

# Tell your story to the camera!

*Participatory Video for marginalized,  
disadvantaged or otherwise  
vulnerable groups*



Lifelong  
Learning  
Programme

**VISTA project - participatory Video and social Skills for Training  
disadvantaged Adults**

(Project n. 517865-LLP-1-IT-GRUNDTVIG\_GMP)

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**Participatory Video for marginalized, disadvantaged or  
otherwise vulnerable groups**

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**Edited by: Fabrizio Boldrini & Maria Rita Bracchini.**

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Health Psychology Management Organisation Services - UK

Center of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation - Greece

Chancengleich in Europa e.V. - Germany

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## Acknowledgements

Vulnerable and marginalized adults are the target groups who are more in need of participating in Life Long Learning (LLL) programmes. Although the policy agenda of many EU countries seeks to upgrade their skills many studies in this field show that the worse the social situation is the less likely people are to take part in LLL programmes. This framework clearly shows that adult learning is a complex process when regarding vulnerable groups: exclusion from education is a phenomenon linked to exclusion from society. What is needed are specific programmes to facilitate access to LLL (motivating and empowering in order to develop self-confidence and trust) and to supply basic skills, which are the basis of any learning process (personal, social and self-management skills) . The VISTA (Participatory Video and social Skills for Training disadvantaged Adults) project has adopted and experimented the participatory video (PV) method in order to help disadvantaged people. From a practical point of view a PV project can be described as a "scriptless video process, directed by a group of grassroots people, moving forward in iterative cycles of shooting–reviewing. This process aims at creating video narratives that communicate what those who participate in the process really want to communicate, in a way they think is appropriate". (Johansson *et al.* 1999, 35).

The idea behind this concept is that making a video is easy and accessible (video is nowadays widely used both in teaching and learning) and it is a way to bring people together to explore issues, empowering and enabling them to take their own actions and communicate. As such, PV (that has in itself many other languages such as irony, narrative, body and music) can be a highly effective tool to engage and mobilize marginalized people and help them to re-create their social and active processes through which they can build new ideas and concepts and implement their own forms of sustainable development.

The target groups of the project are adults with different kinds of marginalisation: from people with life-long marginality (i.e. people severely impaired from birth or those born into particularly marginalised groups discriminated against such as the Roma) to people for whom exclusion is acquired by later disablement or by changes in the social and economic system (i.e. long term unemployed, adult with psychic disabilities etc.) Whatever the origins and processes of marginalization, these groups

have limited opportunities to contribute in society, they miss social opportunities and lose their self-confidence and their self esteem.

The PV workshops helped to regain some hope, making the participants face every day with a new attitude. The VISTA project helped people affected by social exclusion through an innovative approach which takes into account the development of society and the growing role of media communication technologies which nowadays are easily and cheaply accessible by everyone.

The participants were both the actors and the directors of the film as well as their own audience. The latter point is extremely important since being audience to ourselves means observing, reflecting and *monitoring ourselves* in relation with the world, with others, with objects, with ourselves, with the social performance we give life to. Through the PV workshops they can now see themselves and their emotional reactions in ways they had never experienced before and are able to identify and delve more deeply into their personal problems.

PV carried out in this way can become a powerful means of documenting people's experiences, needs and hopes from their own perspectives. It can start a process of analysis and change that celebrates knowledge and practice, whilst stimulating creativity both within and beyond the community.

I can finally say that the Vista project has given a voice and a face to those who are normally neither heard nor seen.

Therefore, I would like to thank all the project partners, the people who cooperated in the workshops, the researchers in the field of psychology, sociology and adult education and those who work with people with disabilities or who are socially disadvantaged. The partners I would like to informally thank are:

Health Psychology Management Organisation Services (UK); PATER - Territorial Employment Pact in the Ribera county (Spain); Center of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (Greece); Chancengleich in Europa e.V. (Germany); The Public Institution Roma Community Centre (Lithuania); Granaforma S.L. (Spain)

*Fabrizio Boldrini*  
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## Introduction

'Participatory Video' is an umbrella term for a number of innovative uses of video technology which has become widely popular all over the world. After the first trials in the late 1960s PV has developed into several different directions and there is no consensus of what the term actually stands for.

There is not a generally accepted definition of PV although there are several 'claims' as to what PV means. Almost all literature describing a participatory video project offers some kind of definition and a 'background' philosophy. For the latter, Paulo Freire's pedagogy (1970) is often chosen as the main reference. Freire was one of the first to stress the importance of participation. His writings certainly had an impact; since the publication of 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' a staggering number of publications on participation and participatory communication has been published, all of them including a variety of definitions and categorizations concerning participation.

However, there are only a few books which deal exclusively with Participatory Video<sup>1</sup>, often used to explain and justify certain procedures within a Participatory Video project.

In the Vista project PV is a tool for positive social change, to engage and mobilize marginalized people and help them implement their own forms of sustainable development.

It is a process which has encouraged individuals and communities to take control of their destinies.

We have worked with different marginalized, disadvantaged or otherwise vulnerable groups in six European countries namely

*The United Kingdom – Refugee women*

*Spain – Long term unemployed*

*Greece – People with Physical and mental disabilities*

*Germany – Turkish immigrants – women Turkish immigrants*

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<sup>1</sup> The following books are considered to stand for certain 'traditions' in participatory video making:

\_ Shaw and Robertson (1997), *Participatory Video*

\_ Harding (1997), *The Video Activist Handbook*

\_ Braden and Huong (1998), *Video for Development*



*Lithuania – Roma*

*Italy – Elderly people living in a borough in an historical centre*

In the VISTA project PV has given a voice and a face to those who are normally neither heard nor seen.

# **PART I – PARTICIPATORY VIDEO: A MODERN TOOL FOR ADULT EDUCATION**

## **1. The development of the use of video-didactics in adult education**

### **1.1 The use of video techniques and video methodologies in adult education**

*Video erodes our intellectual and social isolation. It provides a platform for encounter with people facing similar problems, similar obstacles and perhaps having similar social goals or objectives. Consequently there is an emerging growth in the potential for video communication to be used by groups with common interests, at national and international levels. (Hall, 1991: 44)*

According to Malcom Knowles<sup>2</sup>, one of the most famous Adult Educators, human beings remember 10% of what they see, 20% of what they hear, 50% of what they see and hear, and 80% of what they see, hear and do. Therefore, a video, especially if combined with a certain level of interaction, allows a more quick and efficient memorization.

Furthermore, studies on human perception show that 83% of what we feel travels to the brain through sight, while all the other senses (smell, hearing, touch and taste) transport only 17% of what we perceive. Therefore, sight is the most powerful sense.

For this reason, in the “era of media” (from cinema to television and the internet) videos and education were bound to meet.

The issue of comparing the language of filming with learning processes in adults has recently been the subject of many initiatives both in theoretical studies and in practice. These have been promoted by educational organizations or by professional associations: university conferences and seminars, meetings and workshops for trainers and, recently also Festivals devoted to Cinema for Training.

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<sup>2</sup> Malcolm Shepherd Knowles (August 24, 1913–November 27, 1997) was an American Adult Educator, famous for the adoption of the theory of andragogy.

See Knowles, M. S. (1989). *The making of an adult educator: An autobiographical journey*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

The growing interest of teachers and educators in the use of media is given by its continuous development and diversification of teaching methodologies: reporting, video clips, video art and last but not least social media and all those new communication tools on the net and web 2.0.

From McLuhan<sup>3</sup> onwards there have been several studies on the historical, sociological and anthropological side of technology which has brought deep changes to our culture and way of living. Technology has been since regarded as a sort of extension of man's mental, psychic and phisic faculties. This means "acknowledging the media as *environments* of knowledge, doing, being and feeling and not as tools<sup>4</sup>".

This is why audiovisual tools are particularly important in updating competences *vis a vis* the development of the labour market and in lifelong learning since its objective is to guarantee a better quality of life which in turn translates into an extension of democracy intended as critic and conscious participation.

Nowadays, lifelong learning requires the ability to integrate open and flexible didactics in a web structured and multidimensional frame in order to guarantee a learning path in which the individual is active in and responsible for building knowledge - for doing and for being. Therefore, digital integration of communication codes is important (images, texts, audiovisuals, internet etc.) in order to develop the so called "learnativity", active learning based on cooperation, integration of teaching methods, use of videos and other media for the transformation of knowledge.

People learn in different ways. *Visual learners* are stimulated by images, *auditory learners* by sound, and *kinesthetic (or tactile) learners* through touching, feeling and experiencing. When implemented effectively, videos in education can stimulate the senses to create a learning environment where new information can be more effectively retained.

According to Clarks & Lyons<sup>5</sup> there are a number of physiological functions which justify the use of videos in adult education since they

- Help attentiveness: concentrate on elements which are important

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<sup>3</sup> Herbert Marshall McLuhan (July 21, 1911 – December 31, 1980) was a Canadian philosopher of communication theory. His work is viewed as one of the cornerstones of the study of media theory, as well as having practical applications in the advertising and television industries.

See McLuhan H.M. (1967), *The Medium is the Message: An inventory of Effects*, with Quentin Fiore, produced by Jerome Agel; 1st Ed.: Random House; reissued by Gingko Press, 2001

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem

<sup>5</sup> Clark R.C. e Lyons C. (2004), *Graphics for Learning. Proven Guidelines for Planning, Designing, and Evaluating Visuals in Training Materials*, San Francisco, Pfeiffer.

- Activate or build pre-knowledge: activate pre-existing mental patterns or supply contents able to help to acquire new information
- Minimise cognitive weight: less information to store during learning
- Building mental models: help adults to memorise new information in the long term memory in order to be able to better understand contents
- Help to transfer knowledge: promote a better understanding
- Foster motivation: make learning more captivating and motivating

Often, videos used for educational purposes have been considered mere extemporary and superficial tools forgetting how artistic and expressive, powerful and rich their language can be, not to mention how important is their polysemy, the many codes exploited and their symbolic and metaphoric values in psychological dynamics.

Videos are a good way to stimulate and strengthen learning especially in adult education for their theoretical and methodological character.

One kind of video is the educational video usually employed for:

- Introducing a topic
- Activating pre-knowledge on a subject
- Analyzing a topic more in depth
- Building a learning path

Choosing a video is dictated by a careful analysis of what is going to be learned and the objective of the lesson.

Then there is the editorial video which requires planning and can be:

- Social: to promote socialization and workgroup
- Didactic: to reinforce ideas, concepts, linguistic competences etc.
- Educational (in a broad sense): to develop all those competences needed to produce a video, such as: organizational/communicative skills, verbal and non verbal language, logic, technical and artistic skills etc.

In conclusion, the ways to use videos in adult education are manifold:

- a. Motivating adult students is one of the main stumbling-blocks teachers have to overcome: videos can be more interesting if they are taken from the student's 'reality';

- b. Videos integrate several codes (iconic, visual, verbal, audio etc.) just like in daily life: they therefore offer both linguistic and cultural elements much closer to reality than a written text;
- c. Videos allow different understandings (only images, only speech, images and soundtrack, some words and the narrative context, images, speech and cultural implications etc.) and are an efficient tool in adult education when, as often as not, both linguistic and cognitive competences are on different levels;
- d. Learners (also adult learners) are targeted by audiovisual messages which are often received passively. This is why they lack the appropriate reading keys needed to understand ends, motivation, artistic and cultural depth, innovation and documentation value. Using videos in adult classes means guiding the learners through reading offering the necessary tools to access information and translate it into knowledge.

## **1.2 The use of videos as a therapeutic technique in projects addressed to adults with problem of social inclusion**

*Video engages the senses and provokes learners with a sensory or emotional experience.*

*For this reason it is often used among marginalized people*

*and adults with problems of social inclusion,*

*and is intended to give insight*

*into how they conceptualize their circumstances*

*and their hopes for the future*

*From "The Problem of Student Engagement," - Shelley Wright*

The use of videos and of non-verbal language as a therapeutical support for adults with problems of social inclusion is a growing phenomenon. In recent years Nowadays, Video and Training courses are quite used although mainly in the field of expressive Art Therapy.

The following is a list of the fields Video therapy is usually applied to:

*Audio-visual Counselling:* used in structured groups (workplaces, schools, small communities).

Work is based on the development and organisation of an audio-visual help. The process becomes an artistic interface for the elaboration of group dynamics, interaction and acquisition of relational skills to reach a common goal.

The plot and the script become the metaphor of the participants' life; the definition of the characters, the possibility to work on the character's life hinting at the participants' inner dynamics without touching them directly. Production and post-production offer an immediate possibility for a creative process of development of social, relational and cooperation competences.

*Film-therapy:* in this case work focuses on the use of films or film sequences, shown to individual subjects or to groups, selected by the therapist. This method is often used in schools, mostly in prevention campaigns.

It is important that at the end of the show a debate take place to trigger an exchange of opinions, feelings and emotions. For therapeutic reasons, single film images regarding specific cases may be included in the treatment process thus

using film therapy as a tool to define the therapeutic contents otherwise not easily explainable in a traditional therapy context.

*Video-genealogy*: each participant brings to the video session a selection of photos considered of significant value. These are shown on the screen and commented by the group.

It is important that the participants choose 5 or 6 photos. During this session a close-up of the photos is shown, the subject describes them and presents him/herself, his/her family, and recounts his/her personal history.

It is a kind of meeting, assisted by the video, of one's idealised dimension (the past) and the real one (the present).

*Video-Biography*: images recalling the subject's life (also abstract images) will bring back to life emotions and past episodes. To begin with, the subject is interviewed in front of the camera; then the images he/she has chosen are cut out and put in sequence in front of the group which then stages the "biography" in front of the author while the whole scene is filmed.

At the end of the performance the author confronts him/herself with the material produced. This phase focuses on a dialogue between the subject and the story performed by the group.

*Psycho-videoclip*: produced by the group with a fixed camera which sets the limits of the visual space. Participants improvise a short performance acting *extempore* on previously fixed flexible guidelines.

It is important that at this stage the therapist is not included in the scene. After the recording the group examines the results and gives its feedback. Whereas in video confrontation the actions are directed towards the image of one Self in a psycho-videoclip the participants' action and interaction are in the foreground.

A variation of this technique is the "1-2-3 psycho-videoclip" in which the subject produces three sequences of images. In the first sequence he/she presents him/herself to his/her own image being filmed. This phase represents an important metaphor of a person alone in his/her own space. Then the subject chooses a second person who he/she directs; this second person takes part in the performance only when requested. In the last sequence the subject chooses two or more people (at least one other participant and a therapist).

In this case there are several possibilities of inter-relation: there could be a symbiosis, a competition or even a triangulation.

*Video-confrontation:* this can be viewed live or shown in delayed broadcasting.

In both cases it is necessary to use that a video camera (or more) and a TV. The subject sits in front of the camera while the therapist (or a cameraman) films the scene. In the case of live video-confrontation the subject acts while being filmed, whereas in delayed broadcasting the subject can use a remote control (rewind, image stop etc.) to select the images considered most interesting. During the confrontation, the attention is focused on the subject's specific behaviour or on actions the therapist wishes to highlight (e.g. a subject's unconscious behaviour).

Whatever aspect is drawn to attention, the therapeutic validity of this method lies in the discrepancy between the memory of the experience and the images shown on the video (time discrepancy) or between the self-image the subject has in his/her mind and that shown on video (image discrepancy).

Looking at oneself on screen allows to notice also one's postural language and incongruities which we were not aware of before. All this gives life to a process of awareness acquisition born out of confrontation.

*Video-microanalysis:* this is used with subjects from 0 to 18 years of age in assisting patients who suffer from developmental problems.

After a first discussion over the case history (anamnesis) parents are asked to make a home video on the parent/child interaction (it is important that bodies and faces are shown) which is first examined in private by the therapist and then with the parents. Attention is focused on both verbal and non verbal aspects of interaction. In particular, the family's inner resources are assessed and the parents assisted in defining those areas which are an obstacle to the child's development. The focus then moves on to the interaction between parents, on their experiences and actions as well as on the role played by imagination in building up their relational and parental competences.



