

# Spotlight on Community Filmmaking

A report on Community Filmmaking and Cultural Diversity Research



Photo's courtesy of City-Eye, Southampton



UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

KING'S College LONDON



[www.communityfilmmaking.com](http://www.communityfilmmaking.com)

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# Executive Summary

Community filmmaking and cultural diversity are emerging within dynamic social, cultural and political contexts.

The 'Community Filmmaking and Cultural Diversity' project situates developments in community filmmaking in the social, cultural and political contexts in which they are based. This new study puts the spotlight on community filmmaking and focuses on a diverse range of community filmmaker constituents. It highlights how community filmmaking is thriving in the UK and beyond.

The project interrogates what community filmmakers and the communities they work with bring to this important dimension of the filmmaking sector. At another level, it examines how community filmmakers are themselves affected by the work and policy decisions of major creative institutions, like the British Film Institute or Arts Council England.

The summary of findings presented here are intended to be a valuable tool for a range of stakeholders, including the film sector, community practitioners and academics. The research partners – WORLDwrite (London), Light House (Wolverhampton) and City-Eye (Southampton) – have also enabled a comparison of regional differences. The project's international component has included a two-day international conference, hosted by the British Film Institute in London, involving experts and researchers on community filmmaking and cultural diversity from other European Union countries and parts of the world.

Background: Led by Dr Sarita Malik (Brunel University) along with Dr Caroline Chapain (University of Birmingham) and Dr Roberta Comunian (King's College London), the research has helped to understand better how community filmmaking practices, in culturally diverse contexts, contribute to the wider film ecology and to representation, identity and innovation.

The lack of cultural diversity is one of the contexts in which this new research has emerged. The low numbers of black, Asian, minority and women filmmakers in mainstream filmmaking is increasingly becoming a highlighted issue on the industry's agenda. A diversity summit at the BAFTA headquarters in London in November 2013 ([www.rts.org.uk/diversify-improving-diversity-film-and-tv](http://www.rts.org.uk/diversify-improving-diversity-film-and-tv)) revealed recent findings from Creative Skillset ([www.creativeskillset.org](http://www.creativeskillset.org)) that there has been a significant drop in the proportion of BAME (Black Asian and Minority Ethnic) people working in the creative industries over the past decade.

Creative Skillset's 2012 Employment Census shows that only 5.4% of the Creative Industries workforce is Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) and just 1% is disabled. In film, excluding freelancers, the figure for BAME is 4.4% and for television it is 7.5%. Looking at film in London, where the vast majority (58%) of this workforce is located, the working Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) population is 28.8%. However, the BAME proportion of the film workforce in London is only 6%. Through situating the community filmmaker as the central node in a complex network of relationships, our research shows that community filmmaking practices lead to innovation in terms of both content and processes and a better representation of the cultural diversity of the UK's communities and places.

# Who We Are

## Research Team



**DR SARITA MALIK, PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR**

Dr Sarita Malik is a Senior Lecturer in Media and Communications at Brunel University. She

is the Director of Research for the Department of Social Sciences, Media and Communications. Her research is focused on how social processes and systems operate in relation to ideology and inequalities, with a focus on media and cultural representation. Sarita has been the Principal Investigator on two Arts and Humanities Research Council Connected Communities projects looking at the relationship between communities and screen culture. She also supports the British Film Institute develop its diversity policies through related research and is a member of the BFI's 'Unlocking Film Heritage' Curatorial Advisory Panel. She is currently the Principal Investigator on a recently-funded Arts and Humanities Research Development Project called 'Creative Interruptions', researching the relationship between grassroots culture, state structures and disconnection.



**DR CAROLINE CHAPAIN, CO-INVESTIGATOR**

Dr Caroline Chapain is a lecturer at the Business School, University of Birmingham. Since 2005, she

has been looking at the way creative industries emerge, operate and develop at the local and regional levels in the UK and in Europe. In 2010, she was involved in a project looking at the links between creative clusters and innovation in Great Britain for NESTA (the British national agency for innovation). She is currently exploring the range of creative practices existing in various communities through various Arts and Humanities Research Council Connected Communities Programme projects. This includes a large project looking at 'Community, media and creative citizenship' ([www.creativecitizens.co.uk/](http://www.creativecitizens.co.uk/)). Caroline co-chairs with Roberta Comunian and Nick Clifton the Regional Studies Association Network on Creative Regions in Europe ([www.creative-regions.eu](http://www.creative-regions.eu))



