

Participatory visual methods in the ‘Psychology loves Porta Capuana’ project

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Abstract

This article describes the use of participatory visual and multimedia methods as part of a participatory action research carried out in a highly degraded urban area of a metropolis. The project was developed by the ‘I love Portacapuana’ committee in collaboration with community psychology lab and 180 undergraduate psychology students of the University of Naples Federico II. The joint use of visual tools such as photographs and videos with Internet-based collaborative work groups – through social networks such as Facebook – has proved effective in interpreting the needs of local citizens. This process has also involved a thorough analysis in terms of strengths and weaknesses as well as opportunities and threats in the local context. Indeed, the integration of visual tools into the broader framework of community diagnosis has fostered an interactive dialogue between the local community, researchers and local authorities. This, in turn, has lead to the outlining of a series of intervention strategies for local urban regeneration.

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Keywords

participatory action research, urban regeneration, participatory visual methods, community diagnosis, Internet-based collaborative work groups

Introduction

In community psychology, participatory action research (PAR) represents an elected methodology for carrying out initiatives oriented towards collective well-being through social change (Bradbury, 2015; Kagan, Burton, Duckett, Lawthom, & Siddiquee, 2011; Reason & Bradbury, 2008). The procedures of this approach, which are constantly negotiated with associations and members of the community under study, are always characterized by discussing, de-constructing, reflecting, sharing and identifying the resources and obstacles of the local context (Brydon-Miller, 2010). It is in this sense that participation serves the purpose of co-constructing novel proposals of collective actions and giving value to the capacity of the approach itself to promote well-being (Arcidiacono, 2009; Arcidiacono & Procentese, 2010).

In particular, the display and sharing of the content of visual materials has the main goal of opening up new communication channels between researchers, local actors, stakeholders and local authorities. This, in turn, leads to a shared dialogue and debate, which is key to the exchange of views and the search for possible solutions to local problems (Arcidiacono & Legewie, 2013; Procentese & Schophaus, 2013). Pictures are also used as a reflective tool for analysing both weak and strong points of the local context. They are in fact a useful instrument for developing awareness about individual and collective feelings and thoughts while discovering the researcher's positionality (Mitchell, 2008; Suffla, Seedat, & Bawa, 2015).

In our procedure, images (i.e. photographs, drawings, video clips) are not specifically participatory in their construction, but in their use: they are in our vision thoroughgoing codes of communication that facilitate the collective creation of spaces for sharing and reflecting on meanings (Procentese, 2006; Wang, 2006).

Employment of visual tools in the 'Psychology loves Porta Capuana' project

Aims

'Psychology loves Porta Capuana' is a project championed by the ILPC (I love Porta Capuana Project) committee together with the community psychology lab of the University of Naples Federico II. The project has brought together psychology researchers and undergraduate psychology students of the University of Naples Federico II who were called upon to be involved in their project of urban regeneration. The main goal of the study was the promotion of better life conditions in

an urban area where social and environmental degradation has a strong impact on individual and collective well-being.

The identification of local needs, which emerged from this research, was used by the I Love Portacapuana wider network as a support for lobbying and advocacy towards the local authorities, namely the town mayor, urban and tourism councillors, heads of trade and hotelier associations.

In this case, bodies, associations, academic researchers and laypersons were involved, whilst a number of visual methods helped participatory actions. In particular, as we shall see in the following pages, the use of such tools as Photovoice and participatory videos, along with Internet-based collaborative work groups, facilitated communication and dialogue between researchers, undergraduate psychologists, city users and the stakeholders of the community involved in the study (Arcidiacono, Tuozzi, & Procentese, 2016).

The local context

Porta Capuana is an area of the city of Naples, based in the South of Italy, surrounding the ancient gate that once separated the city from the countryside. This place – once a site of art and beauty – stands out today as a degraded and alienated area. However, in spite of these problems, this still remains a central city hub, given its close proximity to the central train station, the airport and the ancient inner city.

The 'I love Porta Capuana' project is independent and self-financed and has actively engaged local associations, corporations, firms, foundations and citizens to take collective action in order to promote the artistic, cultural and productive potential of the area.