## 2. An introduction to the Participatory Video

.....the difference between participatory video and documentary style video in a very simple way; "With a documentary you are finished when the video is finished. With participatory video it usually takes longer. You finish when your goal has been achieved."  
(Riano 1994)

The first participatory video was made over 40 years ago in 1969 but it still has no shared definition or theorization to mould its concept in a coherent experience; also literature on the subject is scarce: Ferriera 2006; Gilbert s.d.; Gonzalo Olmos and Ramella 2005; Lunch 2004; Molony, Zonie, and Goodsmith 2007; Odutola 2003; Riaño 1994; Rose 1992; Snowden 1983; Lunch 2004, 2006a, 2006b; Nathaniels, 2006; et cetera.

Among the sources available there is Shirley Whites' "Participatory Video: Images that Transform and Empower"<sup>6</sup>. Although it is a comprehensive text, it lacks in theoretical analysis. It is more about practice than theory and as such does not regroup the case studies in an integrated theoretical structure.

This limitation, understandable since PV is a set of operational, situational and idiosyncratic practices, calls for a short introduction of the meaning of PV more than of its theory, before the analysis of the case study. Broadening the definition by Su Braden and Victor Young<sup>7</sup> we could define a PV "a set of alternative audiovisual applications and development projects" or in social and political projects "aiming at bringing about social changes" or individual development.

A common trait of these applications is to emphasize the participation in the audiovisual production<sup>8</sup>. The social impact of a video is not given by its "social" subject but by social and collective participation<sup>9</sup>.

From a practical point of view a PV project can be described as:

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<sup>6</sup> Shirley A. White, *Participatory Video: Images that Transform and Empower*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2003

<sup>7</sup> Braden, Su and Thi Thien Huong Than. 1998. *Video for Development. A casebook for Vietnam*. Oxford - London: Oxfam Press.

<sup>8</sup> Johansson, L. (1999) 'Participatory Video and PRA: Acknowledging the politics of Empowerment', in *Forests, Trees and People*, Newsletter No. 40/41, December 1999

<sup>9</sup> Huber, B. (1998) *Communicative aspects of participatory video projects: An Explanatory Study*. Download: [www.zanzibar.org/maneno/New%20Pages/articles.htm](http://www.zanzibar.org/maneno/New%20Pages/articles.htm)

a scriptless video process, directed by a group of grassroots people, moving forward in iterative cycles of shooting–reviewing. This process aims at creating video narratives that communicate what those who participate in the process really want to communicate, in a way they think is appropriate<sup>10</sup>.

A video is storytelling. Storytelling is a powerful communication tool which can activate our imagination and maintain our attention. When we hear a story we naturally visualize the context and characters and mentally rehearse actions as they unfold. Part instruction, part entertainment, stories can enable participants to mentally prepare for different (also unexpected) situations.

A PV is collective storytelling and the narration of expressive, narrative and identity needs through shared audio-visual production which emphasizes the use of video as a social collective process with strong social, cultural and symbolic interaction traits.

It is also the common building and rebuilding of narrations which can spur social and individual change. The use of video in PV is directed more towards reflection than towards the actual production since the whole process is centred on participation<sup>11</sup>.

The use of PV has however a manifold impact: it disseminates technological knowledge, it allows collective realization and action; it develops creativity; it processes and disseminates unforeseen and unaccounted for visions originated by a collective process of self-comprehension and narration.

This is why the areas of development of PV are several: therapy, the social outcomes of PV production; advocacy, the use of PV as a tool to promote justice and social protection; empowerment, the use of audiovisual production allowing a group or a community to become protagonist of a possible change.

In many literature sources on participatory communication the 'Fogo Process' is referred to as the birth of participatory video. The Fogo Process evolved out of a series of events which took place in 1967 on Fogo Island, a small island out-port fishing community off the Eastern coast of Newfoundland, Canada. Its creative use of simple media tools, predominantly videos, provided a model of development communication practice that was far ahead of its time. The 'rhetoric' around current

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<sup>10</sup> Johansson *et al.* 1999, p. 35 – op.cit

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*

participatory video projects quite often shows clear resemblance to the visions and goals of the Fogo Process (Don Snowden Program for Development Communication 1998)<sup>12</sup>.

### .....What happened?

In 1965 Donald Snowden, the then Director of the Extension Department at the Memorial University of Newfoundland, read the Economic Council of Canada's 'Report on Poverty in Canada'. Enraged because he felt the report dealt with poverty using purely urban values, Snowden got the idea to produce a series of films to present how the people of Newfoundland felt about poverty and other issues. He wanted to show that poverty did not mean only economic deprivation but also isolation and the inability to access information and communication media, as well as the lack of organization. Teaming up with the film maker Colin Low, Snowden took him to about four or five different areas in Newfoundland for potential filming. In the end, Fogo Island was chosen as the best potential place to initiate what was later to become known as the 'Fogo Process'.

In 1967 there were less than 5,000 people living on Fogo Island in ten separate settlements without much communication among them. The island represented the type of isolation and lack of information or organization that Snowden wanted to show as alternate indicators of poverty in the province. Fogo Island was also going through an economic slump. Having been dependent on the fishing industry for 300 years, the inshore fishery had been dropping, forcing 60% of the men to go on welfare. This brought about the possibility of resettlement (the government had decided that outport communities not able to make a living through fishing any longer were to be relocated to areas of Newfoundland which were more economically viable). The islanders, however, did not want to move. Nevertheless, with minimal communication between members of communities, poor organization, lack of local government in most communities, lack of unions or producer co-operatives, and altogether lack of confidence, the picture seemed dismal.

Snowden believed the islanders could form a co-operative and become organized so that they could preserve their way of life. He took Colin Low to the island and introduced him to Fred Earle, a Memorial University extension worker. Together, Earle and Low went to a meeting of the Fogo Island Improvement Committee. They introduced the concept of filming on the island which was agreed upon by the committee. It was to be a project that used film to assist communities in coming to terms with some of their problems.

It was intended to help the people realize that they had problems in common and to move towards building co-operation and development. The community members interviewed clearly identified a number of island issues: the inability to organize, the need for communication, the resentment felt towards the idea of resettlement and the anger that the government seemed to be making decisions about their future with no community consultation process. Low decided to show the films to the people of Fogo and thirty-five separate screenings were held with the total number of viewers reaching 3,000. This became an important part of the process. It was realized that people were not comfortable discussing issues with each other face-to-face. Instead, they were quite comfortable explaining their individual views on film and

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<sup>12</sup> Snowden, D. Eyes see; ears hear By Memorial University, Newfoundland, Canada. Download: [www.fao.org/waicent/faoinfo/sustdev/cddirect/cdre0038.htm](http://www.fao.org/waicent/faoinfo/sustdev/cddirect/cdre0038.htm)

having those opinions played back to other community members. By viewing the films, the islanders started to realize that all the communities were experiencing the same problems and became more aware of them and of what needed to be done to solve them.

There was controversy back at the university about what the political consequences for the institution would be because of the blatant criticisms against the government that occurred in the films. After some discussion, it was decided that the Prime minister and his cabinet should view the films. This was phenomenal since it allowed fishermen to talk to people in power. It was also successful: the Minister of Fisheries, Aiden Maloney, asked to be able to respond to the commentaries. The government point-of-view was filmed through him and shown back to the communities. This brought about a two-way flow of knowledge between community members and decision makers. From this point, things began to happen on their own. The films simply helped contribute to an island-wide sense of community and assisted people in looking for alternatives to resettlement.

It is not known for certain what would have happened on Fogo had the filming never been done. What is certain is that the fishermen formed an island-wide producers' co-operative, which handled and processed large catches, enabling them to keep the profits on their island. Unemployment of able-bodied men disappeared and the government directed their efforts into helping people to stay. The films created an awareness and self confidence that allowed people-led development to occur (largely based on a summary of: Don Snowden Program for Development Communication 1998).

Snowden, the patron of this remarkable video experiment, facilitated the Fogo process into the innovative 'Challenge for Change Program' and 'The War on Poverty Program in Canada'. By the mid 1970s Snowden and his colleagues were being asked to experiment with the Fogo Process in various parts of the Arctic and Alaska, Africa and Asia. Snowden died suddenly in 1984 while working on a project in Bangladesh. Today the 'Don Snowden Program for Development Communication' keeps Snowden's legacy alive by continuing to apply the Fogo Process approach in a variety of activities.

#### .....Further Development

In the 1970s and 1980s participatory video saw many applications all over the world. As they were scattered and not properly documented, it is difficult to identify a 'trend' in the development of PV. Many projects operated on a small scale with small budgets, often not taking notice of other on-going projects with similar objectives. The exchange of experiences occurred, if at all, at conferences, in workshops, and through informal communication.

One is left with the impression, however, that some designers of video projects developed their concept of 'good participatory video practice' completely on their own.

They arguably missed the chance to learn from valuable experiences made in other participatory video projects. Practitioners argue, to their defence, that a flexible and culturally sensitive approach like participatory video precludes standardized, deterministic performance guidelines. They say that each context requires a very specific approach, which is difficult to derive from experiences made in other places (Media Development 1989).

### **3. Participatory processes for the development of the social competences**

*I am always really annoyed by those “educational novels” whose main character idly sits with a funnel on his head waiting for others and life to pour experience and wisdom into him. I find this not to be dialectical.*

*An individual is modified and at the same time modifies the environment surrounding him, learns and teaches, otherwise he is not a man. A novel in which this does not happen cannot be considered a novel, although there have been written in their thousands.*

*(Italo Calvino, I libri degli altri)*

#### **3.1 Meaning of and terms relating to social skills**

In general terms and according to the most current theories, the term social development defines the process by which individuals acquire a set of skills, behaviours, motivations and "useful" values in order to be able to adapt to the society and culture to which they belong<sup>13</sup> (Maccoby, 2007).

To define this social action we should define also the set of these skills, attitudes, values and motivations relating them in their entirety to general social competences.

Social skills allow individuals to find their place in their own social context.

Seen as a process of adaptation, therefore, social development allows individuals to acquire their own set of social skills and positively implement the socialization process which then builds one's Self.

A quite recent accepted definition of social competence describes it as the ability to effectively adapt to an environment and to reach one's social goals (e.g. popularity and acceptance) resulting in the development of social relations. It implies also the ability to make judgments and estimates and show empathy and emotional regulation, with the result that the individual is able to provide solutions to social problems and make full use of other specific skills that he/she possesses.

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<sup>13</sup> Maccoby, M. (2007) - The Leaders We Need and What Makes Us Follow; . Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Publishing

Some authors have also insisted on the prosocial dimension of social skills such as the fact that social characteristics lead to positive and altruistic actions<sup>14</sup> (Rubin, Bukowski and Parker) and inhibit negative behaviour by finding different and adequate means to initiate, maintain and conclude an interaction in order to also understand the consequences of one's actions.

This element has an operational dimension which is not negligible: the ability to offer moral judgments, which can guide behaviour, and to define a forward-looking attitude, which could lead to the ability to understand the meaning of one's actions, are at the basis of an interesting experiment conducted in Brazilian prisons.

The experiment consists in reducing a sentence for every book read by an inmate (4 days deducted from the sentence to be served, for a maximum of 48 days per year).

The objective is to foster through reading and understanding a text (which will be verified by an operator) social competences specifically in "being able to understand the meaning of one's actions."

These approaches show a variety of structures and attempt to analyse social competences based on different levels of abstraction.

In order to achieve a complete and comprehensive definition of social skills the American psychologist Rose-Krasnor<sup>15</sup> suggests a PRISM MODEL.

According to this model competences are multi-layer structures characterized by three hierarchically organised levels:

- identification of social competences and social skills, cognitive and/or behavioural;
- identification of social competences by intra-and interpersonal indicators (self-esteem, self-efficacy, peer acceptance, sociometric status);
- identification of social competences through a personality trait

In theory, according to this scheme of definition of competences we determine a personal strategy for the management of inter-personal relations (we "learn" to build relationships) to then define "indexes" of relationships directed to the identification of

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<sup>14</sup> Handbook of Peer Interactions, Relationships, and Groups - Edited by Kenneth H. Rubin, William M. Bukowski, Brett Laurse, 1998

<sup>15</sup> Kose-Krasnor, L. (1997). "The nature of social competence: A theoretical review". *Social Development* 6: 111–35.

behaviours and results ranging from "self-control " to the " control of others. " The third phase defines the realization of a purpose. At this stage, the dynamics of social skills is oriented and directed to practical purposes (helping a friend or getting a promotion).

We must never forget that the system of social competences is considered important since there is a widespread belief that it is the basis of the social actions of all individuals which allow them to live socially within a relational context.

As clearly shown by Rose-Krasnor, social competences in terms of skills or know-how are proper abilities, rather than behavioural characteristics emerging from the interactions between individuals.

The current understanding of social competences leads, therefore, to focus not so much on individual behavioural aspects, but on the whole system of organization of actions employed to fulfil personal and professional goals. Judged from this perspective, actions which may be considered socially appropriate if seen singly, are potentially not finalised to validation if taken in a relational context.

If such a perspective focusing on "concrete know-how " is valid, then, in order to overcome any arbitrary assessment, competences should be seen as a set of interactional behaviours aimed at overcoming conflicts (general or not) and at reaching social objectives (or, as some would say, prosocial objectives). This objective is an improvement of the position of the subject within a system of relations or an improvement that benefits the group, offering also space to "altruistic" actions.

This consideration results also in having a set of tools to overcome difficulties arising when identifying which behaviours are related to the development and use of social skills.

When developing a dynamic reconstruction of social skills, the process cannot be generated without taking into account the subjects' sociometric traits. They have a history. Often it is a story with contradictions and suffering. The consequences of being "cornered" are represented by the difficulty of hoping to be able to re-build a win-win situation. In these cases, sociometric traits make debate on this issue very difficult since, through a careful induced autobiographical narrative, it is not always easy to understand if it is the social difficulties which generate a lack of social skills or if the latter determines the former.



### **3.2 Social competences and participatory video as tools for reactivation**

The reconstruction of autobiographical memory is one of the oldest fields of study in psychology. The development of the techniques of *video-taping* has helped to define in practical terms the relationship between human functions, which allow to integrate thoughts, representations, feelings, needs, intentions and ambitions of the individual<sup>16</sup>, and the ability to abstract and to represent the story.

If autobiographical memory provides a dynamic and potentially active social representation of human experiences, and its role in self-definition and organization of personality is known and accepted, there is still the need to explore the possibilities offered by the system of social relationships based on new technologies (the so-called social networks).

As Karl A. Pillemer said<sup>17</sup>, also personal memories take a "psychodynamic function" in group dynamics when reconstructing cultural memory of individuals or groups. This allows to build a bridge to ensure the continuity of one's personal and cultural essence (the Self) or of one's group regarding the past. This action is fundamental for the organization and the reconstruction of one's own experience in order to form a coherent whole. But this consistency cannot be adapted only to the past but can be "projected" into the present giving meaning to life and to "what one is now." Participatory video, defined in the previous section, is an example of how autobiographical memory and self-knowledge are intertwined to such an extent as to coincide. The story of Fogo Island, the first experiment of an autobiographical cultural narrative using specular techniques which seems almost psycho-dramatic in order to become a "method", shows how, when in dire straits, experience relies on narrative as an element for the perception of both the physical and the social reality.

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<sup>16</sup> Maccoby, E.E.; Martin, J.A. (1983). P.H. Mussen & E.M. Hetherington, ed. *Handbook of child psychology*. Vol. 4. Socialization, personality, and social development (4th ed.). New York: Wiley. pp. 1–101

<sup>17</sup> 30 Lessons for Living: Tried and True Advice from the Wisest Americans by Karl Pillemer Ph.D.

The purpose of the Fogo project in fact was to provide a plan to understand the meanings and feelings that make up a human story.

The practical application of the method defined in the project Vista has attempted to use this social methodology to meet the need (expressed or not) to have a new or re-activate an old set of social and emotional skills employed to deal with unresolved integration of adults in employment and training.

