



## Insights into Participatory Video – A Handbook for the Field.

Lunch, Nick. Lunch, Chris.

Insight (UK), 2006

125pp

[http://www.insightshare.org/training\\_book.html](http://www.insightshare.org/training_book.html)

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The technique of participatory video for development and social change continues to gain popularity and success stories around the world. Separating participatory video (PV) from traditional documentaries, is the absolute involvement with the community to create their own film, from the content to the actual filmmaking. It is an effective way to bring people together to discuss issues and voice concerns. The process is intended to be empowering at the local level which ideally will lead to the community solving their own problems, communicating their ideas to other communities or to decision makers to facilitate change.

In its intended application as an in the field guide to encourage and improve PV projects, Nick and Chris Lunch's handbook and DVD "Insights into Participatory Video" is both successful and slightly limited. The book offers no shortage of useful activities and teaching methods, explanation of the process and ethics, important tips and possible problems which may arise, as well as personal accounts and success stories written and included for view on DVD. It continually reaffirms the importance of community participation and empowerment at every level to ensure success and positive change, but it lacks some important information for potential users.

The authors note acknowledges straightaway that their book is not written by academics, but by practitioners in the effort to clarify, diversify and encourage the use of PV. However, this note should immediately address an issue of caution when entering such a project. One should be circumspect of creating empowerment, raising controversial issues within a community or changing power roles. If done hastily, incompletely or with a conscience or unconscious Western bias, the outcome can be a failed project or worse. With human lives and communities at stake, the lingering ethical question remains; should Westerners interfere and influence change in other communities?

Lunchs' guidebook is a refreshing movement away from academic theory to practical, useful activities, and methods for use in real situations. However, academic publications rightly caution against instant universal success, and provide a more in depth study of the methods, techniques and theories as well as potential negative consequences (e.g. western bias) both intentional and unintentional. One however can not knock the author's vigor and enthusiasm for actually getting into the field, ignoring the bickering commonly found between academics and working for positive sustainable change.

Several useful suggestions are provided for potent and smooth production such as ice-breaking, story board development, interview etiquette and the critical process of organizing footage screenings for the community especially in the early stages of the project. Regular screening creates transparency and trust between the people and facilitators and will encourage further interest and participation. Lunch also addresses leaving behind all material created for the community for their future viewing. This is a critical point given that many of these communities have been "studied" by outsiders in the past, and often left with only unfulfilled promises.

Concluding the book with case studies was an excellent addition and illuminated the efficaciousness of PV for development. There were numerous testimonies from the local people involved, challenges faced by facilitators during the process and what was learned from the problems and projects themselves. It is important to recognize these challenges as beneficial to others progress. It would have been refreshing to see at least one failed project, its outcomes and ideas of why it ended in failure and its meaning to those involved.

Informative, effective and unrivalled in purpose, *Insights into Participatory Video*, provides users with an amazing view of the possibilities of PV for community development; excellent relevant activities, advice and tips to assist those undertaking a PV project. The inclusion of a DVD with videos of training methods, tips, activities and finished products, compliment and add value to the written text.

It should be noted however the power involved in interfering with communities even with good intentions in place. The book broadly covers several areas regarding PV, but its limitation is apparent. There is still an important role for deeper study from more in-depth academic resources and their greater coverage of PV theories, more critical case studies and methods, and

possible negative outcomes. A project such as PV for community development is not something that should be taken lightly, and the authors would do themselves and aspiring PV artists a great duty to clearly advise against hasty, quick projects without gaining a greater understanding and appreciation of the process, methods and outcomes.