Research phases and participants

The history. The ILPC committee is a network of 20 local groups formed by significant community stakeholders and key people of Porta Capuana that work together towards the betterment of the area. These associations are engaged in a variety of grassroots activities such as the establishment of a traditional craft centre, cultural entertainments, guided tours for the promotion of the artistic and culinary tradition of the area, anti-racket surveillance and the management of Christmas and festive street lighting. In December 2013, some associations hereafter forming ILPC invited the community psychology lab to deepen their knowledge about the needs and resources of the area of Porta Capuana. Within this aim, the Department of humanities, which hosts a community psychology lab, was invited to the constitution of the ILPC committee with the coordinator of the present research elected as president of the ILPC scientific committee. Moreover, a referent of PSI-COM (association of young psychologists compounded by some senior researcher collaborating to the research) was nominated onto the board of the ILPC.

Research participants. The ILPC committee acted as reference organization throughout this PAR. The ILPC board and all the organizations that adhered to it can be considered, by all means, co-researchers of this project. Indeed, they contributed towards setting the goals of the research, to the collection and use of the data, and were involved in all the actions of social engagement that followed on from the research outcomes. ILPC was also the principal channel of interaction with local people due to its trustful relationship with inhabitants, local stakeholders and 'grassroots' experts (i.e. the chemists, school teachers, police officers, parson, etc.).

In partnership with ILPC, 180 undergraduate psychology students, both males and females, were also actively engaged as part of their internship in this PAR. Our goal was to offer an active didactic that would allow them to acquire observational and interviewing skills while developing reflectivity and positionality. A team of 10 senior researchers in community psychology, involved in the activities of the community psychology lab of the University of Naples Federico II, oversaw the students' activity and their interaction with the local association, grassroots experts, and stakeholders.

Active didactic procedures. By capitalising on the web 2.0, we framed our research within the guidelines of the Knowledge Building Community (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 2003). During the first stage of the research, the undergraduate students were first assigned to five discussion subgroups. A senior psychologist was in charge of overseeing each group during both the plenary sessions and the thematic meetings whilst supporting every student in their internship and intervention in the area.

Subsequently, the designated groups were appointed to carry out a series of ethnographic observations and write up a number of related reports after shooting pictures around the area of Porta Capuana. The groups were then invited to share their thoughts and all the material they gathered via a private Facebook group page.

Subsequently, we singled out several small research teams from the main group. These teams were focalized on the various uses and experiences of the area that we intended to explore (i.e. traders, immigrants, institutional boards, tourists) through interviews. The research teams gathered information for profiling the themes according to the principles of community diagnosis (Francescato & Zani, 2013; Arcidiacono et al., 2016).

Research phases: actors, actions, and outcomes. Various actors took part in this PAR. Figure 1 summarizes the flowchart of activities during the preliminary phase of contacts and interactions and describes the kind of participants that were involved in each phase.

Figure 2 describes, through subsequent phases, both the outcomes of the research and their use in the regeneration of the local context. The results were discussed with local people and city users involved in the interviews. However, the

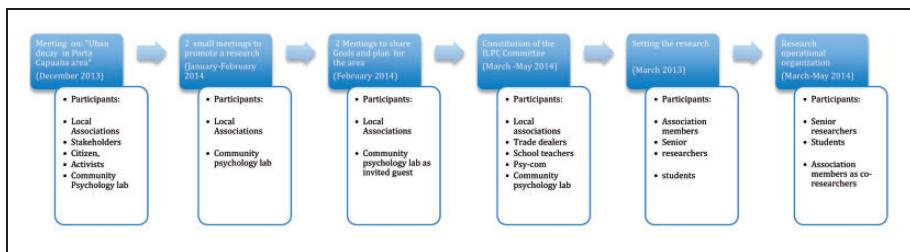


Figure 1. Phase 1: research set up.