This process has also tried to use the dynamic experiential memories associated with events considered relevant characterized by the presence of multiple processes and mechanisms, as pointed out by Rubin in his analysis of a system based on the so-called multi-sensory imagery, an essential element of autobiographical memory able to facilitate the mental manipulation of data in the memory systems, while facilitating the building and storage of mental representations in the long term.

Basing narration on such a perceptual ability of representation of the past evaluated in terms of a dynamic present, the subjects analyze the key elements of their self and project them in their current experiences; experience of social urgency, work that is not there and that perhaps there never will be, loss of cultural identity, negative rating on their professional life.

As the participatory video project clearly shows, the path to the employment of this method crosses "troubled waters", but it is not hopeless. This hope is reflected in the smiles of men and women; in the confessed ambitions; in the desire to be integrated and to regain a social identity; in the anger of not having a job and in the wish to have one soon. In experiences and in the stories of men and women who want to regain their place also in history.

#### 4. The PV setting up: the process of participation

*"Participatory video is a tool for positive social change, it is a means of empowerment for the marginalized and it is a process that encourages individuals and communities to take control of their destinies" Lunch & Lunch, 2006*

There is evidence that the use of participatory video in development projects is increasing. Participatory video is in the process of becoming an important tool for facilitating communication in development work. Since there is still no clear view what the term 'participatory video' actually stands for, experiences and knowledge are confined to a few people who operate in the sector, in little known literature such as project evaluations, workshop reports, or unpublished theses, and in strictly theoretical literature which often covers broader aspects. The overall picture indicates that there is poor information about what PV can achieve, what dangers and pitfalls it involves, and for what purposes it has proved appropriate.

This field is not wholly codified also in sociological terms. The many types of PV, the difference in theories (in most cases though, implicit), the number of professional competences involved and the impact with other fields (educational science and methodology; international cooperation, psychotherapy; anthropological research; political and social activism) design a wide and fragmented field with uncertain boundaries. The field is even more elusive owing to the fact that experiences related to the intertwining between participation and video were carried out at different times and in different places in a way which may be called "kaleidoscopic"<sup>18</sup>, often without any reciprocal information<sup>19</sup> (Huber, 1998).

What we know is that PV is an iterative process whereby people and/or communities use videos to document innovations and ideas or focus on issues affecting their environment, their personal situations and their community. The participants work together to create a video about their common experiences as a way of inquiring into challenges in their lives.

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<sup>18</sup> White Shirley A., Participatory Video: Images that Transform and Empower. Op Cit.

<sup>19</sup> Huber, B. (1998) Communicative aspects of participatory video projects: An Explanatory Study.

Download: [www.zanzibar.org/maneno/New%20Pages/articles.htm](http://www.zanzibar.org/maneno/New%20Pages/articles.htm)

Setting up a PV process can:

- open new communication channels
- promote dialogue and discussion
- set in motion a dynamic exchange of ideas and solutions.

The implementation of PV means that Participation and the Process are key values.

### .....**What is "Participation"**

In recent years the use of participatory approaches has increased dramatically. Today, practically every development project plan contains the concept of participation. Together with notions such as 'empowerment', 'capacity building' or 'good governance' it is one of the buzzwords of current development discourse. In relation to video, the attribute 'participatory' refers to the idea that people should not only be receivers but also producers of messages. This has to be seen in contrast to mass media like television or newspapers where people are normally only receivers of messages. Shaw and Robertson stress this aspect in their book 'Participatory Video'<sup>20</sup>. They describe participatory as a group-based activity that develops participants' abilities by involving them in using video equipment creatively, to record themselves and the world around them, and to produce their own videos.

This is only one understanding of the purpose of "participatory" in the context of video methodology. There are several other views, as shown in the categorization section. Nevertheless, the implication of this definition stresses many elements that are common with many participatory video projects: it is a creative use of technology, people are involved in the video production process and it is a group-based activity.

### .....**What "Process" means**

The emphasis of participatory video practice is placed on process rather than product. The process that has emerged and evolved over more than forty years (from the Fogo Process) is today widely recognized as a dynamic and effective method of working

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<sup>20</sup> Robertson, C. and Shaw, J. (1997) Participatory Video: A Practical Approach to Using Video Creatively in Group Developmental Work (Routledge)

with marginalized, disadvantaged or otherwise vulnerable groups for a wide range of purposes.

Many researchers have suggested different distinctions, continuums and classifications of participatory video to highlight the differences among participatory video methodologies. These classifications are often used to explain and justify certain procedures within a project. However, the distinction between process and product appears in many literature sources on participatory video. A project can have its focus on the process of production or on the product, the actual video, or on both. Therefore, it is important not to set up a dichotomy with process and product as poles since in many participatory video projects both aspects are important. Often, project designers claim that they focus entirely on the process in order to prevent being 'discredited' as a (mere product-oriented) documentary filmmaker.

In general terms, the process aims to:

- Build confidence of participating individuals and communities
- Increase participation of marginalized groups and individuals
- Develop critical consciousness amongst participants
- Increase capacity for advocacy
- Foster understanding and awareness within participating communities
- Value, support and disseminate local knowledge and solutions
- Enable participants to clearly communicate with its target audience(s)
- Empower communities to continue processes of change and development
- Challenge injustice and inequity

#### .....**Form/Content**

Related to the distinction between process and product is that of form and content. In the production of a video, the focus can be either on "form" or on "content", which are both trade-offs. When focusing on form, the content is 'fitted' into a predetermined structure. Structuring elements can appear in the form of a script, a certain storyline,

requirements concerning length, language and picture quality, etc. When focusing on content, the above elements are neither decided upon beforehand nor are they as important. It may turn out that a 'raw' unedited video serves the purpose better than a 'formalized' edited one.

#### **..... Individual/Collective benefits**

Participatory video can have its focus on empowering individuals or on empowering collective groups of people ('the community'). The production process arguably improves the relations among people within the community and improves communication between the community and the policy makers. Again, this distinction does not describe genuinely exclusive categories but rather provides an analytic tool to examine different cases. *Braden and Huong (1998)*<sup>21</sup> point out that change in the personal relationships within a community are easily overlooked. Awareness and caution concerning internal changes are very important, not least from an ethical perspective. *Braden and Huong* stress that careful study of social and cultural boundaries are necessary to understand the power relations at work regarding individual/collective benefits. Research evaluations need to include examination of intra-community changes and not treat communities as one homogenous body. Communities in contexts may be highly socially stratified and contain a range of conflicting interests such as divisions between rich and poor and between men and women.

#### **.....Reflection & Positive actions**

Reflection is central to the experiential learning process within participatory video. Groups learn more about issues and the causes and devise home-grown solutions through investigation, reflection and discussion. Individual participants learn about themselves and their abilities through the introspection and reflection built into the process. Communities and the wider society see themselves, their peers and neighbours reflected back through the perspectives of others.

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<sup>21</sup> Su Braden, Than Thi Thien Huong; *Video for Development: A Casebook from Vietnam*; Oxfam Publishing, 1998 - Social Science

The process of participatory video can thus open channels of communication, create powerful messages for direct advocacy, ignite movements of solidarity, inform multiple audiences, influence decision-makers and provide a vehicle for the preservation and transmission of knowledge across generations and cultures. All through a constructive, positive and peaceful process.

## 5. The key PV Models

*Social change happens through people.*

*What a film can do—that is, whether it is video people have made themselves or a film made by professionals—a film can open up new horizons.*

*It can show people, similar to the ones they are watching, accomplishing things.*

*It can encourage people to try new things to get their lives in their hands. (Hénaut, 2009)*

As already stated, the participatory video definition stresses many “participative” elements: it is a creative use of technology, people are involved in the video production process and it is a group-based activity.

First of all the difference between documentary style and participatory video should be stressed, which is hardly worked out in the literature despite the recurring ‘struggle’ to mark that difference. However, some have described the differences as “With a documentary style you are finished when the video is finished. With participatory video, it usually takes longer. You finish when your goal has been achieved” (Riano 1994).

	DOCUMENTARY	PARTICIPATORY VIDEO
Who shoots the video?	Film maker/Director/Writer	Community, Groups of participants/stakeholders and the video facilitator together (collective authors and directors)
Who writes the script?	Film maker	A jointly formulated script by all the people involved in the Participatory process or no script at all
Who decides on content?	Film maker	Community, Groups of participants
Who’s the audience?	Undetermined (mass) audience	Determined in some cases (PV as a therapeutic support) Undetermined in other cases (PV as an advocacy process)
Is feedback expected?	Not necessarily, may stimulate thought in the audience	Yes, definitely: people are empowered to act
Process or product?	Product oriented	Mainly process oriented
Underlying paradigm?	Monism, objectivity	Pluralism, subjectivity



Other than this, three basic kinds of participatory video are identified: PV as a form of therapy, PV for activism; PV as empowerment-type video.

Participatory video can have its focus on empowering individuals (often 'against' other community members) or on empowering collective groups of people ('the community').

The following typology distinguishes three different development goals of participatory video projects, or more accurately, development goals determined by project planners or donors.

They are not exclusive; an ideal project may integrate several of the goals described below. The development goals also transcend the border between participatory video and non-participatory video to a certain extent. But they have nothing to do with the purpose of 'conventional' video making.

#### *Type 1: 'Therapy'*

Video is seen as a social and community-based tool for individual and group development. It can be a powerful aid in the cultivation and realization of people's abilities and potential.

This is the meaning of PV used in the VISTA project. The book of Shaw and Robertson (1997) describes the concept of therapy in participatory video<sup>22</sup>: it's a group-based activity that revolves around the needs of the participants. As already said, video is used to develop their confidence and self-esteem, to encourage them to express themselves creatively, to develop a critical awareness and to provide a means for them to communicate with others.

Participatory video is predominantly used with those disadvantaged by physical, attitudinal, educational, social or economic reasons, who would not usually express themselves through video, or attend a training course.

Active participation is an essential component. Group members operate the equipment for themselves, and a primary objective is the development of their control over their

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<sup>22</sup> It has to be pointed out that Shaw and Robertson do not use the term 'therapy'. The examples in their book often go beyond the idea of therapy as described here. It is also worth noting that Shaw and Robertson wrote their book for video practitioners preparing workshops for elderly or physically disadvantaged people. The examples given are not from development settings.

work. 'The thrill of holding a camera' is another important aspect of this kind of participatory video.

Attaining control over a creative, prestigious tool like the video camera or the cutting board has a positive therapeutic effect on the participants' self-esteem. Pushed by that experience participants decrease their "feelings of powerlessness" which they have built up through repeated experiences of inferiority in society.

Summarizing we can say "As social intervention, process video is biased towards reflexivity rather than toward direct political action or intervention".

### *Type 2: 'Activism'*

Again, it is difficult to find a label. The term 'activism' was chosen for its broadness. Associated terms are 'lobbying', 'campaigning' and 'advocacy'. In 'The Video Activist Handbook' by Harding<sup>23</sup> only few of the described examples and applications fall into the realm of participatory video. He sees a video activist as someone "who uses video as a tactical tool to bring about social justice and environmental protection". As a master example he mentions the beating of Rodney King in Los Angeles in 1992, which was filmed by an amateur standing on a balcony nearby. The footage was broadcast hundreds of times on TV channels around the world and subsequently used in court at the trial. Harding concludes from this example that "people suddenly realized the power of the camcorder".

The Rodney King example had nothing to do with participatory video. There was no dialogue between the filming and the filmed. However, in many similar examples video activists follow members of grassroots movements to demonstrations in order to protect the members from police violence by filming the event. Having video evidence at hand might assist people to avoid charges like false arrest. In England, to state another example from the book, the organization, 'Undercurrents' produces a grassroots news magazine with the slogan "the news you don't see on the news". The issues of the magazine are videos promising "ninety minutes of high-energy, passionate, in-yer-face action" They report, for example, about social and environmental protest actions. Again, this is a very interesting bottom-up initiative that questions traditional mass media, but it is hardly participatory.

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<sup>23</sup> Thomas Harding, *Video Activist Handbook*, 1997, Paperback

An example that did include participation to a certain extent is the following: the group around Harding produced video letters for a group of residents who suffered from a noisy and polluting aluminium factory in Wales. They collected local testimonies and included video evidence shot by the residents themselves. The video letters were first sent to the owner of the factory. When they figured out that this would not be enough they sent the letters to other stakeholders, such as bank officials, local journalists, the local council, etc., in order to create pressure against the aluminium factory. If this example should be considered as participatory video it depends again on the broadness of the definition. However, the point is that in activism-type video it is the activist who plays the largest part, in contrast to the therapy type, where the people or participants directly concerned are the main actors.

### *Type 3: 'Empowerment'*

Empowerment is located somewhere in the middle between 'therapy' and 'activism'. It integrates the two approaches by using the full potential of both, the people and the development communicator. The boundaries between subject, producer, and viewer collapse with this approach. Everybody is involved in the three key activities: filming, performing (being filmed), and watching the film. In addition, the development communicator plays an active role as a facilitator. This is the main difference to the therapy cases. The development communicator is not just directing but also involved in the communication and learning process. This, of course, makes it all the more complicated. The development communicator "experiences a constant struggle to find a balance between being directive and letting participants take initiative, between structuring and letting things evolve spontaneously, and between authoritarianism and nondirective dialogical approaches"<sup>24</sup>.

The people's task is not much easier. They need to adjust rapidly to a very creative but at the same time very demanding goal-oriented approach. People have a double responsibility: their active engagement is required in the production of the video and also in the distribution of it. If a participatory video project of this kind succeeds, it can be expected that people have been truly empowered.

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<sup>24</sup> Khawaja, N.G., White, K.M., Schweitzer, R. & Greensalde, J.H. (2008). Difficulties and coping strategies of Sudanese refugees: A qualitative approach. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 45(3),

Putting the three categories into a table may further clarify the differences between the approaches. The categories in the left column partly integrate the distinctions made above.

	<b>Therapy</b>	<b>Activism</b>	<b>Empowerment</b>
<b>Main role of the facilitator</b>	Catalyst	Activist	Mediator and facilitator
<b>Process or product oriented?</b>	Process oriented	Product oriented	Process or product oriented
<b>Focus on form or contents</b>	Content	Form and Content	Content
<b>Is the script developed?</b>	Often	Sometimes	Seldom
<b>If yes, by whom?</b>	The participants/the group	The activist	The participants/the group
<b>Who does the editing?</b>	The participants/the group (supported by the facilitator)	The activist	The participants/the group (supported by the facilitator)
<b>Who benefit from the Participatory Video project?</b>	The participants/the group	All the people affected by the "issue"	The participants/the group and also all the people affected by the "issue"
<b>Who is the target audience?</b>	People	Activist and People	People

## 6. Participatory video as a learning process

In participatory video, making a film is not an end in itself, and instead the focus is on the learning of the participants. But while learning technical skills can be part of this, the primary benefits are social. In good practice, the technology becomes a way for directing the attention of participants, rather than an audience, and activities revolve around “...*the needs of the participants. Video is used to develop their confidence and self-esteem, to encourage them to express themselves creatively, to develop a critical awareness and to provide a means for them to communicate with others*” (Shaw & Robertson, 1997).

Given that most film-makers are used to the need to make good quality films (and academics to address their constituencies with what looks like good quality research) there is often a tension between technical and social competences, which is expressed in the literature on participatory video in terms of discussions about product and process. Both White (2003) and Shaw & Robertson (1997) discuss the use of video with groups in terms of whether they are process or product led, saying both are important. However, there is a strong sense that while the product is important, it is its process which is primary. For Shaw & Robertson, for example, participation is distinguished from non-participation by technical focus, and non-participatory video arises when the quality of a production becomes an overriding concern at the expense of interaction with participants.

We think that much of the potential of participatory video arises because of this activation of participants as learners and also as social actors.

An important claim concerning PV is that it draws people into active roles, through a process of social learning.

