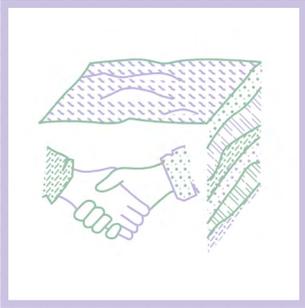


Groundwerk

Collaboration and Participation

Ed Webb-Ingall

Contents



I work with archival materials and methodologies largely drawn from community video to collaborate with groups. Together, we explore under-represented historical moments and their relationship to contemporary life, developing modes of self-representation specific to the subject or the experiences of the participants. As a result of these processes of historical research and reactivation I have produced a list or set of instructions that set out to explain how one might initiate and facilitate a similar project.

This resource takes the form of a workshop outline, which takes this list as a starting point for thinking about ways of working collaboratively.

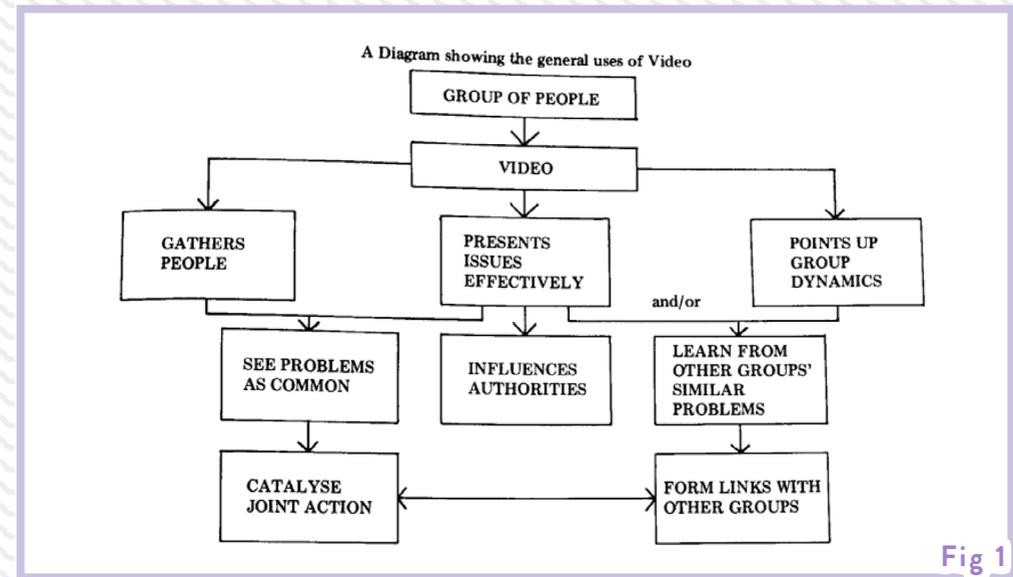
Top Tip

Allow enough structure so that something will happen, with enough space so that you don't know what that 'something' will be.

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Warm Up

1. Ask the group to arrange themselves in a line in order of their door numbers; lowest door number to the left and highest on the right.
2. Divide the line down the middle into two groups.
3. Give each group a sheet of large paper and some pens.
4. Both groups write the word 'collaboration' on their sheet of paper.
5. One group writes all the good things about collaborating on their sheet.
6. One group writes all the bad things about collaborating on their sheet.
7. The idea is that they can draw on what is happening in the group as they carry out the exercise.
8. After about 10 minutes the groups swap sheets of paper and read what the other group have written down.
9. Each group then discusses what the other group has written and selects three or four words or statements that stand out to them.
10. Each group then presents why they chose the words they chose.



A Starting Point

Intro

The list that follows is not a suggestion of best practice or an attempt to erase or smooth over the inherent complications and different approaches to facilitating these kinds of projects, but more of a provocation. I see it as a work in progress, like the archival materials and historical processes I borrow from, to be constantly (re)negotiated, annotated and amended by those who use it. The list is a starting point, an invitation to share ideas and demystify processes and practices, with the suggestion that it can only 'work' when in a process of modification.

The versions of the list produced subsequently operate as evidence of the conversations and exchanges that have taken place since its inception; the annotated form suggests a dialogue rather than a fixed position, something which is constantly in motion.

Some things that I have learnt about the relationship between the facilitator and the participant when developing a collaborative project

(A list, A Provocation, A work in progress)

1. There are roughly three kinds of collaborative project:

I. Projects initiated, made by, for and from the participants, usually with a sense of urgency from within. For example, Squatters making tapes to protect their housing or Tenants Associations making films about the state of their homes to show to the council.