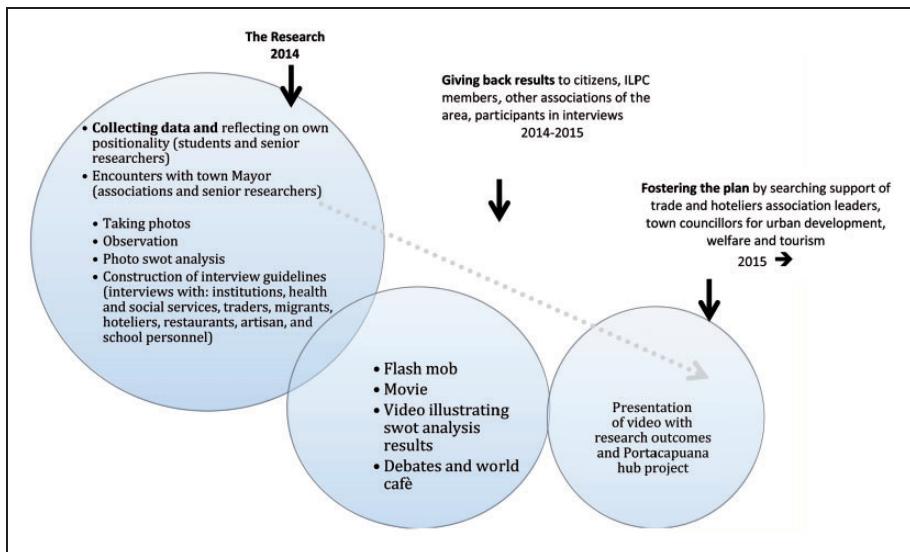


Figure 2. Phase 2: research activities, data dissemination and advocacy planning.

real partners of the research always remained the association members of the ILPC committee. In fact, we strived to work with community members that were actively committed to the betterment of Porta Capuana, although we also gave a voice to the residents, city users and key people through the interviews and the discussion of the results. In that sense, our participatory research was composed of two intertwined and overlapping procedures: (a) all decisions concerning the research were made after consultation with the associations working in the area to promote regeneration, which have, in fact, always been our problem-codefiners, supporters and research co-implementers (Bradbury, 2015) and (b) students collected data on behalf of local associations while developing their positionality in discussion and debates with senior researchers and participants of the ILPC associations.

Instruments and procedures

Observations and photographs were taken according to Francescato and Zani's (2013) approach to community profiling. The content of the photographs was discussed in student group meetings as a means of enhancing their capacity to conduct field research. Moreover, the students, in collaboration with the senior researchers' team and the ILPC board, had the task of drafting the guidelines for the interviews, which were developed through successive steps of re-discussion and changes in a synergic interaction. The interviews were then conducted based on the 'interactive structure' proposed by Richards and Morse (2007) and further developed by Arcidiacono (2012, 2016).

Finally, the content of the 360 interviews was analysed based on the grounded theory and by means of Atlas.ti software (for a detailed description see Arcidiacono, 2016). Regarding photovoice, students and senior researchers worked together to categorize the content of the photographs and subsequently re-discussed it with the ILPC members.

A thorough description of the results of the interviews and photographs would go beyond the scope of this article. What we would like to highlight here, is that the 'Psychology loves Porta Capuana' project made use of visual, multimedia and narrative tools mainly as a support for communication, knowledge and community building. This choice also turned out to be of use for gathering, merging and spreading the thoughts and feelings of all the actors involved in the process.

1. Visual observations and photos as sharing tools

To carry out this study, we combined the ethnographic observation of the context (Arcidiacono, 2009; Case, Todd, & Kral, 2014) with the use of video and photographic tools, as also suggested elsewhere (Pink, 2001). In particular, the undergraduate students were invited to observe the district during different periods of the day and collect a series of photographs. These images were discussed firstly during the student group meetings, and then shared via the private Facebook group page for the research team's use.

2. Video1: 3.54 mn knowledge building

After the pictures were collected, shared and discussed both online and in the face-to-face meetings, they were collated by two senior researchers in a video clip. The latter summarized the results of the observations whilst acting as a further means of data dissemination among local associations, citizens and authorities. Within the framework of the community diagnosis, the video clips depicted both the strong and weak points of the local district in a way that had already emerged from the thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) of the textual reports of the observations. The research team made the 3.4-minute video clip available online for public viewing at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tuotT3-VfaA>.

The tools hitherto described laid the groundwork for developing the guidelines for the interviews with local people.

3. Media and web dissemination of information as tools for participation and awareness raising

We launched a series of initiatives such as a flash mob as well as more traditional panel discussions – both formal and informal – with the aim of raising the awareness of local people and authorities about the needs and issues of Porta Capuana. Following the multimedia and online networking diffusion of information and the broadcasting of the video clips, several television and local radio reports were attracted by our initiatives. This acted as a further means of awareness raising.