Central to the concept of social learning are processes of *action, reflection, communication* and *cooperation*. Each of these processes is characterized by particular tensions and contradictions; they are never simple or consistent in themselves. Action moves to the individual from the group and vice-versa and embeds *need* and *competence*, reflection is the product of the opposition between *distance* and *identification*, communication swings between *unilateral* and *multilateral* control and, finally, cooperation oscillates between *consensus* and *dissensus*.

The PV process is a social learning process because it revolves around finding optimal and dynamic balances between oppositional processes that are in accordance with the peculiar conditions and needs of concrete contexts and challenges.

This way Participatory video enables self-expression and can bypass some of the formal institutionalizations of knowledge that prevent the expression of participant's needs and thinking. The claim here rests on the idea that individuals are drawn into a form of expression they are familiar with, drawing on their inherent visual literacy: PV allows people to express themselves in forms with which they're intimate rather than through the formality of an interview, workshop or questionnaire.

Some of the claimed benefits of the methodology are summarized in the table below which draws on Shaw & Robertson (1997: 20-6).

Benefits of participatory video (based on Shaw & Robertson, 1997)

Active Participation	<i>"In order to generate meaningful participation, development work cannot simply be imposed from above on passive recipients. It is crucial that people take an active part in the PV process and in the decisions affecting their development."</i>
Individual development	<i>"Recording their experiences and ideas on tape assists a process of self-definition. Video acts as a mirror. Playing back the recorded material can promote reflection and develop a sense of self."</i>
Communication	<i>"Video can stimulate two-way communication. The presence of the equipment generates discussion by giving a reason for talking about issues."</i>
Community building	<i>"Working with video equipment can in itself encourage co-operation. Video is a team activity. Participants have to work together to attain a worthwhile result, involving joint planning and decision-making."</i>
Social Learning	<i>"Agreeing on a topic for a video or a message to convey can increase a group's understanding of what it thinks about an issue...The shared strength can motivate people to continue working together to bring about improvements."</i>
Increasing institutional capacity	<i>"From the very beginning of a project, the group are all required to make decisions, and as their planning skills grow, there is a shifting of responsibility for the direction of the project from the workers to the group's members."</i>
Self-advocacy	<i>"As a project progresses, the group's desire to say something to a wider audience often increases."</i>
Empowerment	<i>"...the group can progress with an increased strength and power to use video as a means to participate in divisions affecting their lives, to communicate with and influence the prevailing power structures, and to bring about changes on an organizational, environmental or political level."</i>

## **7. Technical tips**

Over the last 30 years, video equipment (both cameras and video recorders/players) have become cheaper, lighter, less fragile and smaller. Picture and sound quality has improved; the art of filming has always been a question of talent and training rather than equipment. Digital video is among the latest innovations, which have reached the level of 'wide-spread affordability'. The idea behind this is that making a video is easy and accessible and is a great way of bringing people together.

Some advantages of digital video are worth mentioning here: digital video allows for computerized editing, which makes editing simpler, more flexible and less linear. Sequences can be exchanged and copied without loss; sound and picture can easily be separated and exchanged; subtitling becomes easier and cheaper. People without editing experience can participate in the editing process, making participatory video methodology more accessible

It must be underlined that, because the video foresees images and data of people, it's important to respect any regulation/law concerning the Data Protection as well as any sensitivities or concerns that the people involved may have.



## **PART II – PARTICIPATORY VIDEO IN THE VISTA PROJECT: A GUIDE FOR THE APPLICATION WITH DISADVANTAGED, MARGINALIZED AND OTHERWISE VULNERABLE GROUPS**

### **8. The use of Participatory Video with vulnerable groups**

In order to favour social and work integration of subjects with different levels of disadvantages (social hardship, marginalization, physical and mental disabilities etc.), the VISTA project has employed the PV process, seen as collective storytelling and as the narration of expressive, narrative and identity needs through shared audio-visual production which emphasizes the use of video as a social collective process with strong social, cultural and symbolic interaction traits.

PV has been directed more towards reflection than towards the actual production since the whole process was centred on participation.

This process can be very empowering, enabling a group or a community to take action to solve their own problems, and also to communicate their needs and ideas to decision-makers and/or other groups and communities. As such, PV in the VISTA project can be seen as a highly effective tool to engage and mobilize marginalized people, and to help them to implement their own forms of sustainable development.

Through this method it was possible to enhance personal and social skills and the value of communication in the age of media and communication tools.

The beneficiaries were the authors of the story and at the same time subjects of the therapeutical work about them: they were the actors and the directors of the film as well as their own audience. This was extremely important since being audience to ourselves means observing, reflecting and *monitoring ourselves* in relation with the world, with others, with objects, with the social performance we give life to.

The ease of the interventions, the symmetry and the relaxed spontaneity in answering increased the group dynamics and validated individuality. As a consequence, the most important way that PV fostered consciousness was through a periodic review of the action. This represented an exercise of the phenomenon of role distance, a dis-identifying with the performance and a shift to a "meta-role" stance: from this pausing and reflecting, it was possible to develop the capacity and even the

habit of shifting viewpoints, gradually building an inner "observing manager".

Thus, the beneficiaries of the VISTA project were able to see themselves and their emotional reactions in ways that they had never experienced before, which helped them to identify and more deeply delve into personal problems.

In Vista the video narration gave rise to a dialogue between the person and the self/image (represented in the video), which facilitated the development of one's own personal resources, also re-examining and correcting oneself.

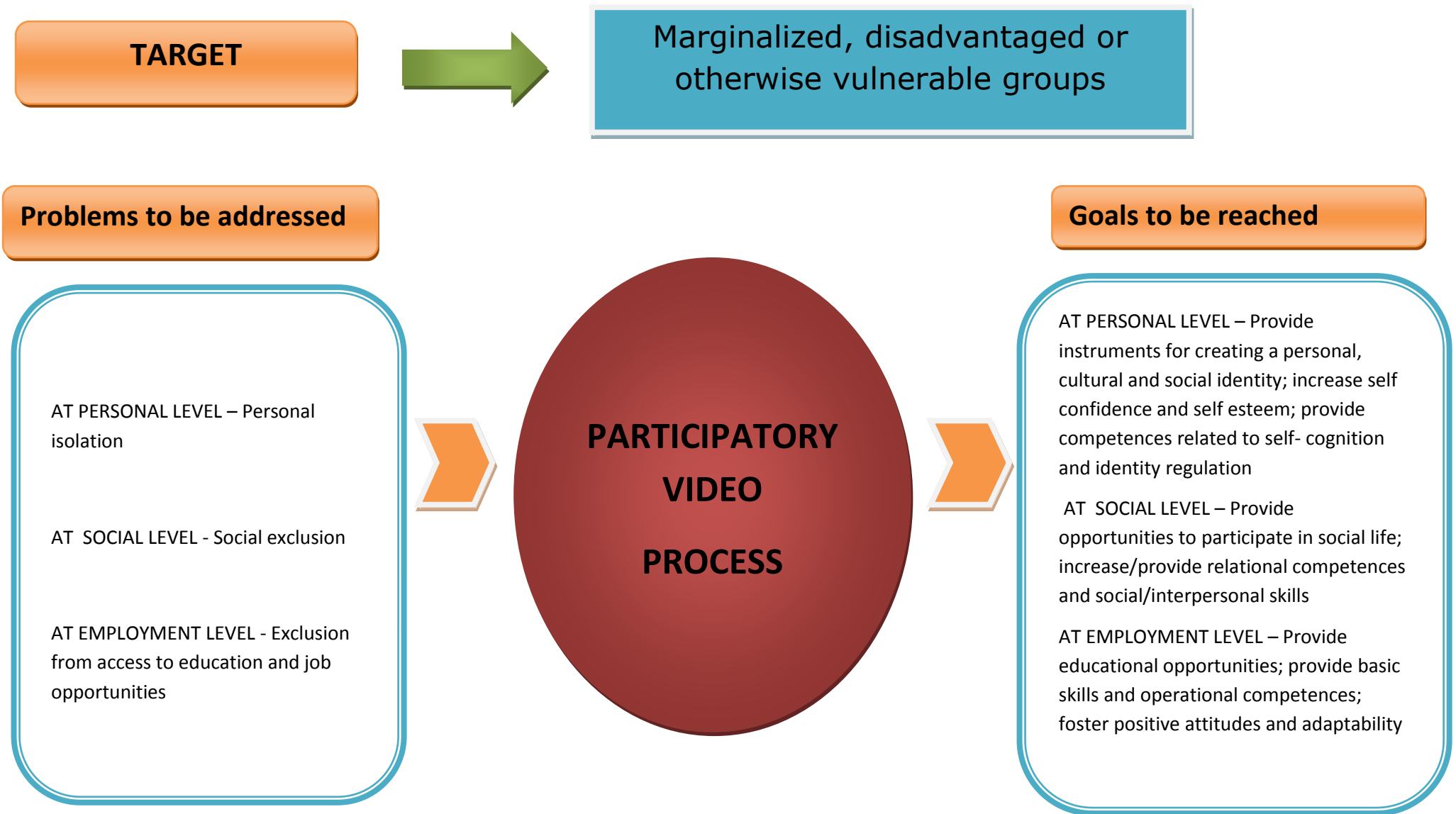
It has also been a path along which emotional and cognitive aspects intersected: the surfacing of new emotions brought about the acquisition of new cognitive and social competences.

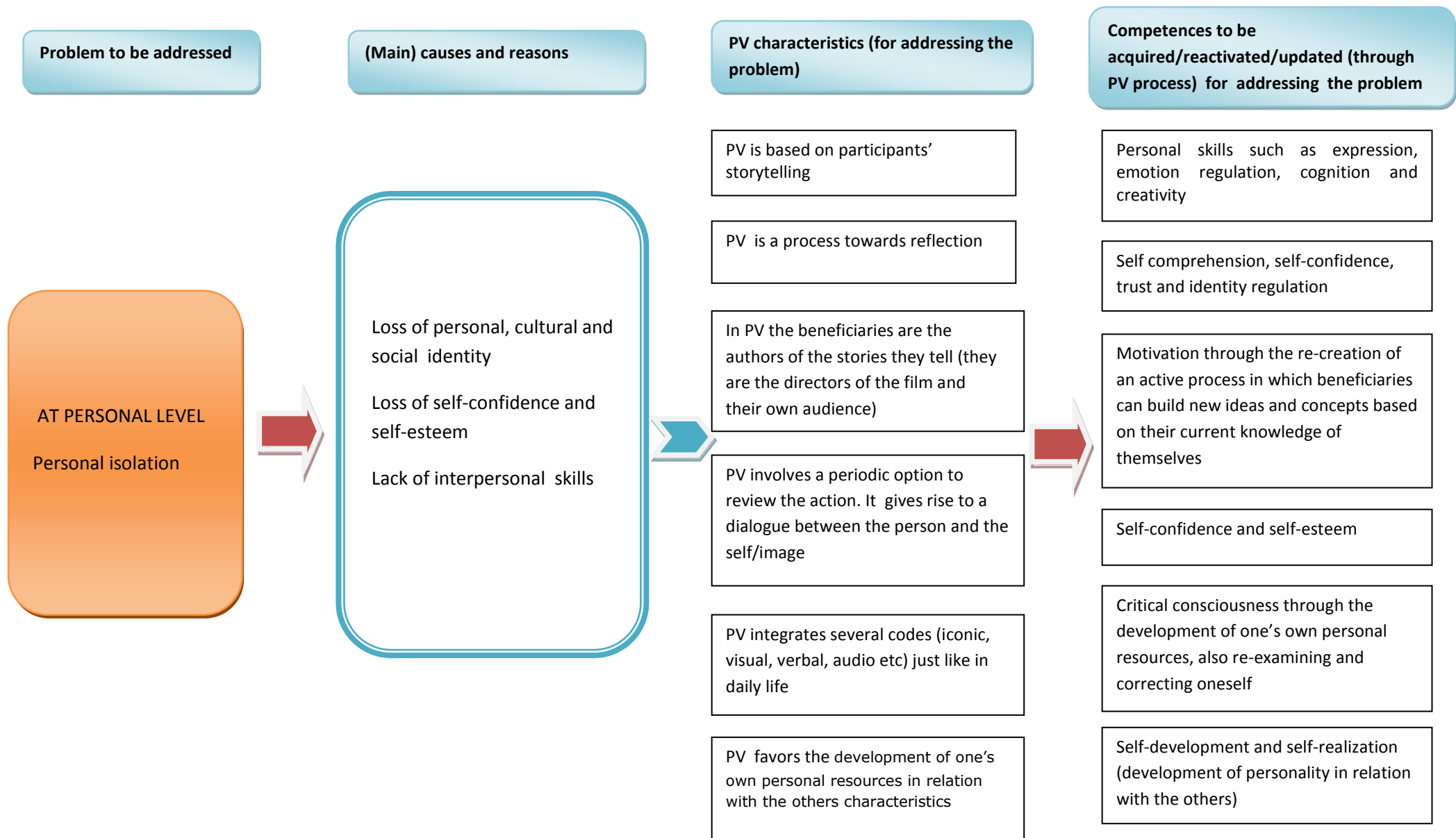
Therefore, the methodology proposed leads to the acquisition, the re-discovery and the consolidation of relational and communication competences indispensable for interpersonal relations which help people to adapt or re-adapt to both the social and work context:

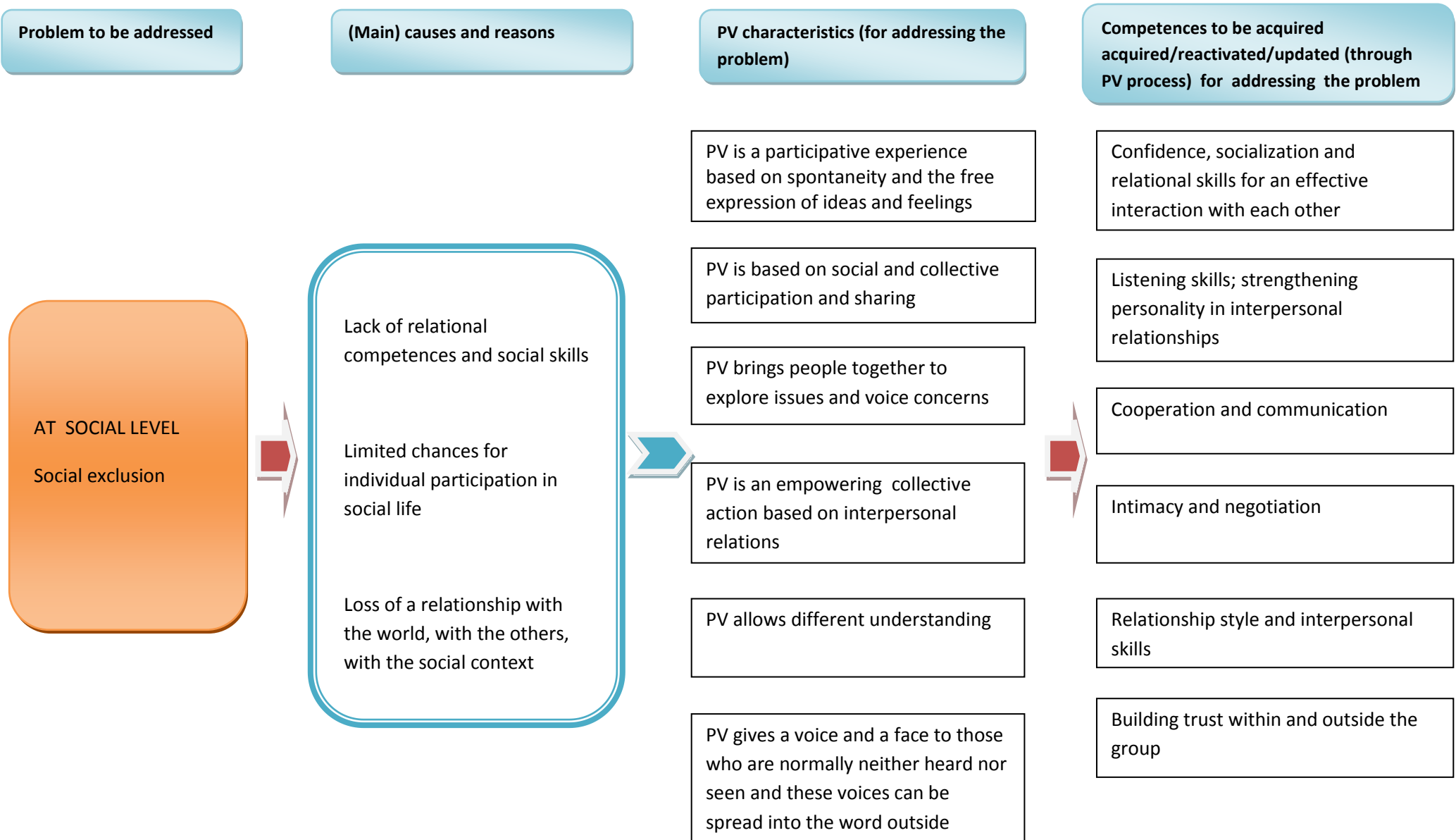
- ♦ Self-development and self-realization – development of personality (cognition, emotion, behaviour)
- ♦ Acquisition of operational and technical competences – use of the camera, video editing...
- ♦ Promotion of integration – support of instatement/re-instatement in society and in the labour market.
- ♦ Personal development, social integration, thus favouring social instatement and active citizenship

