Unit 27

Participatory video in inventorying

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Lesson Plan

Duration:

3 hours

Objective(s):

Develop an understanding of participatory video, including the reasons for it, different methods, ethical considerations and potential uses. Gain confidence in operating a video camera using the basic functions to record a short participatory video.

Description:

This unit introduces participatory video as a method of information generation for community-based inventorying. It provides participants with a brief introduction to handling a video camera, and an overview of the concept of participatory video. Participants will learn how to use video to tell a story and two methods (short video films – stories and ongoing video recording) they can use to create participatory videos. This unit also reviews the principles and ethics of participatory video practice and covers uses of participatory video for intangible cultural heritage.

*Proposed sequence:*

* Video recording for ICH
* Basic video skills and tips
* What is participatory video?
* How to tell a story with participatory video
* Methods of participatory video
* Ethics and editing
* Uses of participatory video
* Exercise 1. Learning to operate a video camera
* Exercise 2. Creating a participatory video

Supporting documents:

* PowerPoint presentation Unit 27
* Unit 27 Hand-out
* Benest, G. 2011. A Rights-Based Approach to Participatory Video: Toolkit. Insightshare.
* CTA/IFAD. 2010. Training Kit on Participatory Spatial Information Management and Communication (Module 14, Unit 5). CTA/IFAD.
* Lunch, N. and Lunch, C. 2006. Insights into Participatory Video ([www.insightshare.org](http://www.insightshare.org)).
* Milne, E-J., Mitchell, C. and de Lange, N. 2012. Handbook of Participatory Video. AltaMira Press.
* Robertson, C. and Shaw, J. 1997. Participatory Video: A Practical Approach to Using Video Creatively in Group Developmental Work. Routledge.
* Snowden, D. 1984. Eyes See, Ears Hear
(http://www.fao.org/docrep/x0295e/x0295e06.htm)
* White, S. 2003. Participatory Video: Images that transform and Empower. Sage.

Notes and suggestions

Participatory video is widely used in development and urban research, and gender studies and so forth. It encourages a bottom-up approach typically by giving a voice to marginalized communities or sections of communities. Although this approach has clear benefits, the mechanics of creating participatory video projects can be problematic, especially with regard to involving a community in projects, and the role of NGOs and cultural workers. Access to equipment and technical training also tends to become ‘top down’. It is important to remember that participatory video should emphasize not only community involvement, but should also treat community members as experts and authorities on their ICH. Other participants should act as co-facilitators allowing community representatives to take the lead.

Unit 27

Participatory video

Facilitator’s narrative

###### SLIDE 1.

Participatory video

Participatory video involves community members not as partners, but as the principal actors of the exercise.

###### SLIDE 2.

In this presentation …

###### SLIDE 3.

Video recording for ICH

Video is a very useful and powerful medium for the inventorying of ICH. Most forms of ICH involve movement, performance, process and activity. As such, video recording is ideal for creating audiovisual documents. The changing nature and variation of ICH elements also makes video a suitable medium.

The cost of video cameras today and the widespread availability of video on cameras and mobile phones make it an accessible and affordable form of technology. It should be borne in mind, however, that video equipment is not cheap and accessible to all. The cost has only lowered in comparison to earlier prices.

###### SLIDE 4.

Basic video skills

Participants need to learn the basics of video camera operation. It is useful to have a tripod as moving with a handheld video camera takes more practice.

Participants should learn when it is most useful to use close-ups and long shots. They should also familiarize themselves with zooming and panning.

Panning

Panning refers to the rotation of a [still camera](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Still_camera) or video camera on a horizontal plane. Panning a camera results in a motion similar to that of someone shaking their head from side to side. [Film-making](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Filmmaking) and [professional video cameras](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Professional_video_camera) pan by turning horizontally on a vertical axis. The effect may be enhanced by adding other techniques, such as the use of rails to move the whole camera platform. Slow panning is also combined with zooming in or out on a single subject, leaving the subject in the same portion of the frame, to emphasize or de-emphasize the subject respectively.

Understanding such terms and techniques helps to plan the sequence of shots and enables participants to break down a script in these terms.

###### SLIDE 5.

Documentation video tips

This slide provides a few basic tips for planning and making videos as part of inventorying ICH. It highlights the need to provide context through the incorporation of background shots and interviews.