4. Video2: 10.17 mn sharing acquired knowledge and promoting social action

The strong points of Porta Capuana that emerged from the interviews were included in a second video clip, which also broadly summarizes the whole experience of the 'I Love Porta Capuana' project. This video clip, which lasts for 10.17 minutes, was prepared by the same research team that created the previous video, and was coupled with the active participation of some local actors (the video is available online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f8zPpURenQA>). The video laid the groundwork for discussing the results of the interviews over several meetings with local stakeholders, city users, associations and authorities.

Acquirement

In this study, we decided to employ Photovoice (Wang, 2006; Wang & Burris, 1997), as a methodological starting point. The use of Photovoice hinges on a type of language, that is the one we acquire through images, which we use informally in everyday life. As a research tool, however, it relies on three theoretical assumptions: (a) sharing the visual content invites participants to detect new opportunities for the community, (b) it can raise awareness about the historical and social pitfalls of the area leading to social change and (c) it is able to empower vulnerable groups through conscientization, by giving value to and enhancing internal resources (Hesse-Biber & Yaiser, 2004).

In our case, Photovoice constituted a valuable aid for PAR in fostering researcher reflectivity and positionality. Indeed, through its support, students were able to talk about the pictures they took, thereby focusing on the resources of the community as well as on the obstacles that stand in the way of collective well-being. Moreover, the discussion groups between associations and researchers acted as a ground for confrontation about representation and resources of the community.

In this particular case, the photos were not shot by the members of the local community. We instead called upon the undergraduate students in psychology to accomplish the task by letting them take the stance of an outside observer and register the key issue of the district. We then shared the gathered information with the local associations and several community members. This gave them the opportunity to engage in a dialogue concerning the way in which their area is perceived from the outside.

Porta Capuana in the eye of the beholder

A total of 60 reports and 750 photos were uploaded to the Facebook group page. The joint use of photographs and written reports was a powerful facilitator of the online and in-group discussions.

The research team had the task of recording both the textual and photographic material. The selection of the pictures was based on their specific content and after considering the results of the online debates as well as those of the face-to-face group discussions. The selection criteria we adopted followed the guidelines of the SWOT analysis (Hill & Westbrook, 1997), that is to categorize contents on the basis of their power to reveal strengths and weaknesses as well as opportunities and threats of the context under study. The results of this process were then presented in an open session to association members, interviewees and local people.

Strengths. The list of strong points that emerged from the observations and interviews refer to the historical and cultural heritage of Porta Capuana. Indeed, this area offers a host of cultural assets and monuments – some of which contribute to enrich the UNESCO's World Heritage List. Moreover, there is the culinary heritage, which has always been the pride of the whole city of Naples for being a great touristic attraction. In addition, some businessmen have started up businesses such as retail shops, restaurants and other enterprises that have converted this area into a very interesting melting pot full of entrepreneurial potential. Indeed, the pictures of monuments, churches, and a considerable number of those showing the majestic Porta Capuana gateway are often followed by those of typical local products such as pizza and *sfogliatella*¹ as well as photos of Arab restaurants and ethnic grocery outlets that populate the district.

Weaknesses. Regrettably, these relevant strengths are overshadowed by the degradation that sweeps across the whole area of Porta Capuana. The 'shameless rubbish', as some students have decided to nickname it, spills from the refuse bins over the sidewalks, thereby forcing the pedestrians to walk down the streets and be exposed to darting moto-scooters and cars. The public gardens are off-limits to the children and local people, as they have been completely taken over by homeless and alcoholic people. The number of pictures testifying the extent of Porta Capuana's degradation is consistently high, so much as to form the majority of the whole visual impression that is gained. In particular, the images of littered rubbish and

cars parked on the pavements without permit are the most prominent, followed by pictures of uncountable bottles scattered around the public gardens along with graffiti drawn on the invaluable monuments.

Another critical issue is represented by the high degree of anarchy that dominates the whole area. Drug dealing and prostitution, even during daylight hours, appears to undermine the preciousness of Porta Capuana. The sense of insecurity that stems from all of this civic and moral degradation pushes people to flee from the place rather than to rise up in its defence. It is worth reporting that pictures showing street workers bargaining with passing car drivers were spontaneously offered to the research team by the people of Porta Capuana as a way of denouncing the illegality that dominates the district. In our view, this represents an extremely powerful example of the efficacy of visual methods in engaging people in their own betterment.