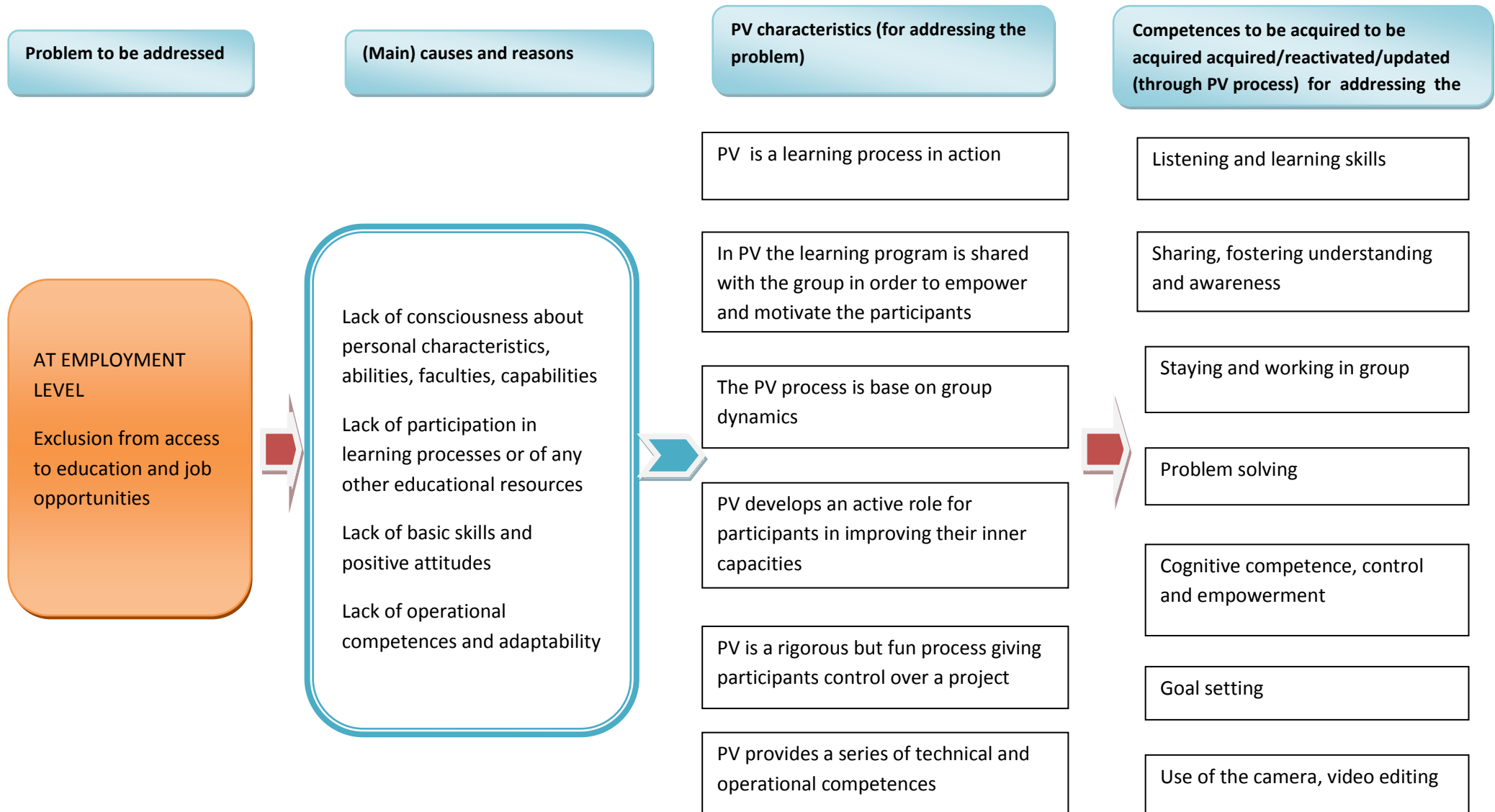
The following tables describe the model of the PV process in the VISTA project

## 9. Model of the PV process in VISTA









## 10. The PV actors

### a. Beneficiaries

In the Vista project the beneficiaries of the PV workshops are marginalized, disadvantaged or otherwise vulnerable groups.

Since marginalization is at the core of exclusion from fulfilling a full social life at individual, interpersonal and social level, the beneficiaries are people who have relatively little control over their lives and over the resources available to them.

Marginalization is a slippery and multi-layered concept. Peter Leonard (1984, p.180) defines social marginality as "*being outside the mainstream of productive activity and/or social life*".

The project foresees adults with different experiences of marginality: from people with typically life-long marginality (i.e. people severely impaired from birth or those born into particularly marginal groups that suffer discrimination like the Roma) to people for whom marginality is acquired, by later disablement, or by changes in the social and economic system (i.e. long term unemployed, adults with psychic disabilities etc.).

Whatever the origins and processes of marginalization, these groups have limited opportunities to contribute in society, they miss social opportunities and lose their self-confidence and their self esteem. The situation of oppressed people is also characterized by resistance and resilience. In resilience there is the potential for an enhanced, reclaimed and re-invented identity. The very fact of being oppressed, of having fundamental rights denied or diminished, may elicit attempts to remediate the situation.

PV, as already said, is a collective action which can help people respond to the challenge of their marginalization in constructive ways, opening up new possibilities for action.

It can provide an opportunity to document their own experiences and to express their wants and hopes from their own viewpoints, allowing them to record and tell their own story and to get their voice heard.

## b. Facilitators/trainers/video makers

Teaching methods based on videos are complex and use a particular narrative language which includes cognition, symbolism and emotions. Other than this it must be underlined that the users have particular personal situations, so the facilitator should value the disadvantaged experiences of the participants.

This means valuing life and insights gained, as well as the level and main reasons of their personal isolation, social exclusion and exclusion from access to education and job opportunities.

A trainer who works in a participatory way should communicate to the group that everyone is able to learn and that everyone has something to share.

He/she should be sensitive and responsive to issues that emerge from both the individuals and the group.

Generally, a trainer/facilitator in PV should possess qualities and skills such as:

- A warm personality and the ability to show approval and acceptance of participants
- Enthusiasm for the chosen subjects and the ability to share them
- Social skills, with the ability to bring the group together and guide it
- Facilitation skills that invite participants' involvement and actively build on their ideas and their capabilities
- Skill in noticing and resolving problems or challenges that participants might be having and
- Flexibility in responding to participants' changing needs, adjusting the speed of work according to the circumstances and try to work at the participants' pace.

*(Adapted from Pretty, Guijt et al., IIED 1995: Participatory Learning and Action: A Trainer's Guide)*

Other than this, the facilitator should:

### *Be a helper*

Participants should see the facilitator/trainer as a helper, not as an "expert" with special abilities. The whole point of participatory video is that anyone can learn the necessary steps and skill: the role/actions/manner of the trainer should help convey



this message. For instance, the facilitator should limit the time in handling the equipment. The demonstration should be as brief as possible.

### *Enable others to share their strengths*

In any group, some people will become confident with the video equipment more quickly than others. Others will be good at conducting interviews or preparing storyboards. Encourage these individuals to help others during exercises, always checking to make sure they do this in a supportive way. Enabling participants to share their strengths can help build confidence and a sense of mutual support.

### *Motivate the group*

The facilitator should be ready with ideas to stimulate the group at low-energy points; should invite ideas from participants, helping people to express what they feel, to empower them and to increase the awareness about the possibility to re-take control of their own destinies.

### *Provide support and feedback*

Offer positive input and supportive feedback during the course of each activity. Appreciative feedback helps build participants' skills and confidence. It also provides them a model for supporting one another within the team.



## **11. The Process**

### ***11.1 Stage 1 - Group forming through narration***

The starting point of the PV laboratory is the creation of a welcoming and stimulating group environment.

Based on participation, collaboration and co-operation, the PV activities should engage the participants physically, mentally and emotionally in a multisensory experience.

The "getting to know each other" can be the first step for forming the group. Further activities (simulation; visualization; role play; free discussion; verbalization of thoughts, questions or experiences; physical movements), based on the different stories of the participants, can give emotional stimulation both individually and within the group.

Members can bring their own commitment, their experiences and knowledge about what life is like from their perspective, sharing their perceptions and identify, prioritize and appraise their issues.

The more comfortable participants are, the more effective this workshop will be.

Safety and wellbeing of participating individuals and communities is paramount at all times.

Some activities can be suggested in order to form the group, such as:

#### *Activity profile*

Asking people about their daily activities.

#### *Approaching members constructively*

Rewarding members either verbally or through privilege for taking initiative and for their actions. Everyone needs to know their contributions are appreciated. Even if their comments are not practical, a reply can begin with "That's a good point but what about... ", or "That's an interesting point, what do others think?"

### *Brainstorming*

Asking members to think of any ideas that come to mind and listing them without evaluation or judgment.

### *Good, bad or in-between*

Showing participants pictures, each with a scene that could be interpreted as good, bad or in-between, depending on their point of view. Then discussing the different alternatives within the group.

### *Making something together*

Providing materials and objects and asking participants to make something. The facilitator will use the results to discuss communication and cooperation.

### *Participation game*

Each participant is given five sticks before starting a discussion about a topic they would like to share. The speaker, after his/her intervention discards one of the sticks. No one may speak without a stick.

### *Presentation of experiences*

Asking participants to describe personal experiences related to their daily life.

### *Problem-solving*

Drawing a table with four columns and listing the participants' main problems in the first column, possible solutions in the second column, what prevents them from solving the problem in the third column, and what will help them solve the problem in the fourth column. Discussion.

### *Song*

Participants make up a song about something they would like to tell and share with the others (e.g. how to increase group cooperation).

### *Stage 1 activities*

- help build trust, self comprehension, self-confidence and intimacy among the group members*
- develop personal reflection*
- favour the understanding of the participants' "inner view"*
- since all the participants are able to express their point of view and therefore their voices are heard, they help mutual understanding and socialization*
- develop empathy - the ability to identify with and understand another people's feelings or difficulties.*
- favour listening and communication skills*



## **11.2 Stage 2 – From Storytelling to the drawing up of a Storyboard**

Once reached a good cohesion within the group, it is time to begin one of the main phases of the VISTA PV process.

As already stated, in this project PV is seen as collective storytelling and as the narration of expressive, narrative and identity needs. PV is directed more towards reflection than towards actual production since the whole process is centred on narration and participation.

Through the building and rebuilding of the participants' narrations and talks, we must discover what story/stories the group would like to tell and film.

Creative activities should be organized in order to stimulate ideas, build group confidence and encourage and praise the stories of the members of the group. The facilitator should stress that everyone has a story to tell and a right to be listened to. Tools and cross-sensory exercises which stimulate creativity can be used such as role-play, games and group exercises as well as hands-on facilitation experiences, body movement, drawings etc. in order to spur the imagination to create original stories that go beyond existing themes and narratives they experience every day.

Sharing these narratives is important not only for their sense of identity, understanding and recognition by others, but as a form of creative expression and advocacy of issues in their lives.

Group members can be able to move beyond their everyday experiences to reveal poetic and imaginative renderings of their inner voices interpreting, reflecting, and artfully re-engaging in their world.

This can be seen as the starting point for the creation of a storytelling group, in which group members, starting from their own narration, can put elements together thus creating a shared story. The process starts with a germ of some shared ideas. The facilitator has the task to help the participants to bring together different ideas, viewpoints, methods, experiences in one story around a common theme.

The conceptualization of the personal narratives for the creation of a script, a sort of storyboard for the PV project, is in general up to the facilitator, if participants do not feel confident enough, but he/she should ensure that participants lead this activity and let the group own the story (better not to instruct or suggest but encourage participants to think about what exactly they want to communicate). The best solution is to create a scenario by using all the ideas of the participants, so they feel that the final scenario is a part of their own story and has points of their own lives, thus letting the group own the final storyboard.

It can be seen as a jazz song, with a deep structure (the overall storyboard) interspersed with free improvisation (the talks/narrations/ideas of the participants).

This process of working together to create a story is extremely stimulating and can be very empowering.

Furthermore, planning tools such as storyboards are also helpful ways to ensure equal and meaningful engagement of all participants.

### *Stage 2 activities*

- help to identify and analyze important issues, setting in motion a dynamic process of sharing and exchange*
- bringing together different ideas, viewpoints, methods, experiences in one story around a common theme, enable participants to creatively imagine and help in building consensus*
- communicate one's experience clearly and communicate ideas and feelings in a visually interesting way, with different locations and presenters*
- sharing ideas and perspectives, organizing something together*
- stimulate community members to "visualize" what they are currently doing and to consider jointly how they can do things better*
- develop skills on how to work constructively as a group*
- help to understand how to tell a story as a visual piece (with a beginning, a middle and an end)*
- form a collective vision for the community, building consensus*

### **11.3 Stage 3 – Shooting the story/stories**

Participants should begin by thinking about how to create a story using a camera. This is the stage in the process in which the participants undertake the production of whatever video they have planned.

It's the core phase of the method: until now the team has presented themselves, their ideas and their final scenario for the video project; from now on the creative part of the work begins.

Through the lens they have the opportunity to choose what to focus on, to reveal their environment and to reach out to an outside audience through the development of a coherent moving image project.

This way, PV method enables people to become creators and as such is a great catalyst for empowerment and change. The video becomes a tool to both reflect the participants' reality and highlight their potential to improve their personal and social skills.

This stage should be divided into four phases.

#### **Phase 1 - How to use the camera**

It is the first contact the participants have with the video camera and the aim is to offer them the opportunity to handle video equipment. It must be underlined that the participants should enjoy themselves, without being afraid of handling and using the it. Therefore, it will be presented as a simple and easy to use tool, through practical demonstrations of its basic features.

Participants should understand that making mistakes is part of learning and working together: it is not important if someone does not use it correctly. Everything can be re-done, adjusted or re-organized.

In this phase we usually use the "name game" exercise, because the camera functions are presented in a friendly and practical way.

