Introduction to Participatory Video for Social action

This introductory course explores how participatory video exercises can be used with groups in non formal educational settings to explore ideas and collaborate creatively. It focuses on how to start discussions with participants to spark ideas and share experiences.

It provides insights into a range of collaborative video production techniques such as chat shows, interviews and making short films using in camera editing techniques. It also explains the ways participatory video is used to build group cohesion and co-operative working, with explanations on how to take turns using the equipment.

There are a variety of exercises that can be used depending on the nature and experience of the groups worked with. There are also worksheets that can be used with groups to encourage storytelling (e.g the 5W's and image prompt).

It builds into a series of tools that can then be used to make a short video in a day about a particular theme. It also includes simple information relating to video composition that can help with the process.

The approach used is based on Real Times participatory video approach, which has been used extensively for more than 30 years in non-formal educational settings. Real Time's approach uses group-based games and exercises to promote participatory learning and collaborative production methodologies. Participatory video is a key tool for individual and group growth, and it can be a powerful aid in the development and realisation of people's abilities and potential. Moreover, as it's a group-based activity, it uses practical approaches to explore and express participants' needs, stories and values. Additionally, participatory video can be used to develop participants confidence and self-esteem, by encouraging them to express themselves creatively, develop critical awareness and by providing a means for them to communicate with others.

Video and Virtual Reality for successful youth participation in democratic life

Introduction to Participatory Video for Social Action
LTT-C2 Video Production
Reading 27-30 June 2022

Course aims

- Explore different ways of using video to engage young people in democratic life.
- Provide practical opportunities to develop participatory video (PV) skills and non-formal educational approaches, to develop young people's competences with reference to democratic issues.
- Understand how video can be used to communicate effective messages.

The course has 3 parts

1. Introduction to the methodology of PV
2. How to use participatory methods to explore themes
3. How to make a simple video in a short time using PV

'Participatory Video (PV) is an interactive group process, mediated by video recording and playback activities. The early stages involve participants videoing themselves and the world around them, watching these recordings together (playback), and then reflecting on what was said or shown. Later, group members create their own 'films' (e.g., video stories, messages or vignettes) for different audiences depending on the context and specific project purpose.'
Shaw, J. (2021).

Introductory PV exercises

Exercises with a '*****' are taken from:
Shaw J and C Robertson (1997) Participatory Video: A practical guide to using video creatively in group development work, London, Routledge.
Exercises with a '******' have a worksheet which can be downloaded from:
https://www.real-time.org.uk/2vip

ACTIVITY

The Name Game*

The room should be laid out before participants arrive to ensure they sit in a semi-circle.

The person seated at one end of the row of chairs holds the hand microphone and the camera operator lines up a mid shot of this person. The tripod should be left loose so it can follow along the line (pan).

Begin recording, the first person says their name and something about themselves, e.g. "My name's Anne and I'm wearing jeans". They pass the microphone on.

The camera follows to the next person who says their name, something about themselves, as well as stating what the first person said.
Repeat along the line: everyone introduces themselves and repeats what everyone has said. It's OK to assist people in remembering what was said before.

Workers should also take part.

Watch it all back.

These introductory elements provide specific tasks and clear structure, making it easier to speak on camera (particularly for those that haven't seen themselves or don't like the experience) - the memory game elements help distract everyone from the camera's presence. It's important after this first game to talk about how people felt seeing themselves. Maybe ask "Who likes the experience?", typically most people don't like watching themselves or listening to their voices.

ACTIVITY

Questions in a Row*

Taking turns is a key part of participatory video methodology. Everyone will undertake all tasks, therefore everyone in the group must be prepared to appear on camera. If they refuse to appear on camera they cannot take part in the exercise. This should be made clear before the work starts. (Workers and other people present should also take part and appear on camera).

The worker should have practiced with the equipment before the start. Check playback is working, particularly the sound.

In a row:

Ask all participants to think of a question.
A new camera operator sets up a '2 shot' to see 'interviewer and interviewee'.
Start recording.
Person 1 asks the question, person 2 answers.
Person 2 asks person 3, person 3 answers, and so on.
The last person asks the worker a question.
Watch back.
Discuss information that was learned (by now everyone including both workers will have seen themselves).

Formulating questions is an essential communication skill but it's something a lot of people find difficult. Questioning is an important part of video work. Learning how to question is fundamental to a participatory methodology. Depending on the group, it is good to introduce the concepts of 'open' and 'closed' questions. Closed questions being those that only illicit a one word answer (e.g. "Do you like chocolate?"). Questions are used in video to discover information so open questions should always be used (e.g. "Tell me why you like chocolate?", "tell me about your favourite animals?").

ACTIVITY

The Edit Game*

The Edit Game the introduces in-camera editing effect.

