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## Visual Problem Appraisal. Using Filmed Narratives for Learning and Mediated Participation

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### Abstract

The film-based learning strategy of Visual Problem Appraisal (VPA), which is used to enhance the analysis of complex issues and facilitate a plan of action. It is used in workshops dealing with problem analysis and policy design, and involves the participants ‘meeting’ stakeholders through the latter’s filmed narratives. Workshop participants consult stakeholders through watching them on films. A VPA set consists of a series of filmed interviews (between 20 and 30) complemented with two documentaries. These films provide particular perspectives on the contextual reality of the stakeholders. Within a set workshop format of ‘scoping’, ‘stakeholder consultation’ and ‘action’, the participants ‘interview’ the stakeholders, which gives them a chance to explore the complex and conflictive arena of the issue at stake. The participants soon come to realise that stakeholder consultation is not about finding out one final truth, but about experiencing personal versions and diverse framings of reality. Stakeholders who interviewed and filmed in the VPA production articulate their motives to document their life story and allow exposure by a wider audience as willingness to communicate and share their experiences and views. A major motive is described as mediated participation. Interviewees realise that their filmed narratives may provide access to policy-making processes they are otherwise excluded from.

The first VPA set, ‘Rice from the Guyana’s’ (Witteveen, 2007; reprinted from 1996) focused on international agribusiness and rural development issues in the Guyana’s. A second VPA set, ‘Kerala’s coast’ (Witteveen, 2003), was produced in Kerala, India and focused on integrated coastal zone management. A third VPA set, filmed in Ghana, Tanzania and Zambia, focused on HIV/AIDS and rural development in Sub-Saharan Africa (Witteveen, Lie and Thachapuzha, 2008) and a fourth set on rural livelihoods in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa will be released in 2012.

**Keywords:** Filmed narratives, learning, mediated participation, social change, visual problem appraisal