1. *Everyone sits in a circle; all present should take part in the exercise. The facilitator also takes part.*
2. *The Facilitator hands over the camera in its case and lets the group unpack it. He/she must not take camera back until everybody has had a chance to film.*
3. *The facilitator should instruct Person A (whoever is sitting next to him/her) how to: hold the camera; switch it on/off; where the record/pause button is. It is important they do this themselves. The facilitator should observe the group to make sure everyone is following the instructions.*
4. *While the group is working with the camera, the facilitator explains that sound is captured as well as picture. He/She can ask someone to plug in the microphone (mic) and then show how to hold it level with one's chest and how to point it to the mouth.*
5. *The facilitator then asks someone else to open the screen and take off the lens cap, then press the play button and start filming, stressing also that the most delicate parts of a camera are the lens and the screen (maybe explaining that they are like the human eye and can be damaged by fingers and dirt). The lens cap must be put back on and the screen closed when the camera is not in use.*  
*During this explanation all the participants should have the opportunity to handle the camera. If some participants are shy, the facilitator should encourage them, saying that they can do it and that it doesn't matter if they make mistakes.*
6. *The facilitator asks a person to try zooming in and out. (Note that giving instructions should not take long – get quickly to the filming part, the action!). A person can film another one. They hold the mic, say their name and a sentence or two about themselves, e.g. something they are passionate about, or something humorous or banal like what she ate for breakfast...Then all the others try. The participant hands the camera to the person sitting next to him/her (clockwise) and the person talking also hands the mic to the person next to her - the process is repeated until everyone in the circle has had a chance to both film and talk, including the facilitator.*
7. *When handing over the camera the participant (rather than the facilitator) explains how to use it.*
8. *When everyone has filmed (including the facilitator) one of the participants will have the task (helped by the facilitator), to rewind the tape and plug the wires to the monitor and then immediately play back footage to the group.*



*Each participant, in turn, is interviewed, films an interview and interviews another participant on camera.*

*(Adapted from "Insights into Participatory Video: a Handbook for the Field by Nick and Chris Lunch)*

*Stage 3 activities– phase 1:*

*- make participants feel confident in using the camera and supply some basic skills about how to use it - on/off; record/pause; how to hold; how to frame a shot; how to record sound;.*

*- learning by experience (e.g. we all get to feel what it's like to be in front of the camera) help to become more sensitive.*

*- learn about each other as a group, because all are focused on a shared task and experience similar emotions as the game progresses*

*- increase relationship and group dynamics between the facilitator and group (the relationships are equalized in terms of power)*

*- all important technical skills are learned by the group members themselves*

*It is remarkable how much can be learned and achieved with this simple game, in terms of both technical learning and building group dynamics.*

## **Phase 2 - The roles within the group: casting the crew**

This phase is related to the allocation of crew roles for shooting the video. The roles can be allocated on a flexible basis.

After having illustrated the main roles (cameraman, camera assistant, person, sound/monitor assistant, interviewer, production coordinator, editing assistant etc.) of the crew (who they are, what they do, what are their responsibilities etc.), each one of the participants can announce in which part of the video making he/she would like to be involved in: it would be easier to focus on the video project as everyone knows exactly what they have to do.

What is important to underline is that all the participants will be actor or actress for this video project. But if someone does not desire to act in front of the camera, he/she could help with some other work behind the camera.

Planning tools such as storyboards are also helpful ways to ensure equal and meaningful engagement of all participants. Ideally, all participants should have equal opportunities to undertake all roles during the production phase. Roles such as 'camera operator' and 'director' are particularly powerful (they make the decisions about what is filmed and what is excluded) and can therefore be attractive to those who might otherwise dominate the process.

Participants should be encouraged to rotate roles on a regular basis to prevent any individual from appropriating particular roles.

However, if being personally involved in all the phases of filmmaking is difficult the whole activity could be divided into small groups

- One group will edit, expressing their opinion on the final visual style of the video.
- Another group will be in charge of the camera as camera assistants during the video shooting.
- A third group can be the interviewers.
- another group will select the locations.

Then the groups can be swapped.

In this sense PV brings everyone to the same level. Hierarchies that exist outside the workshop tend to disintegrate. Participants are constantly changing roles, from

camera operator to subject, from director to actor, and the dynamics of power are constantly shifting.

*Stage 3 activities – phase 2:*

- *make the participants understand that everyone in the group has something unique and valuable to offer.*
- *increase positive attitudes*
- *develop group-working skills, listening skills, self-esteem building*
- *improve motivation, encourage better awareness and develop an active role for participants*
- *build trust and respect among the group*
- *help create a "sacred space" where the participants know they can be themselves and be respected.*



### **Phase 3 – Fieldwork: videos are directed and filmed by the participants**

From now on the script becomes real. The participants are the directors, the audience, the protagonists... the PV method takes its final shape.

This is the time to start the video by filming the story and giving it faces and voices. Participants should film following the storyboard which, in our case, is a sort of basic narrative structure organized in shooting schedule that divides the script into separate scenes.

While filming, the storyboard is a point of reference, but the participants can be flexible. It's not a script that must be looked at constantly while filming, it's just a basic guideline which helps the process.

In this phase the facilitator should take care that all participants have their own role, help the group, check the progress of the filming and encourage all the participants.

Without the pressure of producing predefined outcomes, the facilitator of this creative project should open to the unexpected. Once one feels vulnerable when being filmed, one develops a heightened sensitivity when using the camera to film others. As both personal confidence and trust in the group grow, perceptions can alter drastically. The impossible becomes possible. A new experience of feeling powerful, of "empowerment", can lead the group. This phase enables people to become creators and as such is a great catalyst for action and for change.

The video can become a tool to both reflect the participants' reality and highlight their potential to change it. Through the lens they have the opportunity to choose what to focus on, to reveal their environment and to reach out to an outside audience.

Of course the best results occur when we focus on the process, not the product.

Concerning the process, the facilitator should not film until the participants have started using the camera. This gives a clear message that PV is different from traditional filming and that the facilitator is a member of the film crew, not the director. As work progresses the divide between facilitator and participant further diminishes: all are members of the same team. At this stage it becomes natural for the facilitator to use the camera occasionally (e.g. short shots of community members

using the camera to show the PV process in action, or cut away shots or log tapes important to keep track of what has been filmed on each tape).

Obviously the focus should always be to help develop confidence in using the equipment, and ultimately, control over the process.

Participants improve filming and interviewing techniques rapidly through regularly playing back the footage they film. This reflective, self-appraisal method is at the heart of PV (see next phase).

This process of filming can be fun and develops pride. It can build confidence and self-esteem and, of course, enable the group to develop control over the project.

*Stage 3 activities– phase 3:*

- make participants understand that we all make mistakes - that's how we learn.*
- develop flexibility and creativity*
- building self-confidence and confidence with the other group members*
- increase empowerment and control over the filming process*
- develop self-esteem and capacity building*
- teach participants how to be self-critical*
- Be proud of their work*
- nurture the sense of ownership*

## **Phase 4 – Screening back footage**

The PV method invites the expression of novel or original ideas; it is an tool of group dynamics which validates individuality.

As a consequence, the most important way that PV fosters consciousness is that the process involves a periodic option to review the action.

The ability of the video to replay footage instantly using the playback function creates a lively feedback loop and serves to reflect back "our reality".

The pattern of **film - screen - discuss** is one that lies at the very heart of the participatory video process and is integral throughout its various stages.

Screening back footage and reflecting upon successes, challenges, mistakes made and lessons learned is an essential part of each stage. Participants will rapidly learn by noticing and responding to issues identified and will be able to make informed decisions about what to film next and how. It is important to set a pattern of screening back and to consider logging footage as part of the PV process.

The need to playback and reflect upon footage that is built into the games and exercises undertaken during the initial stages does not end once production has started, in fact its importance in the process increases. Screenings (either directly to those filmed or to larger audiences) should be undertaken each time footage is recorded, thereby providing opportunities for everyone involved to take part in the discussions and decision-making processes.

The reflection upon footage represents an exercise of role distance, a dis-identifying with the performance and a shift to a meta-role stance in which the role player joins with the director and, from this position considers also the performance from the points of view of the audience.

From pausing and reflecting one develops the capacity and even the habit of shifting viewpoints, gradually building an inner observing manager.

This process encourages and supports participants to take part in all other aspects of the process including setting up the equipment, introducing the project, presenting videos, facilitating discussions and recording feedback. The participants are fully

engaged in the process and they can also understand, step by step, their development and proficiency. The willingness and confidence of the facilitator to handover responsibility is also likely to be noticed and appreciated.

In this transversal phase the facilitator should plan the structure and content of the screening carefully, considering each participant's role in the process and planning key questions to stimulate feedback and discussion. A very good exercise is also to focus on what they think is missing or could be improved.

*Stage 3 activities – phase 4:*

- *the capacity and even the habit of shifting viewpoints*
- *the critical consciousness through the development of one's own personal resources, also re-examining and correcting oneself*
- *the development of personality in relation with the others*
- *confidence, socialization and relational/interpersonal skills for an effective interaction with each other*
- *cooperation and communication*
- *building trust within and outside the group*
- *goal setting*
- *cognitive competences, control and empowerment*
- *problem solving*
- *the habit of sharing, fostering understanding and awareness*

## **11.4 Stage 4 – Editing**

In this phase the facilitator plays a key role in supporting participants to shape the videos.

PV is at its best as a collective exercise, so that through an ongoing cycle of filming and reviewing as a group, the participants together make all the decisions about what is included and what is left out. Through consensus a truer and more balanced picture will emerge.

Working this way, images are selected for filming by the participants themselves, who choose what and who to show.

Editing can be done by the facilitator (once the group has selected the images), by the facilitator with some members of the group (the ones who want to take part also in the technical realization of the video), by all the participants (if all of them want to be actors also of this process). It's not possible to get everyone involved in editing and many people won't be interested or have time anyway, but having a small group of advisors really helps to take some of the power away from the editor.

Nowadays editing is no longer the domain of professionals, most modern computers can immediately become editing studios and modern editing software are relatively easy to use, allowing to produce short films relatively quickly and easily.

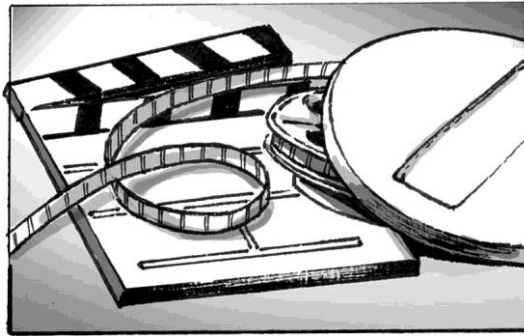
However, it can be a great challenge to maintain the ethos of participation at this stage of the process, also in view of feedback and agreement from the group. Even the smallest manipulation of filmed material, such as putting titles at the start and end and adding background in some of the shots can make a very professional looking product.

Finally, because the ability to edit films means that short, snappy participatory videos can have a wide "spread" potential, the participants should participate also organise their dissemination, deciding together who gets to see the final product and organizing events with the public, stakeholders as well as with policymakers, donors, students, other experts etc.



This is also for the group an important moment to review agreements made at the start of the project and talk about the whole experience.

It may only be at this point that some participants realize the true power of what they have created and it is useful to discuss with them again about the whole process and the experience of PV in action.



## **PART III – THE VISTA LIVING EXPERIENCE: THE EUROPEAN PARTICIPATORY VIDEO LABORATORIES**

### **12. Introduction**

As already mentioned, the VISTA project experimented the Participatory Video method with workshops addressed to different target groups in six European countries:

- UK: refugee women asylum seekers in the UK
- Italy: elderly people living in a borough in an historical centre
- Lithuania: group of Roma adults
- Germany: group of women of Turkish migrant background
- Greece: group of adults with physical and mental disabilities
- Spain: group of long-term unemployed with social difficulties

The experimentation was carried out with about 15 participants for each group, with differing degrees of social disadvantage or marginalisation and was focused on a specific area.

Each European workshop lasted between 60 to 80 hours divided into meetings of 3-4 hours each (as planned by the facilitator and the video maker and according to the groups' needs).

Each workshop was divided into six phases:

- Group forming through narration - the "getting to know each other" step in order to foster the participants own commitment, identifying, prioritizing and appraising their issues
- Storytelling - drawing the PV storyboard for a shared story told by the group members. The process started with some shared ideas and then the facilitator helped the participants to bring together ideas, viewpoints, methods, experiences in one story around a common theme

- The use of the camera - first contact with the video camera, opportunity to handle the video equipment (learning through practical experiences and enjoying oneself)
- Casting the crew - allocation of the PV roles during shooting, encouraging the participants to rotate roles
- Filming and editing - the PV method takes its final shape. Playing back the footage. This reflective, self-appraisal method (film - screen – discuss) is at the heart of PV.
- Closing session, elaboration, assessment - “what I leave behind and what I’m taking with me”.

These steps had no clear cut borders apart from the beginning and end in continuous interaction with the group’s life.

Each participant worked at his/her own pace during each session and during the whole process.

Through a rigorous participatory process which embedded experiential learning, reflection and adaptation, the participants were considered partners and collaborators to the project.

PV has the “power” to shift awareness, energise communities and unleash hidden energy for a positive individual and collective change.

*We have witnessed how transformative a PV project can be, how it gives individuals a sense of empowerment and confidence through enjoyable collective work. It also affirms peoples’ perspective, their knowledge and their everyday world.*

PV is essentially about participants and about them being able to voice their issues; therefore, this process has the potential to make participants acknowledge their abilities which should be a continuing experience.

PV processes generate a certain degree of enthusiasm, confidence and belief in the participants. But also struggles, challenges, obstacles and problems. Often the initial euphoria petered out, even if interest and trust in the process was maintained.

The whole project has made us understand that the participatory process has to be set up in accordance with the participants’ expectations and contexts.

In this way, PV can help catalyze the shifts in attitudes and practice that contribute to a sustained social change—even within the challenging context of marginalization, social hardships, disadvantaged situations and conflict-affected areas.

*"Participating in the project had an effect on me...  
now I am free to speak without fear."  
(A participant)*

### **13. Lithuania - "I have a dream": PV against stereotypes about Roma**

*"I would like to fight the "stigma" Roma carry and also promote, through our dream, a better picture of the Roma community"*

#### **The group**

Participants come from the Roma settlement of Kirtimai in the outskirts of Vilnius. The settlement is composed of about 115 houses and 500 dwellers. Infrastructures are poor, exclusion is high and most of the inhabitants are in one way or another linked to crime, drug-dealing or other anti-social activities.

Several participants used to live in the settlement and eventually moved out, but are still in contact with old friends and with their families, while other members of the group still live there.

Some of the participants were informally engaged in filming and being filmed, interviewed or otherwise involved in the video making.

#### **The Facilitator/trainer or video maker**

The facilitator is a professional film-maker who took part in the workshop as video maker/editor and has also been a social worker in the Roma community, being engaged in several relevant projects. He also has a friendly relationship with a number of people living in the Kirtimai settlement where most of the filming was done.

The combination of his knowledge of both technical aspects of shooting and film-making and editing, as well as his personal qualities and connections with the participants resulted in a professional yet informal and warm work atmosphere, which no doubt led to the participants feeling more comfortable and open to absorb the experience.

The facilitator was assisted by

- the director of the Roma Community Centre who, due to her daily work in the settlement, has a very good relationship with the participants as well as a profound knowledge of the community and of the so-called undercurrents and peculiarities of

the settlement which was extremely important when designing and implementing the project

- a professional social worker who, in addition to his daily work in the settlement, has an important university background and work experiences with other disadvantaged groups.

### **Climate at the beginning of the workshop and how the group was formed**

Each group was formed according to their specific needs and work was carried out quite easily since all participants knew each other beforehand.

Prior to the meeting the participants received the invitation to join the workshop which was a combination of exercises (including the VISTA exercises) with some theoretical introduction to filming and practical training.

At the beginning it was important to familiarise the participants with the camera, teach them its basic usage and make them try filming as soon as possible. This resulted in making them feel active right from the first days of the project implementation.

The filming itself took place in the Roma settlement in Kirtimai and the interviews were done partly in the House of National Minorities and partly at the Roma Community Centre.

### **Story/stories chosen**

The participants presented several stories and after long debates three themes for the docu-films were selected:

1. Building a church in the Roma settlement – “The temple of the soul?”
2. Leisure time of young Roma – “Eternal vacations?”
3. Self-employment of Roma women – “We can”.

At the end of the debate they choose the first proposal.

The story does not describe a particular event but more a 'dream' that hasn't yet been fulfilled. The group came up with the idea of building a church in the Kirtimai settlement which would be the first Roma church in Lithuania and one of the first ones in the world.

They then collected the opinions from the rest of the settlers, filmed them in their daily surroundings and while doing their daily work. The response to this proposal was either positive or very positive. The crew then interviewed representatives of the church (a priest), of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania (the Minister of Culture), Roma leaders and Roma community members.