**DR ROBERTA COMUNIAN, CO-INVESTIGATOR**

Dr Roberta Comunian is Lecturer in Cultural and Creative Industries at the Department for Culture,

Media and Creative Industries at King's College London. She holds a European Doctorate title in Network Economy and Knowledge Management. She is interested in: relationship between public and private investments in the arts, art and cultural regeneration projects, cultural and creative industries, creativity and competitiveness. She is currently researching the role of higher education in the creative economy ([www.creative-campus.org.uk](http://www.creative-campus.org.uk)) and has recently explored in various papers the career opportunities and patterns of creative graduates ([www.creative-graduates.org.uk](http://www.creative-graduates.org.uk)) in the UK.

# Project Partners and the Impact of the Research on their Organisations



## BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE (LONDON)

The BFI was founded in 1933. It is a charity governed by a Royal Charter. It combines cultural, creative and industrial roles, bringing together the BFI National Archive and BFI Reuben Library, film distribution, exhibition at BFI Southbank and BFI IMAX, publishing and festivals. It awards Lottery funding to film production, distribution, education, audience development and market intelligence and research. Visit: [www.bfi.org.uk/](http://www.bfi.org.uk/)

### David Somerset, Education Programmer, British Film Institute

The 'Community Filmmaking and Cultural Diversity' project has helped, "enrich our own knowledge and contact with this area of film culture."



## WORLDWRITE (LONDON)

WORLDwrite is a UK based charity. For many years the charity's work revolved around global exchange programmes. The charity is now film-focused and runs an online Citizen TV station WORLDbytes. Now in its sixth year its pioneering Citizen TV project provides free camera training and has worked with over 2000 young people from across communities to produce over 650 challenging programmes to date. Many of its videos have won awards and it is currently running

a documentary project on the life and impact of revolutionary CLR James alongside regular programme making. Its programmes are available at [www.worldbytes.org](http://www.worldbytes.org)

**Ceri Dingle, Director, WORLDwrite** "The project highlighted the extraordinary level of innovation within community film and video making, its benefit as a tool for hidden voices and the common problem of lack of recognition and funding. Providing a rare opportunity to network, learn from each other and realise 'we are not alone' the project not only brought diverse community filmmakers together but raised the bar in terms of understanding the value, context and policy backdrop to our collective efforts. Overall a unique opportunity to reflect on common achievements, on problems and where we can go from here."

## LIGHT HOUSE LIGHT HOUSE (WOLVERHAMPTON)

Light House is an important cultural venue and creative hub for the City of Wolverhampton providing a mixed offer of film, film education, photography and community activities. Providing a massive amount of culture to the city through a diverse programme which includes World, European & British cinema, classics and documentaries along with a wide programme of alternative live, international theatre broadcasts. Light House strives to increase the enjoyment and understanding of film and culture and its importance to the economic life of Wolverhampton and the West Midlands. Visit: [www.light-house.co.uk/](http://www.light-house.co.uk/)

**Kelly Jeffs, CEO, Light House** “It was of great benefit to Light House to be part of the ‘Community Filmmaking and Cultural Diversity’ research. It provided an outlet for Light House to highlight the importance of its role over many years, supporting independent filmmakers with skills development, creating industry networking opportunities and most importantly ‘showcasing’ films that wouldn’t necessarily be easily accessed by audiences without our support. The conference enabled us to increase our awareness of some of the other fantastic projects, research and supporting organisations across the UK and Europe as well as meeting like-minded individuals to share experiences of success and failures.... all under the roof of one of the most inspirational film organisations in the world: the BFI.”

## CITY EYE CITY-EYE (SOUTHAMPTON)

City Eye was formed in 1986 and today, as then, exists to promote and develop film culture in Southampton and across the Region. They support the community, arts organisations, individuals and emerging talent in the achievement of their filmmaking goals and through a programme of community-based projects, education and screening activity train and develop people of all ages in the art of film. Their own production work tells the stories of communities, individuals and organisations, usually working directly with the people at the heart of the subject to ensure that their voice is heard.