Sit the group in a line.
Make sure everyone can be seen in the camera, lock the camera so it can't move.
Record 5 seconds, then get one person to leave the shot.
Record another 5 seconds and so on, until everyone has disappeared.

Tip: You can use the same technique in other ways, e.g. hat moving from one person to next, try to keep to one change per shot for best effect.

PV ground rules

- Participants operate the equipment themselves
- Everyone at the session appears on video
- Participants take turns at all roles
- All video recorded is played back
- Other people must not be videoed without permission
- Video recorded in the session is confidential

Participatory Video by Jackie Shaw and Clive Robertson. Routledge 1997 (Page 46)

🎥   Participatory video workshop basics
        https://videoineducation.eu/participatory-video/

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Setting up Kits

In groups of no more than 5, set up the equipment: make sure everyone takes turns with everything: camera, sound, etc. Everyone should individually check the equipment by doing a test recording and playback. It's good to make sure all the groups are using the same equipment if possible. It's also useful to use equipment that has a microphone input and audio monitoring (i.e., you can listen to the sound on headphones).

Using PV to introduce ideas and themes

It is useful at this stage to investigate how video can be used in social action.

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World Café

A world café approach can help to formulate ideas around themes. A chat show (see below) can use video to delve deeper into specific issues.

The World Café is a method for improving large-group discussion by borrowing concepts from the informal 'café' conversations that we have all the time: round tables, cross pollinating ideas, and pursuing questions that matter. As a conversational process, the World Café may take on many forms.
https://gamestorming.com/world-cafe/

World Café

ACTIVITY

Chat Show*

The technical roles for the chat show activity introduce more what making a video would be like. The essential roles are as follows:

Chat show technical crew: Group of 3
Camera operator - carries the camera to next shot, sets it up and records shot.
Sound recordist - sets audio levels, monitors sound with headphones.
Floor manager - coordinates the action in front following directors instructions, acts as communication between crew and presenters, counts in to start filming when everyone is ready.
(If a group of 4) Add:
Sound assistant - holds directional microphone (with boom) or helps wire up the presenters with the clip microphone.

It's useful to create a black frame (by recording 3 or 4 seconds with the lens cap at both the beginning and end of the film), this helps create the sense of a completed film on playback.

- Split into groups of 3 or 4 people
- Each group thinks of a topic (e.g. food)
- Then plan 3 questions
- Sit group together
- The other group do the production roles: camera, sound etc.
- Swap until all groups have recorded their chat show
- Watch it all back

Not everyone will have used the camera, it can be useful to do a quick exercise to ensure that everyone has used the equipment. Get everyone to think of a statement to make to camera on a particular subject, taking turns to use the equipment to record it. Play all the statements back.

When viewing the chat shows back, be careful not to make comparisons between the shows, instead invite discussion about the format, "Was it easy to think of a topic?". This exercise can be used to introduce thematic discussions later on but is really suitable for inclusion in a finished video. It should be used as a way of investigating themes.

Getting started making simple
video sequences using in-camera editing

What is in-camera editing?

In-camera editing is a technique where, instead of editing the shots, in a film, into a sequence after shooting, the shots are recorded in order. The resulting 'edit' is therefore already complete and can be played back immediately.
This is particularly useful in group work, as participants can see and critique their work immediately and learn from, and improve it.
It also means the final film is a collaborative result as often editing is undertaken by one person rather than as a group process.

ACTIVITY

In-Camera Edited Statements*

This is an opportunity to start planning around themes.

Decide on or suggest a theme, it could be related to the project, e.g. 'engagement in democracy'.
Everyone thinks of a statement to make about the subject.
It can be written down if they want.
Camera starts recording.
Each person speaks to the camera, then the camera is switched off.
Find a new location and new person.
Carried on until everyone has been in front of the camera and done all the roles (camera, sound etc.).
Play it all back.
Discuss.

Taking turns on location**

Taking turns is an essential part of the Participatory Video approach.
Using this simple diagram can help participants get the idea of swapping roles around.

Swapping around makes sure everyone experiences practically all the things that need to take place to successfully record a scene.

The worksheet below is for a group of 8.

Roles can easily be combined to reduce this number e.g.,

- For a group of 6, combine 'location manager/continuity', and 'sound/sound recordist' roles.

- For a group of 4, combine 'director/location manager/continuity', 'sound/sound recordist' roles and dispense with the '2nd camera'.