###### SLIDE 6.

What is participatory video?

Participatory video is a set of techniques designed to involve a group or community in shaping and creating its own film. The underlying concept is that the ease and accessibility of making videos renders it ideal for uniting a community for the purposes of inventorying an ICH element. The process allows communities to take a leading role in inventorying. It can also be an effective tool for engaging and mobilizing communities and/or individuals that might otherwise be marginalized and helps them contribute to inventorying ICH elements. The process involves the following steps:

* Short videos and messages are directed and filmed by the participants.
* Footage is shown to the wider community at screenings. In [film](http://www.answers.com/topic/film) and [video](http://www.answers.com/topic/video), footage is the raw, unedited material as originally filmed. This helps people observe themselves and decide what elements are missing, what needs to be improved, and what needs to be included or excluded. It also gets more people involved. This process of learning, improving and valuing one’s ICH element is central to participatory video.
* A dynamic process of community-led learning, sharing and exchange is set in motion. This process of filming, screening back and discussing issues lends itself to one of the main objectives of the Convention, which is safeguarding or ensuring the ‘viability’ of ICH through measures that enable its continued enactment, development and transmission, providing groups with a sense of identity and continuity.

###### SLIDE 7.

Participatory video: other terms and related concepts

Participatory video is a term used for community-based video projects. However, other similar terms and concepts are also used, including participatory film-making, community media and so on. The use of participatory video and film-making has evolved over the last decade from initial usage as a tool for activism and bottom-up research methodology to documentaries and even advertising films.

###### SLIDE 8.

How to tell a story

Community video commonly consists of small films made by community members with scenarios dealing with issues concerning their community (in this case ICH related issues or elements). When performing this as an exercise, the group must first reach a consensus about certain key issues. The film should have a simple structure (i.e. a beginning, middle and end), but the perspective of the film may vary (e.g. single or multiple perspectives, inclusion of a narrator, etc.). Once the basic script is in place, the group should plan a series of scenes including the type of shot to be used for each frame.

###### SLIDE 9.

Participatory video: storyboards

Storyboards are a common method of planning a sequence of shots to create a short story. They do not have to be drawn well, but each frame should convey what is meant to happen. It is a tool that makes it easy to visualize how the video will be shot and what is needed in preparation. It also enables a group to work together contributing frame by frame. Storyboarding is also useful for visualization and makes few demands on conventional literacy. As video is a visual medium it adapts well to this approach. However, it is useful to include sounds and voices into the storyboard.

###### SLIDE 10.

Methods of participatory video

This slide introduces two possible approaches to participatory video-making. A common approach for participatory videos is to create small stories. Another very different approach is to provide a camera to a few members of a community to record everyday life and events as they occur.

###### SLIDE 11.

Methods of participatory video: a comparison

This slide compares the two approaches.

There are advantages to creating small stories, as they offer a means of introducing themes and issues that members of a community may want to emphasize. At times this may even be the only way for marginalized people to have their voices heard. This kind of video has a specifically created structure, perhaps imposed by community members, offering interpretations as to what the ICH may mean. It can provide interesting insights into how a community sees its ICH.

An alternative approach is to provide cameras to a community to record its life and its ICH in its context within the community. This approach allows people to record their everyday lives and occurrences. This is very useful for inventorying as events concerning ICH occur as part of daily lives, as well as special festivals, performances and so on. The community members are able to record ICH in context as it takes place and learn from the experience. Many interesting projects are based on this method. The approach also seems appropriate for a community-based inventory. The community members can decide what they want to record and how to use it – whether for preservation, transmission or raising awareness within or outside the community.

Community members can also use this opportunity to record change, evaluate their project and exercise control more than through a small workshop or project.

The facilitator may wish to open up this discussion, asking participants to think of various models and methodologies of participatory video.

###### SLIDE 12.

Ethics, editing and rights

Ethics

Ethics come into play at many points during the creation of a participatory video. Often ethical issues are thought of as applicable only to outsiders to a community. However, it is necessary for members to also keep issues of ethics in mind, even as they work within their own community.

There is a need to share the purpose of the activity, introduce the idea of inventorying ICH at a more general level, and have an open discussion before embarking on such a project or process.