City Eye is currently working with Southampton City Council, John Hansard Gallery and other partners to build a new Arts Council funded arts complex at the heart of Southampton’s Cultural Quarter, providing purpose built film production, education and screening facilities for access by industry and community filmmakers.

Visit: [www.city-eye.co.uk](http://www.city-eye.co.uk) and [www.Southamptonfilmweek.com](http://www.Southamptonfilmweek.com)

**Susan Beckett, CEO, City Eye** “In a time when community filmmaking has been so challenged by the failing economy and its impact on local authority and voluntary sector funding, it was a great pleasure to learn of this research project; an even greater pleasure to be invited to join its Advisory Board. The opportunity to meet with other practitioners from UK and further afield has been particularly enriching. The stories of their own work - approaches and outcomes - were invariably thought provoking and inspiring, creating opportunity to reflect on one’s own work and its place in this broader context. The conference in particular afforded great opportunity for sharing and debate, for issues and challenges to be shared and aired and for extending one’s network of community filmmaking contacts. This focused project has provided a welcome validation of this area of our work which, especially in these times, can feel marginalised and unsupported.”



# Advisory Committee



**SALEHA ALI** worked in digital media, web development, and research prior to working with and helping to develop WORLDbytes. Ali believes that “community film-making channelled through citizen TV is a perfect model for promoting the diversity of ideas.”

**SUSAN BECKETT** joined City Eye from community theatre organisation Solent Peoples Theatre in 2003, assuming responsibility for the company's day to day management and administration. In 2011 she became Executive Director and now oversees all of City Eye's activity including production, projects, education and support to filmmakers of all levels as well as Southampton Film Week, the City's annual film festival. During her time at City Eye Susan has managed the company's roles and relationships with a number of local and regional groups including the UK Film Council's Regional Screen Agency, Screen South, for which City Eye was a Community Delivery Partner. At a local level Susan, for a number of years, co-chaired the Creative Industries working group for Southampton's Cultural Consortium and now sits on the Executive Group which oversees its successor SHAPe (Southampton Arts and Heritage People). She is actively involved with a number of cultural networks and projects including the development of a major new arts facility in Southampton which in 2016 will become home to a varied programme of film and arts and will provide City Eye with purpose built production and education facilities to further its work in developing the region's filmmakers. Susan is a member of the Advisory Group for Film Hub South East which is part of the BFI's Film Audience Network.

**CERI DINGLE** set up and ran an anti-censorship art space prior to setting up the charity WORLDwrite over twenty years ago and the Citizen TV channel WORLDbytes five years ago. She has been developing and managing voluntary projects for over 25 years and using film and video evolved from global exchange programmes she was running as one way of reporting back in the UK from Ghana, Uganda, the Amazon, Hiroshima and beyond before the web existed. She has directed nine feature documentaries and produced over 360 Citizen TV programmes with volunteers. Ceri says that “at WORLDwrite, it's not about ego or having a badge or getting 'credits' it really is about collective endeavour and engagement with issues people are passionate about.”

**JULIAN HENRIQUES** is a Reader in the Department of Media and Communications. He is a filmmaker and convenor of the MA Scriptwriting programme and the Music as Communication and Creative Practice BA and MA courses. His credits as a writer and director include the 1998 feature film Babymother, a reggae musical and improvised short drama We the Ragamuffin. Julian researches street cultures, music and technologies and is interested in the uses of sound as a critical and creative tool.



**FIONA HOWE** has been a script and production consultant for more than twenty years, and gives screenwriting masterclasses around Europe, including for Scenario's own training programme BABYLON, of which she is the Co-founder and Director, alongside her role as Managing Director of Scenario Films Ltd.

**PRISCILLA IGWE** is filmmaker who set up her own media company called Anointed Productions in 2004. Since then, she has worked with the community to produce short films, deliver training courses and set up film festivals and film clubs as a platform to screen the work and develop audiences. Currently, she is managing The New Black Film Collective ([www.tnbfc.co.uk](http://www.tnbfc.co.uk)), a nationwide network of film exhibitors, educators and programmers of black representation.