The result is a rather comprehensive and convincing case, well-presented and well-made. The title "I have a dream" refers to Martin Luther King, which has a relevant role model both for the Lithuanian as well as the European Roma.

The participants showed eagerness to do more filming than even was initially discussed; therefore they continued filming also outside the working sessions.

The aim of the participants is to create a video to "verbalize" their ideas into a consistent and positive story (building a church) told by the community, to fight against discrimination and anti-Roma sentiment.

## **PV living workshop**

### *The use of the camera*

As the group was presented with the camera from the very first day, strongly encouraged to engage in filming and to be as proactive as possible, the contact of the group with the camera can be estimated as good.

Some exercises were used to both make the participants feel comfortable in front and behind the camera and to build their technical skills in filming.

Since some of the participants felt comfortable with both filming or being filmed the facilitator had to ensure that all had a chance to equally participate in the process.

Each filming session was followed by sometimes brief, sometimes lengthy discussions on the lessons learned and the challenges the participants might have encountered

during the day. This exercise was extremely important for the project's progress and development.

#### *The roles within the group: casting the crew*

From the beginning the allocation of the roles in the crew was very flexible, in order to allow the maximum possible number of participants to take part in the process as well as to be able to switch from one role to another. The selection of the participants was absolutely voluntarily and was based on their expressed interest.

After several sessions it became clear that four of the participants felt more involved in the process and wished to play more leading roles than the others and therefore switched between acting and filming.

Among the rest of the participants there were some who felt more comfortable in front of the camera and some who felt less comfortable. There are both general and specific reasons for this: those who consider themselves not to be photogenic or not eloquent enough do not feel comfortable in front of a camera and there are prejudices among Roma about being filmed since video cameras are now widely used by the police and therefore in any case did not wish to be filmed.

However, in general most the group members enjoyed the process, although for the final video some of them asked not to be filmed.

The participants had equal opportunities to play all roles during the production phase.

#### *Fieldwork: videos are directed and filmed by the participants*

Speaking about the filming process, it should first be mentioned that it was an evolving process throughout the project.

If at the beginning the facilitator would play a rather essential role and would also do some filming himself, it can be clearly noticed that as the project evolved, the other members of the group would show more initiative and be more proactive.

In general, it can be said that the video was mainly filmed by the members of the group who often showed their willingness to do more than what was initially agreed on and continue the filming outside the workshop.



This “homework” was later presented to the group to be discussed and then became a part of the final product.

### *Screening back footage*

We tried to have as many screenings as possible, as this part of the process is very important. Therefore, due to a number of logistical issues and time constraints, the screenings were organized after the filming sessions.

During the screenings, the group members gathered together with the facilitators and watched the footage.

The reactions were usually rather emotional. As the chosen topic did not explicitly trigger any heavy or challenging feelings amongst the participants, the general atmosphere of the screenings was very optimistic and light. The most common reaction to the footage was friendly laughter, and it seems that the group members enjoyed re-living the moments they experienced during the filming.

However, there were some privacy issues when some of the group members explicitly asked to remove from the final film their faces and any recognisable personal traits which could allow identification. This, however, was not the case for all of the group members, some of whom were pleased to be on video.

*“I had a dream and with this experience I can say that I’ve realized it”*

## **14. UK - "Asylum is a human right": PV to give voice to refugees**

*"My God, how can I break the silence!!!"*

### **The group**

The group participating in the PV workshop were from the international organisation "Women for Refugee Women" which fights the injustices experienced by women who seek asylum in the UK. Many of them are fleeing persecution targeted particularly at women such as rape, forced marriage, honour crimes and trafficking for forced prostitution. They were of diverse backgrounds and ages, with different experiences of the asylum process, different amount of time spent in the UK and differing levels of English language proficiency. Some were fluent, and others were not, as English is not their first language, they struggled at times to get their points of view across. Their countries of origin were Kenya, Uganda, Iran, Iraq, South America, Ethiopia, Sudan, Afghanistan, Syria, Lebanon and Eritrea. There are specific concerns about the low level of preventive healthcare measures and the impact of mental health problems including post traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety.

### **The Facilitator/trainer or video maker**

The facilitator of the group is an expert of the Participatory Video process: she has worked with InsightShare (the most important organization operating with Participatory Video) since 2007 as a senior PV facilitator, prior to which she worked as an independent filmmaker and visual anthropologist, with her main film project centred around different generations of Bengalis living in London. Her works with InsightShare's projects have included work in Asia, Africa, and Europe, working with different groups including women, youths and farmers, in urban and rural contexts. She has a special interest in working with women, and has undertaken several projects with groups of immigrant women in the UK, as part of a programme for confidence building, language learning and exploring issues of integration.

### **Climate at the beginning of the workshop and how the group was formed**

To break the ice the facilitator of the group used a game, introducing people to each other, and practicing each others' names. After that the facilitator introduced the proposed schedule using pictures to make it clear and understandable. This included the background, the purpose of the film, and who their target audiences are. They all signed consent forms to allow them to participate in the group. The group made a poster 'mistakes are great', to emphasise the learning approach – to welcome their mistakes so that they can learn from them. This helped the group to use the video equipment more light-heartedly and not be afraid to try.

All the subsequent activities fostered group-building, were interactive and employed different ways of learning. For instance – filming in small groups as a physical and team-building activity, then watching back to reflect and express feelings about themselves and others.

### **Story/stories chosen by the group**

Some sessions were spent in games and exercises to practice technical aspects, and to learn to work together as a group. They were enjoyable and fun, and gave the women a chance to work together as a group, not based on discussion but on fun learning activities. A further session included brainstorming activities before storyboarding to generate ideas for the film, as well as activities to understand the type of audience. The group had already planned to produce footage around the issue of destitution of women who seek asylum in the UK. Therefore, the activities focused on elaborating on this issue to include the voices and stories of the women in the group.

### **The PV living workshop**

#### *The use of the camera*

The facilitator used a series of games as exercises for the group to get to know the equipment and each other. The exercises were the following:

Name game – pass the camera around in circle taking a turn to film someone, and be filmed: the facilitator teaches the first person, then that person teaches the next one and so on. Tell your name and tell us something about your name.

Watching back – with projector and speakers. The women were asked the question “how did you feel in front and behind the camera? Seeing yourself?” This gave them the chance to share anxiety or excitement, and to support each other in their first attempt at filming. “What did you like, what would you do differently next time?”

(What was learnt: how to hold and switch on the camera, connect the microphone and headphones, how the light makes a difference to the picture, how the sound is picked up, whether it is nice to have many people in the frame or just one, what impact the background has, how to hold the camera steady).

Show and tell – Dividing the group into 3 teams to go out, film something for 10 minutes, each take a chance to film and to speak, and come back.

The facilitator recorded this technical learning on cards. There was a lot of fun and laughing about the mistakes.

#### *The roles within the group: casting the crew*

Throughout all the games and exercises, the roles were continually rotated and the facilitator ensured that everyone had a chance to film and to speak on camera. During the planning of the film, the facilitator made sure that those who wanted to, had a chance to speak and tell their story, and be supported by others in both filming and sound recording. There were several who did not want to show their faces on camera. Their participation was obtained by listening to their ideas in the film and the feedback also giving them the chance to use the camera. An equal access to playing all the roles during the production was difficult to monitor and maintain since the women had a different attendance rate during the skills development sessions, and because they wanted were interested at different levels of involvement.

There were several participants who did not want to appear on camera for different reasons: primarily fear of repercussions either on themselves and their family or on their extended family back in their home country. This changed for some throughout the project, since they were able to share their fears with others, be encouraged and find their voice.

The facilitator undertook one-to-one conversations with those who were unsure whether they wanted to participate or not. When this was not possible it was done by others.

### *Field work: videos are directed and filmed by participants*

A storyboard was drawn, including the personal stories of all those who wanted to share them. Other scenes were shot on location since the plan was to film the women when meeting an MP at the Houses of Parliament.

The facilitator filmed only when all the group wanted to appear in the shot and there was no one else who could film as for example during the trip to the Houses of Parliament.

### *Screening back footage*

The group watched the back footage after every day of shooting, apart from the day they went to the Houses of Parliament. They drew the different sections on paper, created a paper edit, discussed what was missing and filmed those sections. Some participants appreciated the fact that there were different sides to the story told by different people from different backgrounds all in the same film. Others instead, felt that the message was not quite strong enough. The group agreed that this was a good awareness-raising tool and that they could show it to other women's groups.

After the editing process by the entire group, the facilitator did the final editing, brought it back for a final viewing and obtained the consent to show the film in public. In the final session we watched everything and asked - is the message coming across? Is there anything that could make it clearer? Is there anything to add? The group members decided themselves the title and music and added some extra shots that were felt to be missing, as well as a summary by one lady who had not yet participated. There was a debate about whether or not to include the information about their countries of origin - this was desirable for some, but for others it was not felt safe - the reason given being that there are many spies in this country that could track them back to the home country and put friends and family in danger.

All the women reported that they were really surprised and happy to see how much more confident they all had become and at being able to speak out for themselves. Their level of confidence allowed them to recount their personal stories to an MP. This

is significant because the women most often prefer to speak in general terms, rather than share their own stories. However it has been noted by some MPs that more personal stories should be told to evidence the situation and enable them to prove that this issue requires action.

The women learnt to work together, shared their ideas and manage to build a supportive space for women to come forward and share their own personal stories. In addition, the facilitator led a session to help them plan and role-play how they would conduct the meeting – what their aims were, who would speak when, and who and how they would film. This helped the women to learn how speak their minds during a debate.

*"I have watched the film and I think it is very powerful  
and we should really be very proud of ourselves and also keep fighting  
for the rights of women seeking asylum all over the world:  
we will start it from here!"*

## **15. Italy - "When my neighbourhood was a place to live": collective memory encompasses individual memories**

*"But can this method restore reminiscence of my neighbourhood and can the film record our memories for our grandchildren?"*

### **The group**

The group taking part in the workshop was selected by the Social Service of Città di Castello and involved a group of senior citizens living in a once thriving neighbourhood in the historical centre now at risk of social marginalization. Adults live in a situation of border-marginalized isolation because they do not have a place where to socialise. These citizens started having problems arising from lack of social communication and feedbacks.

### **The Facilitator/trainer or video maker**

The process was facilitated by an expert in adult education, a social operator and experts in video making.

The facilitators involved also local organizations (pro-loco) whose main goal is to promote and keep alive neighbourhoods. This kind of organisations, which are also active in encouraging socialization among the elderly, are in daily contact with the group participating in the PV workshop.

### **Climate at the beginning of the workshop and how the group was formed**

All participants knew each other before the beginning of the workshops. They all felt isolated and without the possibility to socialise. Most of them do not have a close family any longer (sons and daughters living far away and rarely visiting) and some are widowed. The majority had a very negative approach to life. The group shared the idea that the best part of their existence was long passed and that no socialization was possible within the social circle represented by their neighbourhood since the current inhabitants were immigrants which they considered as "invaders".

Some of them had difficulty in socializing and speaking in front of the group.



It was not a completely homogeneous group since each member had different social background, class, cultural level and education.

In order to obtain cohesion within the group, they decided not to introduce themselves but to tell their stories through a sort of short autobiography.

The facilitator decided to allow them to present their stories without the camera. Then, the video-makers introduced the camera and asked them to say how difficult they thought it was to use it. Some knew how to use one while the majority considered it a "very complicate piece of machinery" specifically addressed to younger people.

### **Story/stories chosen by the group**

All participants shared a situation of social isolation and most of them claimed that the neighbourhood was not the "same as before". "Before" they had opportunities and places for gathering and meeting socially.

They decided to re-create the local identity re-discovering the neighbourhood as a way to tell the new generations how they lived before.

They decided also to carry the camera around telling the stories of places and people who used to live there.

### **A living workshop**

#### *The use of the camera*

The first contact was very unpleasant and critical. Participants had never used a video camera before, only a few had used a smart phone to take pictures. Then they filmed themselves, telling their own stories.

When the participants started using the camera, the facilitators presented a version of the "name game" where everybody sat at a round table and one by one took the camera and recorded someone else, asking to tell an anecdote of the local life in the past.

Most of them started with saying "when I was a child or a boy/girl."

After that the group started to enjoy the camera and filmed almost everything, showing pleasure in using it.

### *The roles within the group: casting the crew*

Each participant started telling stories about their past life in the neighbourhood, but also telling stories about the difficult present situation. Some of them didn't want to be filmed so they just told stories to the others during the PV workshops.

For most of them it was critical to "play a role" and they preferred to be called "guides" recounting stories for the new generations. The facilitators adopted this name and definition.

### *Field work: videos are directed and filmed by participants*

Once the group decided the content of the PV, it was difficult to ask them to use the camera and the facilitator convinced them to try and enjoy it. After a first attempt and during the "trips" around the neighbourhood they actually ended up "squabbling" for the camera. The women were in general more diffident than the men. Some of them also asked to continue using the camera after the end of the workshop. The trips were in the three neighbourhoods selected: each group decided beforehand where to go and who to meet.

The script was informal and the facilitators asked to write down some lines about the story of the day.

The facilitators stimulated the coherence of the memory, trying to define the mental paths based on the group's autobiography and memories.

### *Screening back footage*

Other than screening back shorter scenes during filming, the group had sessions specifically devoted to watching first everything that had been filmed and later the first edited versions of the takes. At the end, they also watched together the final movie.

Seeing themselves on screen was an important experience. They were all very excited and proud of what they had filmed and said.

The screenings also sparked off some heated and very useful discussions which helped the participants to share their opinions, cooperate with each other and make

compromises. Their contribution to the film and the fact that everybody's opinion mattered gave them confidence. The participants also reflected upon the facts they remembered, thus discovering the 'why' of events, their shapes and their moulds.

In this way the collective memory encompassed the individual memories while remaining distinct and the group provided a portrait that unfolds through time: an image of the past that allowed the group to recognize itself throughout the succession of the filmed images. At the end, looking back to their past, the group felt stronger, becoming conscious of its identity through time.

*"I'm so proud!!! The video we produced is a bridge  
between our generation and the new ones".*

*"After the PV experience, I'm using the camera almost regularly and I'm always  
invited to family celebrations to film and make short videos for neighbourhood families  
and friends"  
Riccardo, 79 years old*

## **16. Germany - "Between worlds": The stories of three generations of Turkish immigrant women**

*"I waited, and waited and waited.... But nothing happened!  
My husband always said he was going to fetch me, but when? Three years on my  
own! I thought I would not get through it! "*

### **The group**

The group consisted of women with Turkish migrant background. The work was done according to the mother tongue of the participants, the goal was to create an environment where they could trust each other, share their experiences and problems, break out of their isolation and together find solutions to their problems. The age is wide-ranging, from 18 to 65: the members of the older generation were pensioners who used to work as saleswomen, cooks, cleaners or housewives; the younger members are housewives, saleswomen, a teacher and a student.

The participants came from different backgrounds, the connection between them was that they all came to Germany from Turkey. They arrived in different times, starting from the first wave of guest workers in the 1960s and 1970s, the second generation being their children who were already born in Germany and the third generation, their grandchildren. Their problems are also different according to which generation they belong to, but being out of employment, not speaking the language properly, not having enough social contacts with the German society are common issues. The older generations also have to face problems arising from not having attended school in Turkey and therefore not being able to read and write, as well as not having any qualifications to find proper jobs. The newer generations, having grown up in Germany, find it easier to integrate into society, they feel part of it, what they have to face is prejudices first at school and later in the labour market.

They feel that they are still regarded as the "poor migrant women" who are unable to do anything, which is not the case at all. The group was enthusiastic about the idea of making a film, since they felt that people know far too little about them, they don't know what they have been through, what a long journey is behind them, how far they have come and what they are capable of doing. People talk a lot about the guest workers who came to Germany, but what about their wives who were left behind in

Turkey and followed them years later? How did they cope? They wanted to show the story of the guest worker from a new perspective, from the women's point of view. They wanted to show that they are strong and skilful women.