II. Projects initiated by outsiders invited by participants to work with them together on a specific project or theme or to share a skill of some sort. For example young people learning to use video cameras from a filmmaker or artists helping organize a community festival.

III. Projects where the person initiating the project has no prior relationship to the participants invites themselves into a community with the assumption that the chosen community would in some way benefit from their expertise or knowledge.

2. In order for those projects described as the 'outsider invited in' to be 'effective' there must be some slippage between how the roles of insider and outsider are defined – the participants/insiders need to develop a sense of being not simply just the subject but also the author and the facilitator/outsider needs to develop a relationship or a stake in the aims of the participants.

3. The relative 'success' of a project is based on the depth of the relationships formed, by this I mean the facilitator getting to know the participants and vice versa.

4. Measures of success should be shared, along with intentions, at the start of a project. These may well change as a project develops and any changes to either of these should be made clear and communicated to the group.

5. Outcomes: If the measure of success or the intention is the creation of a tangible object; a video, text, performance, sculpture, then the authorship and ownership of

this object must also be agreed upon at the start of the project.

6. Both facilitators and participants should propose outcomes and there should be room for these to change and develop as a project progresses.

7. Measures of success should be according to the needs of individuals involved and based on a value system agreed by all participants. For example learning to use a video camera, having a conversation and a cup of tea and being asked ones opinion and listened to on camera might be equally 'valuable' depending on the needs of the individual.

8. Multiple spaces and moments for feedback should be built into any project and the forms that feedback takes should be varied, agreed collectively and sensitive to the specific needs of the participants.

9. Develop a shared language between participants and facilitators. Avoid acronyms; any terminology or key words should be made clear.

10. Time is key. The relationship between the length of time spent on a project and its efficacy are inextricably linked. Consider exit strategies and the sustainability or legacy of a project at start.

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Fig 2

Activity

This activity could be helpful at the start of a new collaborative project:

Print out enough copies of the list so that one can be shared between two or three participants. In these small groups discuss, annotate, and amend the list; making adjustments, suggestions and asking questions.

After about fifteen or twenty minutes, each group can present their findings and the facilitator can have the original version of the list on screen (ideally on a projector) so that they can make the adjustments and suggestions in real time. You could continue to return to the amended list throughout a project and make further adjustments.



Fig 3

Further Reading and Resources

- London Community Video Archive: the-lcva.co.uk
- Rehana Zaman, [Tongues](#). London: PSS, 2019. Print.
- Ed Webb-Ingall with Birdman, Dirmuid, Ismail, Jessica, Kazi Noor Jahan and Robert, [People Make Videos, A Manual for Making Community Videos](#), 2016. Designed by Rosen Eveleigh, printed by Art Quarters Press for The Showroom Gallery.

Image Credits

Photos courtesy of Ed Webb Ingall

Fig 1

This diagram is taken from the 1975 publication 'Basic Video in Community Work', published by community arts group Inter-action as an attempt to illustrate the potential actions and reactions of a group involved in the production of an activist video project in the early 1970s. It remains as a provocation for understanding the way video was being used to activate and engage groups and individuals in the production of early activist videos in the UK.

Fig 2

'Some things that I have learnt about the relationship between the facilitator and the participant when developing a collaborative project. (A list, A Provocation, A work in progress)', edited by Ed Webb-Ingall on the occasion of this publication, October 2020. To be reprinted at a scale large enough to be reproduced. (Attribution-Non Commercial Creative Commons BY-NC Ed Webb-Ingall)

Fig 3

Cover Image for the 1975 publication 'Basic Video in Community Work', published by community arts group Inter-action.

Ed Webb-Ingall is a filmmaker and researcher working with archival materials and methodologies drawn from community video. He collaborates with groups to explore under-represented historical moments and their relationship to contemporary life, developing modes of self-representation specific to the subject or the experiences of the participants. He is the participation programmer for the London Community Video Archive and Senior Lecturer on the BA Film and Screen Studies course at London College of Communication. He is currently writing a book with the title BFI Screen Stories: The Story of Video Activism.

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Founded in 2013 by Croydon locals, Turf Projects is the first entirely artist-run contemporary art space in Croydon, South London. A registered charity (#1160527), Turf has supported the work of over 400 artists to date through a programme of free public exhibitions, workshops and events.

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