinforces the mediation of semiotic elements and positions the point-of-view from the NGOs perspective as analysed in the section above.

The group dialogue that demonstrates a collective resolve to show authorities the film, indicates they are capable of 'political discussion' and participation in decision-making processes (Dahlgren & Alvares, 2013: 157). Political discussion here refers to a meaningful dialogue around 'solving problems, finding solutions to conflicts; is purposive [and] goal-oriented' (Dahlgren, 2002:7). This orients their relationship to participatory video to express a desire for self-representation to a particular audience they have already identified (Harris, 2009). Harris (2009) discusses how such group discussions help women generate 'social capital' to enact a form of 'civic participation through their membership and engagement with a local group' to initiate a dialogue with authorities (Dahlgren, 2009; Harris, 2009: 539-

40). A discursive analysis similarly posits links to notions of civic agency that is evoked through the capacity for political discussion through participatory communication (ibid).

The participant's reflections on her filmmaking experiences framed as a close shot, speaking into camera emphasises a visual return to the very first interview and underlines the documentary's culminating message. Her first-hand experience of harassment by the police serves as an indictment of the socio-cultural biases against ragpickers manifest in actions of institutional forces. Similarly, the group discussion on the *sarkar's* failure to rehabilitate or even listen to the demands of ragpickers underlines what Couldry (2008) comments on the "crisis" of voice and the failures of the state to effectively provide channels for voice to marginalised communities. The film's concluding remarks similarly highlight the role participatory video can discursively play in generating increased dialogue on civic issues through self-reflexive communication processes (Dasgupta & Serageldin, 2000; Harris, 2009: 547).

6.4. Discussion and Conclusion

This section positions the above analysis in wider discussions on the role of self-representation in social identity-construction and political participation (Corneil, 2012; Low et al., 2012). The analysis of the three sequences reveal notable findings such as: (1) voice and self-representation using reflexive filmmaking processes establishes counter-hegemony; (2) participatory video provides a mediated representation, embedded in the tense relationship between NGOs, marginalised communities and imagined audiences such as community members, authorities and donor institutes; (3) participatory communication processes such as group dialogue converge with discussions on political participation.

The 'direct address' of the women's voices is a 'tactical weapon [to combat] sexism, caste oppression, and class domination [whose strategy] is to simply deny the credibility of the subaltern on the ground of her identity' (Mookerjea, 2010: 374). Women addressing their social exclusion through 'video images [thus] provide testimony to their problems and difficulties and so authorize their speech' (ibid). This analysis makes possible further research on processes of 'identity deconstruction' which prompts 'reevaluation of certain

aspects of community life (through) the process of retelling one's reality' to the camera from empirical texts and material practices (Rodriguez cites in Riaño Alcalá, 1994:155).

Secondly, the analysis draw attention to intertextual techniques like close head shots, montage, captions and so on belonging to different audiovisual genres like news reportage or television documentary. These techniques belong to a 'professional code' that media producers use to communicate preferred readings of their texts (S Hall, 1980: 61). Intertextual techniques used without self-reflexivity tends to produce a fetishistic image of the subjects, and where mediation does not 'express or acknowledge the involvement of the researcher' it produces 'voyeuristic, distanced and disembodied claims to knowledge' (Kindon, 2003: 142). To this end, participatory video as a feminist practice, borrows from feminist documentary filmmaking in documenting everyday lives and issues of ordinary women subjects, and insists on 'deeper involvement of women [participants] in all contexts of video production – conceptualising to viewing' (Kindon, 2003; Lesage, 1978; Yang, 2012:107). This appropriation to construct counter-hegemonic identities from a postcolonial perspective, highlights how 'underlying logics' of media production tend to 'universalise themselves and their Eurocentric assumptions' (Shome, 2016: 245). In this respect, it is pertinent to note Walsh's critique of participatory video's entrenchment in the discourse of 'the individual as a site of social change [and] dominant liberal political ideology' making the symbolic power of participatory communication escape 'scrutiny and become an invisible backdrop' in development interventions (Walsh, 2016: 406). The analysis indicates that future research and practice in participatory video could focus on 'developing audiovisual codes, narratives and formats truly anchored in the lives and culture of marginalized women' (Riaño Alcalá, 1994: 156-57).