**YUDHISHTHIR RAJ ISAR** is an analyst, advisor and public speaker who straddles different worlds of cultural theory, experience and practice. Professor of Cultural Policy Studies at The American University of Paris and Adjunct Professor at the Institute for Culture and Society, University of Western Sydney (from 2011 to 2013 he was an Eminent Research Visitor). Founding co-editor of the Cultures and Globalization Series (SAGE); principal investigator, coordinating editor and lead writer of the UN Creative Economy Report 2013. Widening Local Development Pathways; has authored many book chapters and articles in scholarly journals as well. Educated at St. Stephen's College, Delhi, the Sorbonne and the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris.

**KELLY JEFFS** has worked for Light House in Wolverhampton for almost 15 years and in 2012 became the CEO, responsible for leading the organisation into a new chapter in its 27 year history. Her previous role focused on the skills development of literally 1000's of people, supporting their pathways into the creative industries especially film production and animation. After studying for her MA in Media Enterprise in 2008, Kelly began to work more strategically for the organisation focusing on future business planning in the face of challenging income cuts. Ultimately Kelly has enabled Light House to become a more sustainable organisation with less reliance on public funding. The organisation has never before offered such a busy, diverse and exciting programme of film and cultural events for the City of Wolverhampton.

**GARETH JONES** is an independent filmmaker and international consultant; he made a name as an innovator both in style and substance, though he has also created commercial television films and series in the UK, Italy and Germany. With his partner Fiona Howe he founded and runs Scenario's pan-European training programme BABYLON with funds from several European nations.

**ROGER ODIN** is Emeritus Professor of Communication and was the Head of the Institute of Film and Audiovisual Research at the University of Paris III Sorbonne-Nouvelle since 1983 until January 2004. A communication theorist, he is the author of numerous works, is part of the Steering Comity of the European Network "City and Cinema" and is running a research group on "Cell phones and creativity."

**RYAN SHAND** is Research Assistant on the AHRC funded project 'Children and Amateur Media in Scotland' based at the University of Glasgow. He has contributed chapters to a number of anthologies on amateur filmmaking.

**DAVID SOMERSET** is the Adult and Communities Programmer at BFI. Since being at the BFI Southbank in 2007, he has facilitated community led programme of culture and learning, working closely with the audiences from all backgrounds.



# Our Research Process

## Analytical Framework

The community arts movement of the 1960s and 1970s was predicated on the ideological basis that community-led activity was representative of the people and merited public investment (Braden, 1978). Community filmmaking has been a good illustration of this.

Filmmaking that has emerged from the margins and that is created and controlled by a community (for example the UK Black film workshop collectives of the early 1980s) has typically involved a struggle over identity and cultural representation that has been activated on two fronts. The first in relation to material issues (both opportunities and constraints) such as funding, distribution and exhibition; and the second, in relation to aesthetics such as how new paradigms, languages and agendas might be formed through and within innovative modes of filmmaking that operate outside of an institutionalised context (Malik, 2010).

There have been public and academic (Arts and Humanities led) debates around the significance of cultural diversity to film culture. These have foregrounded questions of representation; for example how these communities of identity use cultural spaces for political and aesthetic projects that seek to re-work or re-imagine dominant cultural representations; an alternative (or oppositional cinema) to the mainstream (cinema) (Pines and Willemsen, 1989, Mercer, 1988, Hill, 2004).