Permissions should be sought of all those appearing in the video, and it is a good idea to have the permissions on record.

An attempt should be made to include as many points of view as possible, as the video is meant to represent the community. It should be kept in mind that the Convention accepts and welcomes variation on the basis that practise of ICH is not limited to any one form.

At times, dealing with a ‘modern’ technology, such as handling a camera, puts people in a different space where traditional norms of respect or ways of interacting within a community can be overlooked. Participants should be aware of this issue and aim to address it.

The entry of technology into a community normally involves a funding agency, an NGO or even a local member. It is important to avoid the perception that the voices of those closest to the agency are being privileged or that the opinion of the person holding the camera is being imposed. Participatory video is meant to be an inclusive tool.

It is also important to discuss how the resulting video will be used: whether it will be uploaded to the internet, broadcast or shown publicly. Many people may not object to their everyday lives being filmed when they are part of the project, but may not want the material to be shown publicly.

Finally, it is critical that all participants and the community as a whole are thanked and their contributions acknowledged.

Editing

The issue of ethics in editing comes up often in discussions on participatory video. There are several reasons for this:

* A skilled editor may come from outside the community. As such, they may not be familiar with the ICH and its related traditions and may not value the elements to the same extent as community members.
* Collective editing is hard to achieve. A camera may be passed hand-to-hand to ensure multiple points of view, but editing cannot be achieved in this way. As such, it involves a lot of discussion and consensus.
* Editing brings with it the desire to create a ‘product’ and has the concept of authorship attached to it. Whether such a decision is taken as a group or the community decides to choose one or more persons to make these decisions is a key issue to be addressed.

A community screening is organized at the end of the project to gather inputs. A preview screening of a ‘rough edit’ could also be organized during the editing process to gather input and feedback towards production of a final edit.

Copyright and communal rights

A video based on a story or edited from events becomes a product or a document. It is useful only if it can be viewed by members of the community who may or may not be in the same location, or by outsiders – whether the government, cultural workers or researchers. In such cases, issues of copyright have to be addressed. Many countries do not have a system for granting copyright to a community. In its place, the copyright could be granted to an organization such as a collective or a committee. Various options can be explored in this regard, such as a Creative Commons license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/?lang=en).

Note to the facilitator

Depending on time constraints, for slide 11 and slide 12 the facilitator may wish to distribute or discuss some or all of the Hand-out: Ethics, editing and the ethics of editing.

###### SLIDE 13.

Why use participatory video for ICH?

Participatory video can be a powerful means of collecting ICH elements from the community’s own perspective. It celebrates local knowledge and practice, while stimulating creativity within and beyond the community.

All community members are meant to have equal access to the process. All voices should be expressed and heard. The video medium is transportable, easily replicated and easily shared. It also gives a voice and a face to those who may not normally be heard or seen. However, this is not always easy to accomplish.

Participatory video for community-based inventorying is based on the idea of collecting ICH elements from the community’s perspective, using their own resources, strategies and values. It also serves as a means for the community to reflect on the dynamic nature of their ICH element and to creatively exchange ideas. It stimulates community members to visualize their ICH and to consider together how to best inventory. This process has the potential to strengthen links among community members and to help them develop consensus.

Visual literacy

In many remote regions of the world where literacy levels are low, visual collection of ICH elements through participatory video provides material in a form that is easily understood. It also allows community members to use video to monitor and evaluate inventorying projects.

Collection of ICH elements

Participatory video is particularly useful in giving marginalized groups within the community (e.g. women and youth) as well as marginalized communities (e.g. pastoralists) a way to collect and present ICH elements using their own words and images.

###### SLIDE 14.

Case study: Na Modesta (Mexico)

This case study[[1]](#footnote-1) is based on a project by a Zapotec media collective in Ranchu Gubiña, Mexico, called the Grupo Libre e Independiente Binni Cubi (GLIBC). The main agenda of this group is to strengthen Binniza culture. Their idea was not only to appreciate the ancestral past, but also ‘to secure the future of our Binniza practices for future generations in the same way our elders and ancestors had done before us’. During a film screening in the community, an elder named Modesta Vicente, known locally as Na Modesta approached the GLIBC members to ask if they could make a film about her well-known dish Gueta Biza (Black Bean Tamale). She wanted to preserve this Zapotec recipe for future generations of the community. This request matched the plans of the collective as they were planning to collect traditional community recipes for future generations because such food ‘nourishes both physically and culturally’. The film would not only document the tradition, but also provide a platform for related issues.