The analysis of mediated representation indicates how the emancipatory logic of participatory video 'entangled [in] the ideas of voice, empowerment, and self-expression' is conflated with paternalistic notions of NGOs providing opportunities for reflexive self-representation to marginalised communities (Walsh, 2016: 407). The finding opens the space to explore questions such as 'who is this representation for and why?' (408) and counter the naive optimism that simply voicing one's concerns or 'telling stories of injustice that justice will be served' (ibid). Thirdly, the analysis indicates that participation through 'political

discussion' in participatory video 'embodies power-relations [and make claims on] forms of power sharing' that involves bigger sociological factors than just 'media access and interactivity' (Corneil, 2012; Dahlgren, 2009; Dahlgren & Alvares, 2013: 49-50; Riaño Alcalá, 1994; Rodriguez, 2001; Walsh, 2016). In that sense, the documentary can be understood from the lens of 'shared authorship' where 'camera operation (or editing) by professionals is not considered less participatory [for participants]' (Yang, 2012: 104). This recontextualisation of the text positions participatory video as a collaborative 'social intervention' that focuses on 'generating new levels of self-awareness and identity amongst research participants' rather than the constraints of limited knowledge in video production (Pink, 2008; Yang, 2012: 106). The multiple perspectives gained from the study highlights how further research can carry forward the discussion on participatory video as cultural representation tied to discussions on political participation by ordinary people. The hybridity of the discursive possibilities embedded in participatory video demonstrates how media engagement is tied to notions about its significance in reflecting and stimulating processes of social change (Fairclough, 1995: 61).

7 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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APPENDIX 1

1.1   Theme: Addressing stereotypes through voice and self-representation - SEQ 2 (A) -
(D)

SEQUENCE 2 (A) | EXPOSITION - Handheld camera, low angle, ambient noise

MID of a **FAMILY** in a **CROWDED ROOM** in a **SLUM** (see **SEQUENCE 2**) huddled
together. There are a number of objects in the background to suggest the CONFINEMENT of
the space including the **COMPOSITION** of the shot, the **LOW ANGLE** and the roof (tin-
plated). The woman (**WOMAN RAGPICKER - R1**) is wearing the **MANGALSUTRA,
EARRINGS** and a **BINDI** typical signs of a married Hindu woman. Her bright colored dress
contrasts with the dull colored clothes of her **HUSBAND** and the drabness of the space
suggested by the background. The **GAZE** of the MAN and their **CHILD** who remain
SILENT is transfixed on the camera throughout the shot while **R1'S LOOK/GAZE** and
SPEECH is more **DYNAMIC** suggestive of her **AGENCY** in the conversation. Similarly, she
is being egged on by the **PARTICIPANT-INTERVIEWER 1.**

PARTICIPANT-INTERVIEWER 1 – So are you facing any difficulties in work?

WOMAN-RAGPICKER 1 - Work well...people keep heckling me on the streets...by anyone
and everyone...but how else do I collect trash (bhangaar)?

P1– You collect bhangaar?

R1 – Yes

P1 – And what does your husband do?

R1 - Daily wage (manual work)

P1 – And how long does he work?

R1 – Ummm...he leaves the house at 8 in the morning and he returns at 9 in the night

P1 – And you are selling bhangaar?

R1 – Yes

P1 – So what difficulties do you face when collecting bhangaar?

R1 - Oh there are so many difficulties, dogs chase me...men chase me...there are plenty difficulties in this work

P1 – So, can you tell us something **about the difficulties** you have faced in the last ten years?