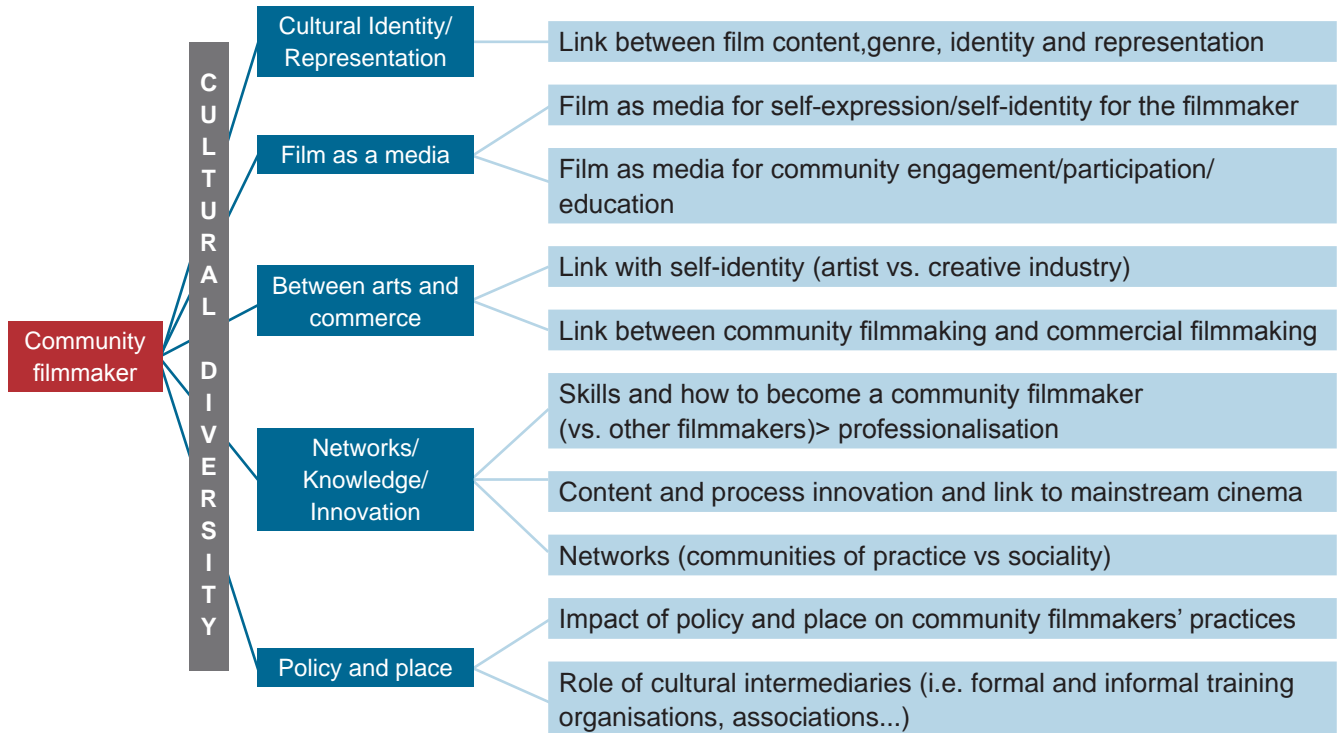
However, research around innovation and cinema has tended to focus on the mainstream film value chain (Pratt and Gornostaeva, 2009; Chapain et al., 2010; BIS, 2010), with the role of innovation in culturally diverse community filmmaking contexts still under-developed. More broadly, community filmmaking, as a field of enquiry, has been characterised by a lack of academic writings integrating theory and empirical fieldwork in the last ten years (Shand, 2008). This includes issues around skills, training and networks and the role that place and policies may have on community filmmaking practices and the role of cultural intermediaries.

Recognising the complex set of cultural, economic and social relationships and engagements in community filmmaking, our

research adopts a complexity and multidisciplinary framework to take a wider perspective to consider the cascade of connections which are behind community filmmakers' engagement with communities, industries, supporting institutions and audiences and which may impact on the cultural product and experience delivered as well as in urban/local development (Comunian, 2011). This multidisciplinary framework looks at issues of community filmmaking and cultural diversity through 5 main themes with sub-dimensions: 1) identity and representation; 2) film as a media; 3) film between arts and commercial practices; 4) innovation, skills and networks; and 5) policy and place (see Figure 1).