The collective group spent time with Na Modesta to understand the process of making Gueta Biza. They also acquired basic camera skills and raised funding for the project. When filming started, various members took turns with the camera, and all took on various roles to assist the project. Na Modesta also insisted that they learn the words and understand the processes of preparation. In this way, the group not only made a video but also learned about their own traditions.

As can be expected, the editing of such a project was problematic. However, the group arrived at collective decisions following repeated viewings of footage and discussions with Na Modesta. At some points, the group resorted to voting when there was a difference of opinion. The final product was a 10-minute biopic of Na Modesta, which shows her making the dish and follows her as she sells it in the community. The film also includes a brief personal history and explains how she learnt to make the dish.

The GLIBC also had to promote this work within the community, referring to their own ancestors and family names to give themselves the credibility. Once people understood the project they began to offer details about other community elders who still practised forms of Zapotec culture, such as embroidery and sandal-making.

The final screening at Ranchu Gubiña was publicized and well attended. Many community members offered suggestions and the success of this project encouraged the GLIBC to create a media centre for youth in Ranchu Gubiña, where they can learn to use audiovisual and social media. The centre will create material to inform the community and for curricula and archival purposes for future generations.

The facilitator may wish to raise the following question as the basis for discussion.

Why is this case study important?

* It is a participatory video the impetus for which came from within the community.
* It was funded, scripted and shot entirely within the community.
* It is not an isolated event.
* The making of this participatory video led to the documentation of related culture and ICH within the community, leading to the development of a media centre, which is intended to create materials for awareness raising, curricula and archival use.

If the facilitator so wishes, the film may be streamed from YouTube at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=TFlCQglD1TM.

###### SLIDE 15.

Participatory video and ICH inventorying: questions?

The concluding slide raises some issues for discussion, which the facilitator can add to. The major issue is how such videos can be used as part of inventorying, and how they can form the basis for safeguarding ICH.

* Completed films can be used to promote awareness of an ICH element and perpetuate the ICH of the community.
* Furthermore, the process and the products (i.e. the short films) can provide stakeholders and formal researchers with greater insight into the dynamics of ICH elements.

There are also issues concerning ownership of audiovisual media created in a community. Finally, the role of facilitators and the community within the context of the workshop needs discussion.

Exercises

The two exercises below are drawn from the experiences of inventorying workshops carried out under the global capacity-building strategy, and are for the facilitator to build on.[[2]](#footnote-2) The time allotted for each exercise is best decided by the facilitator.

***Exercise 1: Learning to operate a video camera***

Participants can break into groups and work with a video technician or participants familiar with video cameras to learn to operate their basic functions. They will then use the cameras for the following exercise.

***Exercise 2: Creating a participatory video***

The objective is for the participants to divide into groups, the size of which can be determined by the number and availability of cameras. Each group should have one or more community representatives to lead the discussion. Each group prepares a scenario for one ICH element of the community. Community members represent the primary resource and will create the scenario. If the community participants include practitioners, they can be the subject of the film. Participants can create a story or scenario, describe an element through interviews and practice, or choose any approach they wish.

Participants can be given the choice of creating a storyboard or may list the scenes in the form of a planning. This should also include the kind of shots to be used (e.g. close-ups, long shot, etc.).

If there is a shortage of cameras, the camera can pass from group to group. If the planning is detailed, the shooting should not take too long and be possible to achieve within the timeframe of the exercise.

As this exercise does not involve editing, careful planning of shots is necessary. The participants then screen all videos and provide inputs.

1. . This case study is taken from J. Schwab-Cartas. 2012. ‘Learning from communities: Personal reflections from inside’. In E-J Milne, C. Mitchell and N. de Lange (eds) Handbook of Participatory Video. AltaMira Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. . This material is drawn from the CTA/IFAD Training Kit on Participatory Spatial Information Management and Communication ([www.insightshare.org](http://www.insightshare.org)). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)