Conversely, it is also worth highlighting the existence of some events that the students have witnessed, yet not photographed. For instance, some students have reported, as proof of the degradation of the area, episodes in which they have seen people urinating next to the ancient monuments, with one even defecating by the famous Porta Capuana gateway in broad daylight. However, in spite of the strong impact that these pictures had on the observers, they preferred to neither take a picture nor mention the event in the written reports. This episode is worth reporting as an example of how personal ethical issues and social taboos might interfere with reporting events of a strange social context by weakening observational skills.

Opportunities. Despite the obvious presence of so many weak points, the research group has managed to put forth some well-thought proposals for the urban regeneration of Porta Capuana. These focus mainly on the revaluation of the area in terms of a touristic hub based on its strategic positioning. Porta Capuana is, in fact, placed between the central train station, the historical city centre, and the new line of the metro that connects the rest of the city. This advantage could contribute towards the restoration of the area as one of the main gateways to the city, as it used to be in the past. This notion is supported by a series of photographs that depict the to and fro of tourists that use the metro of Piazza Garibaldi square, which is located just off Porta Capuana.

In addition, the above-mentioned presence of ethnic businesses is thought to be a further opportunity for the area to build a multicultural identity. Opportunities for cultural integration are perceived to be of value for enhancing the local area and restoring the pride of the community. In that regard, there are several pictures of various ethnic retail shops, which have thus far been used mainly by the same compatriots as the managers. However, this is quickly changing, as appears to be evidenced by other images of local people entering these premises.

Threats. Nonetheless, this multi-ethnicity also obscures a threat. In particular, if this does not develop into a positive experience of cultural integration, it might constitute a further reason for the local people to disengage from the area. As more

and more natives leave the place, the risk of Porta Capuana turning into a degraded ghetto for the confinement of migrants looms very large. A series of photos of closed workshops testify the abandonment of some of the oldest business activities of the city, mainly craftsmanship, that have always brought fame to Porta Capuana over the years.

At this stage the researchers were, in fact, faced with an ethical dilemma, that is how to address in the report the description of the migrants given by the interviewees. In fact, the latter attributed the insecurity and degradation of the park surrounding the Porta Capuana gateway to their presence. However, from the discursive power analysis migrants emerged as scapegoats for all the problems of the area. On account of this, the research team reported the data by considering all various angles, but by placing value on the perspective of school teachers who viewed their presence as an added value for the area. A similar dilemma concerned the subtle presence of crime affecting the economics of the area. During the length of time we spent in Porta Capuana, some people were killed as a result of score settling between rival gangs. Two shopkeepers participating in the ILPC initiatives were also threatened: one had his shop hit by an arson attack, and the second was robbed. In this context, it appears clear why some interviewees refused to give their permission to use the information they provided for research purposes and, more generally speaking, crime-related issues were never explicitly addressed in the interviews. However, they were cautiously tabled during the ILPC board meetings and in the discussions with the senior researchers.

Giving voice to local people through the use of participatory videos

Participatory video is a term used to describe a variety of heterogeneous research practices that make of use of audio-visual techniques for fostering participation and social transformation (Plush, 2012; White, 2003). In general terms, we refer to participatory video as a set of interactive techniques whereby people utilize video clips as a tool to record personal ideas and thoughts as well as social and environmental issues related to their local community. In our case, participatory video has acted as an informative tool for the social research process. Participation is, thus, the key of our approach, in that the visual production was not an end in itself, rather, its final result was primarily associated with the shared, and hence participated engagement of the community with its organized bodies (associations) (Bery, 2003).

In this light, the main advantages brought about by videos is summarized in three points: (a) to generate grassroots knowledge in order to raise awareness that would in turn help to restore the balance of power in decision-making, (b) to build local capacity and on-going support for community members and stakeholders acting for the community interest and (c) to be a vital component leading to social transformation by supporting advocacy-oriented actions (Plush, 2012).

In order to share the results of the observations, we selected a number of photographs that formed the first 'explicatory' video clip. The aim of this video was to

share the observers' knowledge with the rest of the community. Furthermore, it served as a background for the realization of the guideline for the interviews with the local experts and stakeholders.

Over 360 members of the community were interviewed in this process. Even the choice of which part of the interview should have been included in the first video was made in consultation with some of the interviewees.