Figure 1: Our Analytical Framework



## Methodology

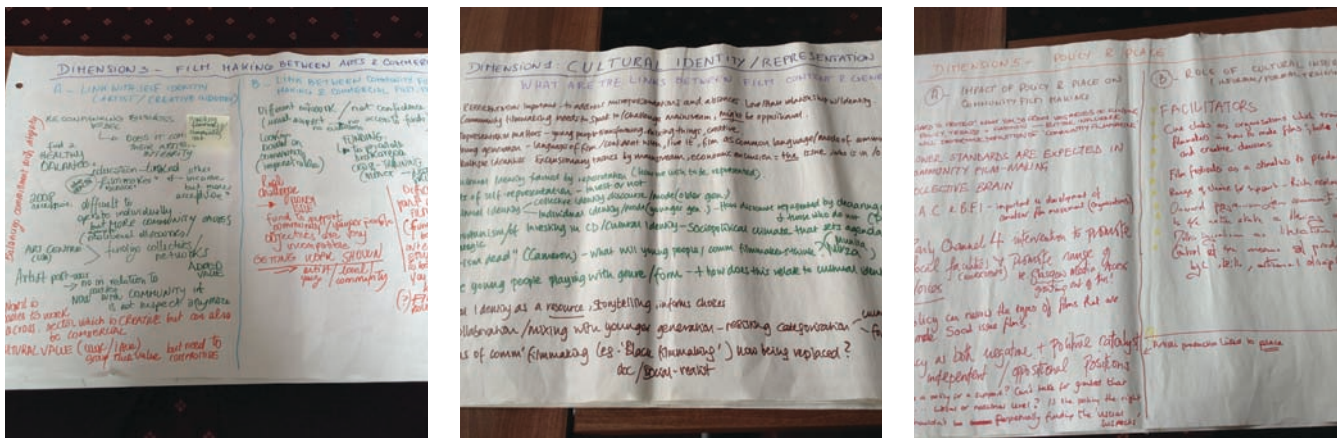
The process followed in this research is presented in Figure 2. As discussed in the previous section, our research project adopts a multidisciplinary approach based on the complementary academic expertise of the members of the research team. In addition, the project research follows an inductive approach in two stages.

The first stage consisted in testing and delimitating the definitions for our two main concepts with our Advisory Board composed of UK and European academic and practitioners in the

field of community filmmaking and cultural diversity – this was addressed at a one-day workshop in April 2013. Discussions at the workshop highlighted the different understandings of the term community filmmaking amongst participants. For some, community filmmaking consisted in representing specific communities through film whereas for others it also meant engaging these communities through the filming process. Community filmmaking could take the form of individual and/or group filmmaking and be part of the

professional or non-professional realm. As such, there was recognition that community filmmaking can take various forms depending on the degree of involvement of communities in the filming process and the ethos of the filmmaker(s) involved. Participants to the workshop also recommended that while cultural diversity could be associated with the recognition of various races and ethnicities in the society, the research should adopt a broader understanding including age groups, gender, sexual orientations, disabilities, geography/places, social





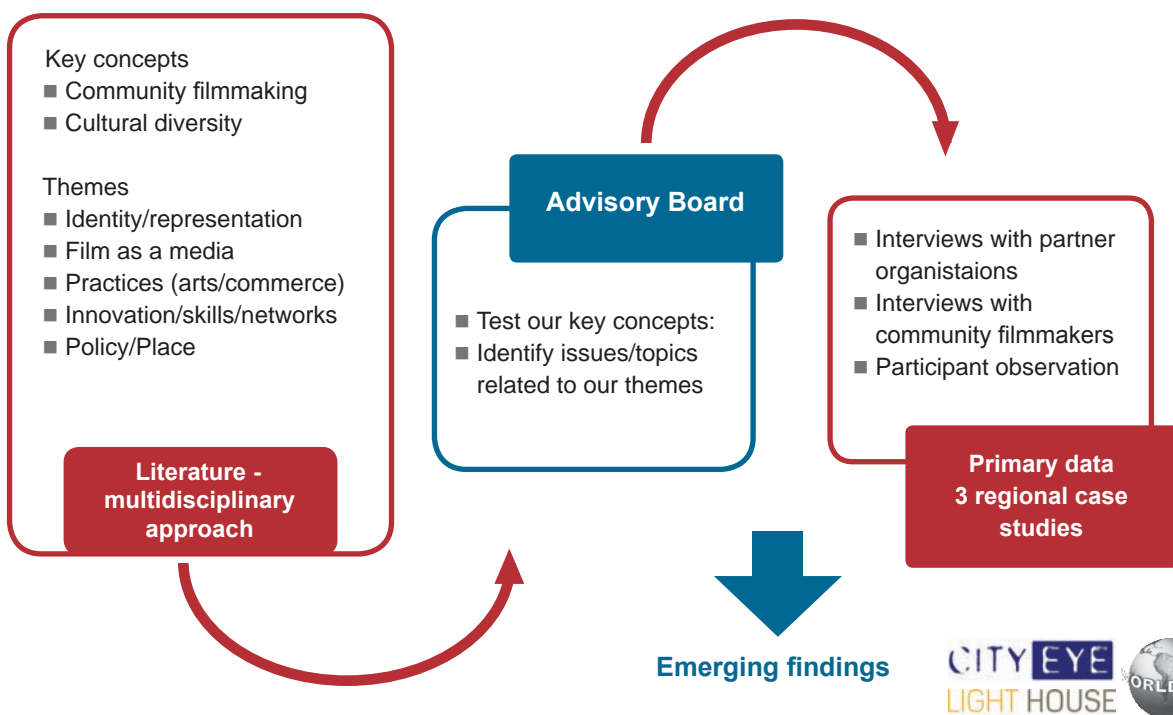
classes, cultural practices... Ultimately, it was felt that it was about enabling the voices of “unheard” communities. Finally, various issues linked to community filmmaking, cultural diversity and the five main themes of our research were highlighted during the workshop; these were incorporated in our analytical framework and the interview guideline used in the second stage of our research.