· For larger groups, 2 people can share some of the roles or extra roles can be created like 'runner' (to get equipment ready, charge batteries get props) or 'location security' (to keep onlookers out of shot, check for problems such as traffic) also if you have a reflector or similar, then a person can do 'lighting'.
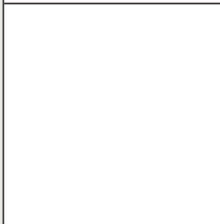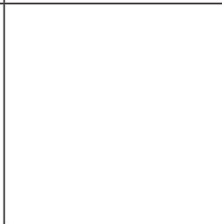
Taking turns on location

Sound
Holds boom or gives
the presenter the mic

Presenter

Camera

Continuity
Checks everyone swaps roles

The Crew
Take turns at all
production roles

Director
Counts '3,2,1'

Location Manager
Organises crew, calls for
'Quiet on set'

2nd Camera
Captures behind
the scenes footage

Sound recordist
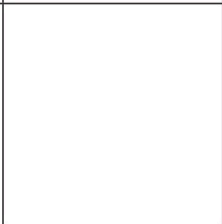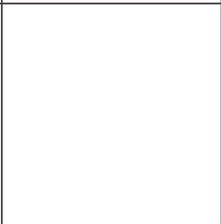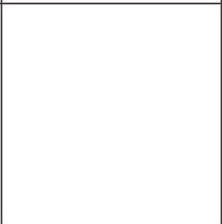Monitors sound levels

real-time.org.uk

Creating sequences

When creating videos it is useful to start small, creating a series of visuals that link together to form a sequence.

To introduce this, some simple exercises can help people understand.

ACTIVITY

How to Make a Cup of Tea**

Creating Sequences

To get people thinking of combining visuals by storyboarding short sequences.
Draw a 5-shot sequence (no words, only pictures). Explain to someone: 'How to make a cup of tea'

1. Beginning	2.	3.	4.	5. End

Now participants are starting to think visually, it's useful to introduce some composition concepts.
What is each shot used for?
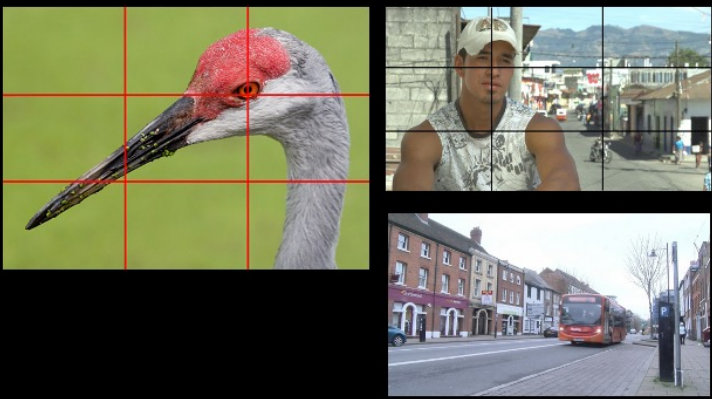
What's the hardest to get using a camera…
Rule of thirds.
Looking space.

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Image Sequence

Record a 5 (or more, if more than 5 participants in the group) shot sequence made up of:
1 long shot, 1 medium shot and 3 close ups.

Tip: Record more close ups - they will me more useful in an edit

Developing projects and collaborative production

For Participatory Video to have meaningful impact on social issues it needs to move beyond short term production-led projects. Increasingly, the importance is seen of ensuring that participants voices are heard and more importantly listened to and acted upon. Projects like StoryAp provide the framework for longer lasting engagement with on-going horizontal (peer-to-peer) and vertical communication (to decision-makers and influencers of policy). It also provides a way for people to share and learn, reflecting on what has gone before and building on it.
This way of working can be described as an extended PV approach which was developed to better mitigate the associated risks and is more effective due to the iterative spirals of videoing, reflecting and taking new actions over time. For example, to navigate the ethical risk of inappropriate exposure, the first two stages clearly separate videoing in safe spaces, to establish inclusive dynamics and generate internally-focused research discussion, from video's later uses to mediate external communication (Shaw 2020).

https://www.makingallvoicescount.org/publication/pathways-accountability-margins-reflections-participatory-video-practice/

Table 1 Framing the relational conditions for accountability through video processes

Basic PV process	Enabling spaces	Bonding and bridging communication	Power-shifting processes
Group-forming and building	Opening and enabling safe space to rehearse expression backstage	Progressive cycles of short video recording and playback exercises with turn-taking	**Power within –** building self-esteem, self-confidence and sense of 'can do' (self-efficacy)
Group exploration and reflection toward collective agency	Stepping in / out between the safe space and familiar local environment to develop agendas and performance capacities	Exploring experiences, ideas, issues, opinions and solutions through in-camera edited exercises and discussion on playback	**Power to and power with –** building group agency and group consciousness, understanding and meanings
Action through collaborative production	Pursuing agendas by story-telling and articulating messages in created space	Making short video stories, messages and clips for particular audiences	**Power to –** increasing as people move to action **Power with –** developing through collective awareness, identities and purpose and the energy of collective action
Performing influence through video-mediated exchange	Performing influence frontstage in public space (claimed or invited) within community or between social interests and levels	Directing videos or showing videos to different audiences (peers, wider community, leaders)	**Power to and power with –** to challenge **power over** and foster potential allies

Shaw, J. (2017) Pathways to Accountability from the Margins:
Reflections on Participatory Video Practice, Making All Voices Count Research Report,
Brighton: Institute of Development Studies.

https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/
123456789/13149/PartipVideos_Report_Online.pdf

Interviews

Interviews provide a simple way to explore themes.