Based on the thematic content of the interviews, as well as the observations provided by the research team, we decided to construct a second video. This put together some of the photographs gained by the observations, with quotes of the interviews conducted with the members of the community. These records synthesized the collective representations of the area under study, the most recurring topics, and the expectations for the future of the district.

This second video represented a direct channel of communication for making the ILPC research team aware of the needs of the community. It also served the purpose of clearly exporting the results of the PAR outside of the local community.

The specific activities carried out by the students were part of the ILPC project. This eventually led to the 'Portacapuana hub' meeting to which the councillor for tourism and the councillor for urban development and heads of hotelier and trade associations were invited. The event was created not only to make authorities aware of the problems facing the area but to also ask for their support in the development of a town project for the touristic enhancement of the area by drawing on regional funds for urban regeneration.

Discussion

Our PAR was developed in a specific area, that is the district of Porta Capuana in the city of Naples. The true actors of this research were the network of associations committed to the ILPC's aims that is, the referents of public meetings, social actors, and town hall interlocutors. Senior researchers and several association members were engaged in circulating information and mediating between the various social actors involved in the process. The 180 undergraduate students took part in this project by collecting and contributing towards the analysis and dissemination of the data.

Strength and limitations of this research

In this study, the use of visual methods acted as a means of expression, which was combined with a specific approach – that is, the one of PAR – to analyse and share the multifaceted aspects of such a complex context as Porta Capuana.

By means of the two video clips described above, which were obtained by merging the visual data with the interviews, we strived to highlight the most salient aspects of the district just as they would present themselves to a casual outside visitor walking the streets of Porta Capuana.

In this way, our tools allowed us to combine the perception of the district through the eye of the outside beholder – that is, through the observations and pictures taken by the undergraduate students – with the community diagnosis that we carried out by means of the interviews with the grassroots experts city users and stakeholders (see Arcidiacono et al., 2016).

One of the most striking positive results of the audio-video method has been its communicative power that strengthens ILPC in its actions. By means of this method, local people and city users managed to recognize their perceptions, thoughts and shared views with regard to the most salient factors regarding their community's state of affairs.

The use of images turned out to be a privileged access to personal narrations even for the researchers. Moreover, the choice of using video as a research instrument was driven by the numerous advantages that it offers as a participatory tool. The recording phase, dubbing, and subtitling, along with the completion of the work as a whole helped to make sense of the project through the whole creative process and the discussion group meetings. The visual material is indeed a creative and accessible means that can easily be used without any specific support. When used for in-group activities, this instrument is likely to foster inclusive and collaborative dynamics (Shaw, 2007). Moreover, this has served as a very easy way of sharing the results of Photovoice and the interviews with the members of the community.

These visual tools have also helped us to communicate even seemingly complex aspects of the research to non-experts in a simple fashion. In this way, even those who were not familiar with the area were provided with the opportunity to see the reasons behind the necessity of undertaking an urgent intervention aimed at promoting well-being in that community. As a matter of fact, these videos have contributed towards opening a dialogue with the local authorities on possible interventions and further analysis of the area in question.

However, it could be also useful to note that visual methods constitute, after all, a complex series of research practices and instruments that need to be used consciously, while being aware of the implication they have for the whole research enterprise and, in turn, its impact on the community under scrutiny.

First and foremost, as Goldstein (2007) reminds us, to a more or less extent, '*all photos lie*' (p. 61). In a similar vein, Packard warns us about the limitations – given the subjective nature of the photographer – of visual methods when he points out that '*the act of seeing is inherently subjective*' (Packard, 2008, p. 12). In our case, this has emerged quite clearly with regard to those particular events that had a strong emotional impact on the observer, and yet (or perhaps exactly for this reason) they were not photographed.

In our case, we have striven to reduce this unwanted effect by creating a sort of triangulation between observation, discussion, and image collection. Indeed, during the whole research we connected the thematic classification of pictures with the contents of the latter, following the group discussion and the feedback of the local associations.

In spite of our efforts, we have still encountered resistance by some members of the community to being filmed, although they had previously allowed the researchers to videotape the interviews. This should invite us to reflect on the perceived power and influence of the recording tool in exposing the subject to the watchful eye of an unknown spectator. The subtle presence of criminal groups in the area was a further issue we had to face throughout the entire study, which has raised potentially useful thoughts for further debate and discussion. In particular, this research raises concerns with respect to which PAR procedures should be employed in contexts where criminal organizations are operating. What is meant, for instance, by citizen participation in these contexts? How do we deal with criminal groups and their interests? Does participation mean to include their voice or to interact with them for more inclusive measures? For now, we will leave the question of how to deal with social powers controlling the territory, as it is an issue that requires further investigation.