The second stage of our research resulted in a comparative case studies analysis of community filmmaking in three English regions: London, the West Midlands and the South East. This stage was undertaken in collaboration with our research partners - City Eye, Light House and WORLDwrite – and involved interviews with representatives of these organisations, participant observation

at events that they run and interviews with community filmmakers from each region.

Early findings, emerging from stages 1 and 2 of our research are presented in the next sections.

Figure 2: Our research process



# So What Have Community Filmmakers Told Us?

## Representation

Issues of cultural representation are central to this project. The research finds that cultural representation plays a significant role in how community filmmakers themselves describe their work and in relation to the communities with whom they work and set themselves up to serve. Broadly, community filmmakers are deeply reflexive about their practice and very conscious of ethical issues and the political contexts that surround the communities that they work with.

Many community filmmakers directly challenge the notion that meanings and ideologies are fixed, by facilitating or producing work that re-works and re-negotiates existing representations. Community filmmaking is a cultural space in which communities, for example communities of identity, can be re-imagined and directly involved in reworking cultural representations.

The research findings that focus on the dimension of cultural identity and representation demonstrate that the social and political are at the centre of the community filmmaking process. There is strong agreement amongst community filmmakers that questions of representation are important and will always be with us. In the discussions, references are often made to the struggles around representation and identities that were foregrounded in debates around cultural filmmaking in the 1980s, but these are still broadly perceived to be relevant.

One filmmaker spoke explicitly about the link between community filmmaking and social structure: "we are working with communities... trying to bring some kind of exchange, some kind of dialogue in places and environments where that dialogue hasn't happened. And the fact that it hasn't happened says all sorts of often hypercritical things about the social structures of those places that they can't bring excluded groups into some kind of communication."

So, here, as in many other discussions with community filmmakers, there is a strong sense of alternative and/or oppositional representations. In such ways, community filmmaking functions for many as a counterhegemonic space. Some of this marginalisation is discussed unequivocally in terms of race, and at other times class is seen as the biggest determinant that has led to exclusion from the industry and also in what is actually represented and the perspectives that are given access.

Discussion is recurrently presented as 'political talk', based on evaluating historical and current approaches to community filmmaking – and in what it can and cannot do within its limited frameworks based around access, funding and other social structures. The trope of self-identity can be linked in the research with bigger research themes of cultural production, representation and community engagement. One area for further exploration is the possible connection between questions of identity and a community-responsive approach to filmmaking.

*But I think...if you were looking historically, then, it's very important to understand the extent to which people were ghettoised, shoved out, kept out, barred from all aspects of cultural life.*

*And as far as I can see very often it is your class that ends up deciding whether the subject of the film is on the other side of the camera.*

*The short version of our evolution into film is as an educational tool to tell a different story that we felt was being side lined or not taught at all.*

*It's vital for the black community to own our images, and push forward with them. I actually think we have a responsibility to future generations as well as the current generation.*

## The Significance of Film

Like all media, film is implicated in a complex set of cultural and social relationships and engagements. It is also, according to those interviewed, one of the most powerful instigators of social debate and counter-discourse, a space in which to counter mainstream representations either in cinema or other parts of the media.

The research study focuses on film, rather than on other media forms, because film presents a particularly interesting case in historical and current debates. These debates include those regarding cultural policy, representational practice and self-identity and developments in cultural diversity policy-making. They map onto current debates around progression and sustained employment within the film sector but also about audiences and portrayal.