**Interview techniques - before you start**

- Is the person clear about the purpose of the interview?
- Have they given consent?
- Are they comfortable?
- Have you set aside enough time?
- Do you need prompts (photo, object event etc.)?
- How do you intend to record it?

Interview techniques

- Have you planned (open) questions?
- Where is it going to take place?
- Minimise interruptions
- Active listening
- Make eye contact
- Don't interrupt
- Be encouraging
- Ask them if they want to add anything

Collaborative production

The diagram below from Participatory Video explains the very simple production route.
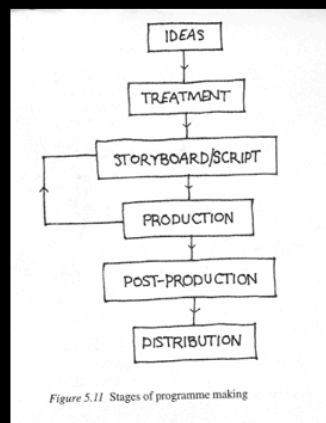
Figure 5.11 Stages of programme making

Shaw J and C Robertson (1997) Participatory Video: A practical guide to using video creatively in group development work, London, Routledge.

For participants who haven't had experience making videos it can be quite daunting.
Have some prompt exercises to get them thinking, anything can help.
Examples:
Story cubes, photos or thinking of an event. 'River of life' etc.

Here are some quick online exercises to try out, to help get started in storyboarding, composition, etc.

https://www.real-time.org.uk/actionmedia

ACTIVITY

Image Prompt**

Draw a 3-shot story with this as one of the images.

| Shot 1	Shot 2	Shot 3

From this simple sequence you can expand your story.

· Where did you put the picture and why: beginning, middle or end?
· What is the style (documentary/drama etc.)?
· Is your story complete, what happened before, what happens next?
· Do you have characters, what do they say?

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Intro to Storyboarding

Storyboarding provides a way for a group to plan their production in more detail. This exercise is a quick way to introduce the concept of storyboarding.
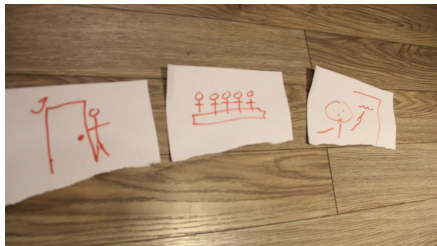
The workshop leader draws an image on small piece of paper, something that suggests a 'follow-on' action (e.g. door opening, phone ringing, bus arriving etc.).

Each person in turn then suggests what happens next and draws it, the image is then placed on the floor (or wall) next to the previous image. Continue until everyone has drawn a picture.
The workshop leader should keep summarising the story and help people with ideas. It's important that all the pictures are on separate pieces of paper, as this allows them to be moved or combined or for extra shots to be included to improve the story.

Tips:

- Remind people they don't need to be good at drawing, these are just notes to remind you while filming
- Remember parallel action can take place (something happening at the same time in a different location)
- Pictures can be moved, removed or additional ones added to make a better storyboard
- If two shots are similar, they can be combined
- Suggest changes in shot sizes or angles to improve the story

If there's time, the group can also use the storyboard to record the storyboarded sequence, but you should factor in the time it would take.

It's important that the whole group works on this together, and everyone draws something.
This is the method they can use later, to plan their films in smaller groups.

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The 5 W's**

The 5 W's is a simple aid for planning a story before you start production.

Use the 5 W's

Select a photograph or an object from a specific event or place you remember.

Use the 5 W's to create a story.

Who?
Describe your character(s) in a short list (this could include yourself).

What?
Write a sentence about your story, what happens?

When?
Describe the time when it happens.

Where?
Describe the location.

Why?
What are the reasons for telling this story?

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Production in a Day

Now use the various skills developed to work in your group to devise, plan, record and edit a short video. One of the key parts of this planning must be to 'timetable' the work so it will be finished on time (including the editing).

It's important that everyone takes turns in the production, so make sure one or two (possibly more experienced or confident individuals) don't dominate the group.

Useful links to making a production

Film ideas

📹 https://youtu.be/A2BhItk6Fo0

Storyboarding

📹 https://youtu.be/238eypcdOzU

Pre-production explained

📹 https://youtu.be/GOQ7rZ4PNOo

Editing

📹 https://youtu.be/FVR8zz8ci2k