### **The Facilitator/trainer or video maker**

Two social operators and a PV expert (who founded and manages the PV company "My-view" in Köln) were the facilitators of the workshop. The PV expert has worked with the method for 7 years, even not knowing at the beginning that the method she was using was called participatory video. She uses the method in social work, mainly with young people under 25, but also with adults. Setting the goals in PV-work always follows the needs of the participants – this has been very important for the PV facilitators. The group has to make its own decisions: the facilitators should not arrive with a ready concept about the film to be made but let the events during the project guide the process.

For these reasons the goal of a PV project is to initiate the following processes:

- creative examination of one's own story and social circumstances
- inner development
- strengthening of social skills
- breaking down prejudices through communication
- change of perspectives
- dialogue and understanding between antagonizing groups and parties in conflict
- point out problems and make them public

### **Climate at the beginning of the workshop and how the group was formed**

The group knew each other before the film project started. As they were all very interested in it and enthusiastic about the possibility of making their own film, the activity started with a highly motivated group. To start with, the group prepared (and ate) a great Turkish breakfast together. Then they played a few games, so that they could start thinking about their common ground in the group (Yes-No-Maybe; Interviewing each other; Brainstorming, Presentation of experiences, Singing and

Dancing). The involvement of the participants was clear from the beginning, and later the facilitators did not need to invest time in motivation.

### **Story/stories chosen by the group**

The group had a quite clear vision of what they wished to tell the world in their film, but they needed time and help with deciding in which form and framework they could tell their stories and which aspects to focus on. There were an abundance of stories coming to light through the collection process. The participants themselves were greatly surprised by the fact that although they had known each other for a while, they had never heard most of these stories before. They were very open and honest, and told each other both the bad and good sides of their experiences. The facilitators listed every idea and every story on a board, and as they were all very interesting and moving, it was a difficult decision to choose. The group wasn't too keen on the idea of a fictional presentation, they preferred to have a more documentarian approach. They agreed that a story is most truthful and believable if told by the person who experienced it. Therefore they decided to interview every member of the group who was willing to share her story and then select parts of the stories that fit better to the main theme and focus of the film. Seeing all the stories listed it was also easier to see the central focal points that connected them. The group very quickly found the theme "Generations" as a central line, and decided to follow that as a starting point. The older generation had a lot to tell about their days alone in Turkey, when their husbands came over to work in Germany, and the wives had to wait patiently for years to be able to follow them. The next focal point was the arrival in Germany and their first experiences in a new country, both in their families and at work. Then it was followed by the differences between the generations in attitudes, in ways of thinking, in opportunities, in lifestyles. How was it back then, 30-40 years ago, and how is it today? One aspect was very important for the group all the way through: although they wanted to show the difficulties, they sought to emphasize the positive sides even more, and to show that it is possible to cope with these difficulties and with willingness and commitment to create a better life.

### **A living workshop**

*The use of the camera*

The video cameras were received with great excitement in the group, especially by the older participants, most of whom had never held a camera in her hands before. They didn't seem to be afraid of the unknown equipment, they were eager to try it out, with the exception of a few women who felt quite uncomfortable about filming or being filmed. After a general introduction into the main functions of the camera the facilitators divided the group into three smaller groups so that each facilitator could work with one. First, the camera went around in the group and everybody had a look at the buttons and learnt how to switch it on and off, and how to keep it still when filming. The older participants needed a bit longer to grasp the idea of having to look into the camera or on its screen while filming, as the camera can't "see" with their eyes. They all interviewed the person sitting next to them and then passed the camera on. After that they watched with great excitement what they had just filmed, and slowly they all became more comfortable and relaxed about being filmed. In the next exercise the facilitators asked the groups to try to act out different emotions (surprise, anger, laughing, etc.) and one person in the group filmed these scenes from different perspectives (from above, from below, from close and from far) to see what the effects were on the recording. All three groups also learnt a few basic "rules" about not zooming, using an external microphone and so on.

#### *The roles within the group: casting the crew*

The process of "casting the crew" seemed to be happening by itself. 3-4 women automatically took over the role of the "organizer" while most of the group was ready and willing to be filmed, and they decided to sit behind the camera during an interview, all asking questions from the person being interviewed, and sometimes turning the interview into a discussion. During filming the other scenes in the group always discussed how they wanted to do it. There were no conflicts about roles in the group.

#### *Field work: videos are directed and filmed by participants*

The main body of the film was based on the interviews with the participants. The group chose together where the interviews should take place and set it up. They sat around the camera opposite the interviewee, one of them filming, the others asking

questions and discussing. Filming these scenes was not difficult, and the members of the group could do it themselves.

For the filming of other scenes the facilitators organized separate dates with those who were involved e.g. some members of the group meet each other at the railway station in Dortmund Hörde on a Saturday to film the "arrival by train" scene; for the "preparing and having breakfast" scene and in the Westfalenpark the group decided when and how. The reading, singing and playing music scenes were also filmed by the group.

All the members showed motivation all the way through. They surprised the facilitators with their openness and honesty while discussing really difficult topics, and managed to keep a positive attitude despite the tragedies and hard times they had to go through in their lives. They were very enthusiastic to be able to share these stories with a wider public and to be listened to by people who knew so little about their backgrounds.

### *Screening back footage*

Apart from screening back shorter scenes during filming, two sessions were specifically devoted to watching first everything that was filmed and then later on the first edited versions of the scenes. At the end, also the final movie was watched together.

Seeing themselves on the screen was an important experience for the members of the group. They were all nervous and slightly embarrassed in the first moments, but then also proud of what they filmed and what they said. The screenings also sparked off some heated discussions very useful for the film (e.g. should a participant wear a headscarf in a scene or not?; or can we show a family conflict so openly in the film?), which helped the participants to share their opinions, cooperate with each other and make compromises. Their contribution to the film and the fact that everybody's opinion mattered gave them confidence.

Apart from the technical knowledge they gained, they learnt a lot about themselves and the other members of the group. They exchanged their experiences, views and opinions, they discussed issues important for all of them. They learnt to work as a team in a new challenge, cooperate, compromise, listen and make decisions together. And last but not least they created something together that they are all very proud of:



a film they can use to open a dialogue in their community and with the wider public too.

*"People may know the stories about the men who left Turkey and came to Germany  
To find a job and a better life...  
but what about their wives who were left behind in Turkey and followed them years  
later?  
How many letters we wrote, how many difficulties we had to face,  
which hardship we had to fight and how difficult was our arrival in Germany!"*

## **17. Spain - "Let's try again": Motivation for finding a new job and start living again**

*"Only a person unemployed can understand how difficult is the life of a jobless"*

### **The group**

The participating group was selected through the "AEDL" (Local Employment and Development Agents), a network working with adults who are not in the labour market.

The criteria for selection were: over 30 years old and long-term unemployed.

The group was made up of adults between 45 and 55 years of age with low economic resources, long-term unemployment, with difficulties to find a job due to their low self-esteem. The common feature is that they are not encouraged to change their attitude to modify their situation; they have low personal capacities to demonstrate their strengths and they find difficulties in managing their frustration; they have low social and relational competences and low emotional balance: all these negative traits cause a very low expectation of succeeding in the labour market.

### **The Facilitator/trainer or video maker**

The PV process was facilitated by a sociologist, a psychologist (both with several years of professional experience in group therapy, psychodrama and active methods for job seeking) and an expert in video making with a deep know-how about the use of the video in therapeutic processes.

### **Climate at the beginning of the workshop and how the group was formed**

None of the participants knew each other before but they had some common elements: strong emotional nature, frustration, shame, anger, powerlessness, despair, indignation and low self-esteem. All these feelings interfered in the development of the PV activity given that their concern is finding a job; the different skills and competences among the participants derived from a polarization in the group, not conflicting but with low motivation.

In order to obtain cohesion within the group, they introduced themselves to the others, giving information about their life.

During this activity the facilitators realized that the main problem (unemployment) influenced their presentations more than expected, so they decided to work on a double level in the following sessions:

- improvement of self-esteem/personal knowledge and empathy: each participant made an effort in sending messages to the person sitting next in a positive way. The used technique is called "chain of success": each participant has to describe the successes reached in his/her life;
- improve the group cohesion through the "mirror technique" using the video camera to break the ice, talking to the camera explaining their life experiences, introducing them and stressing their fears, expectations and what they can be able to offer to others. The purpose was also to gauge the level of self-esteem and, through a cognitive restructuring circuit, to make them able to see how the thoughts about themselves can influence their daily reality.

### **Story/stories chosen by the group**

All participants shared long-term unemployment; therefore, all ideas proposed were linked with the topic of "job".

A brainstorming session was organized in order to select the script, where each participant proposed a topic or matters of interest. At the end they decided to use this experience to show their value and to underline the fact that 40-50 years old people are still skilled enough to be able to be active in the labour market.

To do so, they tried to show the real situation of job seekers in Spain, including industrial areas where many enterprises have shut down. The video records images about a day out looking for a job: going to the Spanish Employment Office, reading the vacancies offered in newspapers, websites, employment services agencies, etc., always hoping to find a job and starting a new life.

### **A living workshop: the four phases of the PV process**

*The use of the camera*

Participants had never used a video camera before, only a few had used a mobile phone. Despite this, the first experience was spontaneous: participants took the camera and started to explain to each other the basic operations of this "new machinery".

Then the facilitators proposed the "name game" and, after, the group started filming each other and watching the recorded material. This was the occasion for commenting their problems and failures in the shots. Through this recording, the facilitators introduced simple technical and artistic concepts to improve the use of the camera, such as composition, lighting, different types of shots, sound, camera movement, zoom, angle recording etc. This was supplemented by further exercises to practice the learned concepts by recording, viewing and evaluating this material.

#### *The roles within the group: casting the crew*

At the beginning, most of the group members played the role of cameraman and only few of them played the role of actors: they felt embarrassed being recorded, afraid or scared to express themselves publicly. One person broke the ice starting playing a role of unemployed people looking for a job, and afterwards the rest of the participants followed suit.

Manly women were reluctant to act in front of the camera, so they were the last ones in participating. Nevertheless, once they acted several times they got familiar with the camera and enjoyed it. Those more skilled encouraged the others to participate and play their roles.

#### *Field work: videos are directed and filmed by participants*

Once the group decided the content of the PV and drafted the script, facilitators suggested a chain of scenes that could be good for the video, and to this the group added other ideas, remarks and selected better places for recording.

The recording of sequences and turns for recording were decided by the actors and actresses in each performance.

Sequences were repeated as many times as required causing laughter so this was an example of enjoying the PV methodology. Participants were aware of the objective of the work which was not the product itself (PV) but the whole process of recording.

Although at the beginning it was difficult to focus the objective and make people understand the aim of the project (given that a lot of sequences were repeated several times), the group strived to do things better and record a good video.

During the process, facilitators checked the progress: new skills acquired related, in particular, to the growth of self-esteem and to the management of frustration.

### *Screening back footage*

The screening back footage prompted the participants to break the chain of feelings, emotions and negative thoughts caused by being unable to meet the personal expectations because unemployed.

A further challenge was that participants shifted the focus from their own problems in order to furthermore develop participatory attitudes and behaviours. Thereby, seeing the problem in a "right" perspective, they could increase their self-esteem, so damaged by long-term unemployment.

That is why for them performing the video has been a success in itself because the group has increased its resilience, ability to cope, personal resources which were latent up to that moment.

Furthermore, the uniqueness of the experience is not just the use of the video, but a particular way of working with this tool, the participatory process that is based on a series of personal goals to be achieved: it has been a social activity.

Through the PV process a new opportunity was given to the participants: solving their depersonalization problem and being aware of their own human values, thus increasing confidence in the development of an autonomous and independent inner renovation process.

*"I've learnt that through reflection on identity, organization and self-representation of subjects in audiovisual format we can see forgotten realities".*

## **18. Greece – “A day without limits...”: Diversity is a story to be told**

*“I want everyone to see our movie, to see that disability is not inability but a form of diversity that should be understood and respected. But what does diversity mean? We are all so different from one another...”*

### **The group**

The group was composed by adults with physical disabilities, tetraplegia, hemiplegia, spastic paraplegia and cerebral paralysis. The age varies from 18 to 55 years old with different levels of education and different attitudes. Some of them feel part of society and do not feel marginalized while others consider their disability as a deterrent to any satisfactory life thus losing both self-confidence and self-esteem.

### **The Facilitator/trainer or video maker**

The facilitators were two social operators and a specialist in audio and video technologies who has worked for many years as a trainer with disabled people using video and photography.

### **Climate at the beginning of the workshop and how the group was formed**

The group already knew each other and they have worked together in the past in other programs. They were very motivated to take part to the PV workshop.

However, from the first meetings the facilitator used exercises such as the Activity profile, Brainstorming, Making something together, Presentation of experiences and Participation Games, all of them by using the camera. These exercises helped the group feel more relaxed and more comfortable.

### **Story/stories chosen by the group**

The facilitators divided the participants into separate groups that shared their stories in order to find out common ground for the realization of the PV storyboard.

Then, two members of the team wrote down the final script by using parts of all the presentations. The final idea and the final story was to show everyone their daily life, the good but also the bad times of disabled people while promoting the message that life not only goes on but it can be beautiful even for the disabled.

### **A living workshop: the four phases of the PV process**

#### *The use of the camera*

At the beginning some participants felt uncomfortable with the use of the camera, mostly because they were afraid of making mistakes or damaging it. Some others felt very confident and wanted to use it all the time.

The group forming activity was filmed by the participants themselves and this made them feel better and overcome fear.

The most important exercise was to sit in a circle, hold the camera and film the others while they were talking about themselves. After that they watched together what they had filmed and discussed about the experience.

#### *The roles within the group: casting the crew*

In this phase a few problems arose because the some "leaders" of the team wanted to be the protagonists of the film.

On the other hand, some participants felt shy or didn't wish to act in front of the camera.

In this phase the facilitators stopped the process and talked about the aim of the workshop and the idea of the project: work together, listen to each other, leave space to others, create something "participative".

The group understood that the film belongs to all and everyone has his/her own role: they decided in which part of the video they wished to be involved in.

#### *Fieldwork: videos are directed and filmed by participants*

Everyone wanted to be part in the shooting even if they had another role. They wished to give their insight and sometimes the scenes changed because of a new

idea. Each member encouraged the others and didn't want to stop until the end of the scene.

The facilitators in this phase underlined that all the participants had their role and they helped the group to proceed with the filming encouraging all the participants.

Facilitation means making people understand that the message of the film is entirely delegated to the group members. This way the participants become creators and this is a great catalyst for action and change.

The video can become a tool to both reflect the participants' reality and highlight their potential to change it. This process of filming was fun and the participants were proud of it. It built confidence and self-esteem and, of course, enabled the group to control the project.

### *Screening back footage*

The ability of the video to instantly replay footage using the playback function created a lively feedback loop and served to reflect back "the reality".

The pattern of *film - screen - discuss* was integral throughout the PV workshop, in its various stages.

Screening back footage and reflecting upon successes, challenges, mistakes made and lessons learnt was an essential part of each stage. Participants rapidly learnt by noticing and responding to the issues identified and were able to make informed decisions about what to film next and how.

The reflections of the group members during the screening back footage were: critical view, re-examining, correcting oneself, cooperation, goal setting, shifting viewpoints, learning how to discuss and solve the problems, learning through the others.

the group members wanted to be the protagonists also in the editing process. They wanted to choose what to show and what to cut. The group proposed also good ideas about the music and the titles for the opening and closing credits.

The experience of the PV workshop makes social change a real possibility. The PV method is an excellent therapeutic tool for disadvantaged adults, it is an easy and innovative way for developing social competences, for identifying and analyzing important issues, for bringing together different ideas, viewpoints, methods,



experiences in one story around a common theme that allows to listen to voices otherwise unheard.

*"This experience is for those, like me, who do not feel they can have a voice and are marginalized in our society. It is always good when you are involved in things in which you feel you have an important role to play".*

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