R1 – A lot of things have happened... but how do I say it...

R1 here falters.

P1 – Don't be shy...don't be afraid...tell us what has happened.

R1 – MEN call (me/us) to their house (bangla)...tell us they have trash...but they don't have anything to give us...they just ask for my name, where I stay...MEN use dirty words with me to proposition for sex

CUT TO
SEQUENCE 2 (B) – Static camera, eyeline match, clear audio minimal room tone

MCU of an **ELDERLY RAGPICKER (R2)** standing in **EYELINE** with the camera. The **BACKGROUND** suggests a countryside location and is indicative of the 'generic backdrop'

that is used in other modes, documentaries/genres, discourse types etc. We see this backdrop featured in most interviews in the documentary.

R 2 – When I got to collect bhangaar, MEN have often chased me on their motorcycles...saying come here, come with me...

Interviewer-RS (Researcher) – And has this happened to YOU?

R2 - Yes, it happened just yesterday...I sat in the autorickshaw and a man on his motorcycle came from behind and tried talking to me...saying...stop, stop, I want to talk to you, stop the auto...and I said to him, I don't know you why should I stop and talk to you? But he kept persisting, saying stop, stop...I will give you money...and I replied - stuff your money! But he kept saying stop, stop can you talk to me for two minutes? And I replied – get lost or do you want me to beat you? Just then a **POLICEMAN** on his motorcycle saw him doing this and then the man scooted off. The **POLICEMAN** asked me – what was he saying to you? I told him – he was trying to pay me money (colloquial discourse). The policeman then went after him on his bike...just happened yesterday

CUT TO

SEQUENCE 2 (C)

MCU of an ELDERLY RAGPICKER-PARTICIPANT (R 3) standing in EYELINE with the CAMERA.

R 3 – We sell bhangaar in Nashik city... Sometimes we go to a residential colony (society) where there are 25-30 banglas...

CUT TO -

VOICEOVER MONTAGE

PAN (Establishing Long Shot - ELS) of a residential colony with short buildings arranged in a neat style with parks and mid-sized cars - that contrasts with the confined spaces of the slum seen in SEQ 2. We see a woman ragpicker picking up trash bags from a corner in the playground.

CUT TO - PAN (MID) inside room seen in 2 (A) from a young girl looking up into camera holding on to the end of her mother's sari to a young boy lying down on the floor with eyes open

VO - ...we go where they dump their trash to pick up plastic bags and bottles...and we are always beset by the watchman or the manager of the estate...he will come and threaten us...asking who gave you permission to come here? What are you doing here? We reply – sir, we have only come to collect trash. Lying, thieving, whoring, goddamn bitch (censored)...this is what they call us and drive us away...and when we are leaving, they make us throw whatever we have collected right there...if we protest, they hit us and take whatever (5-10 rupees) we have collected and kick us out...we go home in utter humiliation...and then at home...there are always LITTLE ONE's waiting for us...asking us – MOTHER, did you sell bhangaar? I am hungry, can you give me some money (2 rupees) I want to eat bread-butter. So...do I tell them that I got slapped in the face and my bhangaar got taken from me by the society watchman? Do I tell them – oh dear ones, your mother was called a bitch and a whore (censored) and her bhangaar got stolen when she went to society today, so I have no money what to do? Instead I tell them – take 5-7 rupees for tea and bread and share it with your siblings...I am going to bed now hungry...That's how precarious our daily existence can be.

CUT TO

SEQUENCE 2 (D)

MID of a **YOUNG BOY** talking to a PARTICIPANT-INTERVIEWER (P 2). A **MICROPHONE** with is held some distance from his face. Behind him there is a CROWD of YOUNG BOYS loitering around, some of them glance into camera occasionally. The BOY is wearing a bright pink shirt.