Furthermore, if we accept Chaplin's (1994) view that using visual methods is not simply a way to record or display data, but is instead a way to generate new knowledge and to tap into existing resources which would otherwise lie dormant, unexplored and unutilized, we should also bear in mind Packard's (2008) warning, namely, that this holds true only to the extent that visual methodologies are able to shift or transfer power in the research process.

In conclusion, it is not enough to adopt visual methods in conjunction with PAR to obtain a successful intervention. It is instead necessary to assume a far-reaching vision whilst taking into account, from the outset of the intervention, the kind of resources available and the potential to exploit them to maximum effect, along with researcher expertise in terms of executing the whole process.

Final remarks

This research forms part of a wider regeneration product focused on the area of Porta Capuana. Its outcomes lie in the raised critical awareness among students as well as the enhancement and strengthening of the actions of the ILPC. In terms of psycho-political validity (Prilleltensky, Prilleltensky, & Voorhees, 2009, p. 358) this research has acted as a tool for drawing attention to the needs of a neglected area by prompting the mayor of the city and councillors to take action towards its betterment. In fact, in parallel with the ongoing interview coding and report drafting, the ILPC pressured the municipality to collect the rubbish from the area more frequently, with one association in particular responding to calls for a cleaner territory by initiating a project known as 'artistic waste bin'. This was in fact one of the issues highly stressed by interviewees. Furthermore, a little while after the flash mob took place, the ILPC committee was successful in its request for the municipality to ban a market of goods managed by local criminal groups from the area of Porta Capuana. Towards the conclusion of the research, the ILPC drafted a project for the regeneration of the area based on its logistic potentialities and touristic resources, which were stressed by the voices of the interviewees.

As described at the end of Figure 2 an official meeting called Portacapuana Hub was hosted approximately 1 year after the beginning of the project in a highly respected university venue. The event presented the research results and the regeneration project to the councillor for tourism and the councillor for urban development as well as the heads of trade and hoteliers institutional organizations.

This project had various beneficiaries: (a) the students that experienced an opportunity to be trained in field work, (b) the local co-researchers, namely the members of local associations working for urban regeneration and the various stakeholders that acquired new knowledge about the different visions and projects geared towards the area and (c) local people and city users that will benefit from the results of future actions.

All the various interactions between these actors made it essential to share the content of the community analysis and the outcomes of the discussions for the set-up of future interventions in the area.

In this regard, the use of Internet-based collaborative work groups made the whole visual production the end result of a choral collaborative project, which involved the students first-hand and then co-researchers, stakeholders and local authorities. Likewise, the shared and negotiated selection of images and themes emerged from a process of collective knowledge building. The exploration through images allowed each observer to be involved in an active reflective process with regard to his/her role in the context of analysis. This has helped to unveil the existence of resources and potential both in researchers, co-researchers and in the local context.

In addition to this, the images are also a valuable source of support for the local community in raising awareness and spreading the project of urban regeneration. This result can be achieved mainly by means of the power of visual material in bringing the necessities of the local people outside the community to the attention of local authorities and decision makers. This holds particularly true in our case.

The second video clip (available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f8zPpURenQA>) was shared with the Municipality of the city of Naples via the association websites (the video clip is available here), meetings with associations, citizens and local institutions, and finally at the Portacapuana Hub meeting. This wide dissemination engendered a fruitful dialogue with local policy makers, and also led to collaboration with the urban planning office on the European Developmental project of the City of Naples (URBACT II–USEACT Project). Therefore, the use of these tools has reached the local decision-making summit and prompted them to take action in favour of Porta Capuana. In fact, the broadcasting of the video has driven the mayor of the city of Naples and the whole council committee to take action on behalf of a deprived area that they consider to be of great historical, cultural and social value.

In conclusion, the capacity of Photovoice, participatory video and multimedia platforms (in the framework of PAR) to bring out needs, capabilities and goals of the community has proved effective in strengthening the ILPC actions aimed at the regeneration of Porta Capuana.

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Note

1. *Sfogliatella* is the famous Neapolitan shell-shaped flaky pastry filled with custard cream.

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