B - People beat us up...call us thieves....don't let us take bhangaar (make a living)

JUMP-CUT TO

B - ...we live in a house made of tin (trash), we have no protection from the sun or the rain...and people all around us are using abusive (foul) language...

P 2 – And school? Do you go to school?

B – I go to school, but the situation at my home is not good...

P 2 – What class do you study in?

B – Sixth grade

P 2 – You study in the sixth grade and you also have to collect bhangaar?

B – I have to do it, there is no choice

P 2 – And who is in your family?

B – I have a father, mother, sister...everyone is there...everyone has to collect trash

Another boy next to him nudges him to say 'we need money for books'

B – We need money for books, pens and everything...where will it come from?

1.2   Theme: Mediating representation through video – SEQ 1, 1 (A), 4, 4 (A)

SEQUENCE 1 | INTRODUCTION

We the Ragpickers (WR) begins with a series of quick shots set to a fast-paced title track featuring six sari-clad women that culminates in the film's title *Amhi Kachra vechak* in Marathi. The video cuts to a ZOOM-IN and CLOSE-UP (CU) of a MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN looks into the CAMERA as she speaks - 'when we talk to the police, they don't want to listen to us...So we thought of making our voices heard through this film. We want them to watch this(ese) picture(s)...so they can see the reality(ies) of our lives for themselves. We hope they will change their thought process about us.'

SEQUENCE 1 (A) | EXPOSITION (Slow motion, handheld camera, melancholy music, text on screen in Marathi)

Mid-Close up (MCU) of the BACK of two RAGPICKERS with large empty PLASTIC SACKS on their heads walking through a SLUM LANE. PASSERS-BY including ADULT MEN and CHILDREN stare into camera. Long Shot (LS) of the back of RAGPICKER bending over to pick up a plastic bottle next to an overflowing trash bin, putting it in her SACK and walking away.

Text: We spend our lives **RUMMAGING** through **RUBBISH BINS** trying to find the RAGS to PATCH the **DESTINIES** of our broken lives.

Images: CU of a RAGPICKER foraging through a mound of rubbish. LS of HUGE PILES OF TRASH at a DUMPING YARD. RAGPICKERS can be seen in the foreground picking through mounds as a JCB truck dumps its load in another pile. MCU of RAGPICKER with her full plastic sack looking into the camera expressionlessly.

Text: We are **SEARCHING a for a MEANING** for our tattered lives in this RUBBISH.

Images: **MID SHOT (MS) of TWO YOUNG BOYS** sitting on top of a **TRASH PILE** and swatting away swarms of flies, glancing into camera which slowly **ZOOMS OUT** from them to show the PILES of TRASH.

Text: To find a piece of BREAD to feed our YOUNG ONE's tiny stomachs and wiping away their tears, we roam around...

Images: MS of RAGPICKER balancing a PLASTIC SACK full of TRASH on her HEAD, the camera PANS with her as she walks on a long empty road in the trash yard. MS of a YOUNG GIRL foraging through TRASH and putting scrap into her SACK. LS of a tinplated roof in a slum, a WOMAN stands with a BABY in her arms. A YOUNG GIRL holding a TODDLER and TWO OTHER BOYS are standing outside a house. The camera SLOW ZOOMS INTO the YOUNG GIRL who is smiling innocently at the camera. MCU of TWO RAGPICKERS walking on the street with their full SACKS at the camera. LS of the SCRAP MERCHANT's shop where TWO RAGPICKERS are loading their SACKS on a WEIGHING SCALE. MCU a MIDDLE-AGED MAN wearing a **BLUE SHIRT SITTING ON A DESK** hands over a few CURRENCY NOTES to one of the WOMEN who is wiping her forehead with the edge of her SARI. She looks away from the MAN and breaks into a relieved smiles. The camera **ZOOMS IN** into her HANDS counting the NOTES.

(Freeze Frame)

FADE TO BLACK

Text on screen: We are challenging your perspective about (us) which holds us (no) more valuable than your trash. Now look at our lives documented through the third eye of the camera and change your thinking...

1.3 Theme: Participating through political discussion

SEQUENCE 3 | GROUP DISCUSSION

MCU of a PARTICIPANT-RAGPICKER (no caption) is talking to camera. The earrings and mangalsutra matches the woman from SEQ 2 (A). The background has a white board with words such as **'camera' 'mid shot' 'long shot'** written on it.

P-R – My question is shouldn't the **government (authorities) help us out**? They know that ragpickers children are roaming the streets, stealing things...(we are not denying) that there are some kids from our slum who steal things...some do some petty thieving, some drink alcohol, some smoke opium...we see so many **young ones...smoked up...in a stupor.**..some end up stealing...but how much can a **mother control her son**?

PAN to P 3 FROM 4 (A)

P 3 – Really I blame the authorities for our situation...do they give any respect to ragpicker's children? They ask if (we are) literate...they look down on us for living in a slum, they say we are alcoholics, we gamble our money...

PAN to P 2 from 2 (C)

P – If I go to a small restaurant (hotel) and ask the people...can you employ my 15 year old son to clean tables or serve food or (do) anything in your hotel? They immediately ask me – where do you stay? And we respond – here in the **Labour Camp**. They respond – we don't employ anyone from any **slums (emphatically gesticulates refusal with her hands)** and if we ask why, they say...**because we are all thieves**...that's what they say...

P3 speaks up. PAN to P 3

P 3 – When young boys listen (to this) day and night, no matter how good their intentions are, they feel worthless...and (then) he is not afraid to steal anymore. Because he thinks even

when I am not stealing, people accuse me of stealing...so why not just do it? Even if I behave myself (try to be a dutiful citizen) I am being falsely accused, so then...

The MALE RESEARCHER chips in.

RS – So why not just do it?

P 3 – Yes

CROSS-FADE TO

SEQUENCE 3 (A) | PARTICIPANT-INTERVIEWER INTERVIEW

Refer to 2 (C) (D) & 4 (A)

P 3 – We face many problems in the slum...those who are staying in the LABOUR CAMP for 2-3 years still don't have access to water, they have to walk 3-4 kilometres to get access to clean water, sometimes they have to buy water or pay 10 rupees to take a shower at the community toiler...thats how bad the situation is...in some cases...

CUT TO

VOICEOVER MONTAGE

ELS slum seen in SEQ 2. Tin roofed houses are sandwiched together leaning over an overflowing sewer. Nearby children are playing and adult men are talking to each other. **Closer shots** of the overflowing garbage.

VO – The open sewers are overflowing in the LABOUR CAMP...when it rains the sewage goes inside our houses...we have to clean up our house, put dry clothes on the floor...this takes us the whole night and then we sleep...if not we go to the CBS (Central bus station) and

sleep there...We have tried to talk to them before but they haven't listened.(pauses) I hope those watching this film will think about our situation and do something (confident tone)."

SEQUENCE 4 (A) | CONCLUSION - Refer to background in SEQ 2 (C) and (D)

PARTICIPANT-INTERVIEWER 3 – When we were shooting this film, we had some (bad) experiences of this sort...very bad...for example when we were shooting in the **DEOLALI MILITARY CAMP Area** and a **passing police patrol car** stopped us. The camera was in my hand and they immediately put their hands on it and ordered me to let it go. They asked me threateningly – where did you get this camera from? Where did you **steal** this camera from? Are you letting it go or not?

P 3 pauses.

P 3 - And I felt really bad then...because we are doing good work but people haven't changed their perspective about ragpickers. They are not ready to change their mindset....so what can we do? Then we had a **group discussion** about it and we realised that we need not be **afraid anymore**...because whatever we are doing now is being captured in this device and we can show it back to them, so we have no reason to be afraid. We want to show them what we go through and that is the reason why we have picked up the CAMERA (to tell our story)...