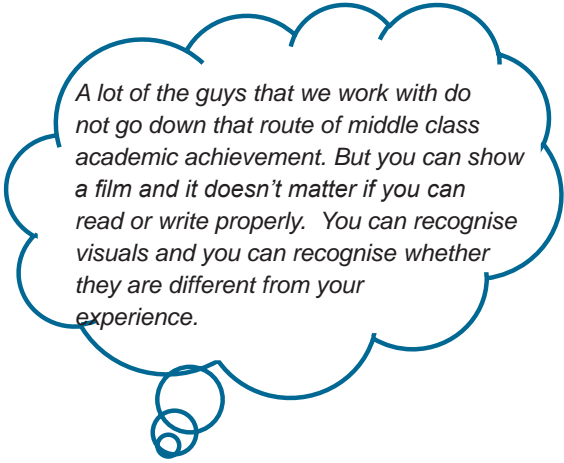
It is clear from the research findings, that film is perceived to be a powerful space for community participation and engagement and as a tool for social, political and artistic expression. Film functions as a medium that creates and maintains shared values, contributes to strong feelings of cultural and group identity and generates modes of belonging.

For our participants, the visual medium of film also offers opportunities and lends itself well to working across a range of other creative disciplines and spaces (dance, music, animation and social media, for example). There is also a great emphasis on the reach/impact of visual language in recognising stories being told and not told and from particular perspectives.

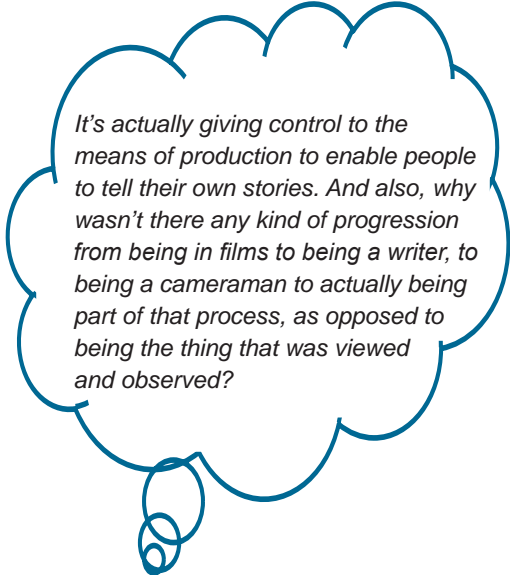
An idea emerges of the value of film also in terms of its relative accessibility and, in turn, how it serves to 'give control to the means of production', regardless of one's social background, skills or prior experience. For filmmakers themselves and practitioners that work with communities, it is seen as a significant medium for allowing the filmmaker to connect to people. The research findings situate film as a radical instrument but also a tool for emotionality and expression.

However, according to the research findings, a contradictory scenario has also emerged with regards to the opportunities and threats for community filmmaking. On the one hand, technological developments and social media spaces such as Facebook, YouTube and Vimeo mean that filmmakers can market and platform their work more easily. On the other, there is reference to the former supportive structures and funding streams which explicitly supported the development of independent filmmaking movement, emerging from the 'margins' and which have now disappeared, such as the Greater London Council, the ACTT Workshop Declaration of 1981 and Channel 4 television.

The 1980s is noted for its practical support of non-mainstream film and also for demonstrating an understanding of the social and cultural rationale for such work. The research finds a strong critique of diminished structural support for community filmmaking and recognition of it as a critical space for diverse voices and perspectives to be heard. In this way, community filmmaking serves as a good example of community-led arts activity with a civic agenda that also lacks public investment.



*A lot of the guys that we work with do not go down that route of middle class academic achievement. But you can show a film and it doesn't matter if you can read or write properly. You can recognise visuals and you can recognise whether they are different from your experience.*



*It's actually giving control to the means of production to enable people to tell their own stories. And also, why wasn't there any kind of progression from being in films to being a writer, to being a cameraman to actually being part of that process, as opposed to being the thing that was viewed and observed?*

*Anybody can be a filmmaker; the technical know-how is being simplified. So, because it's being democratised, community filmmaking therefore should have more importance, because communities can put their statements, or whatever they want to say, out there without having to hire people like me. They can do it themselves... (But) the opportunities that people have for bringing that visual voice and then having it screened somewhere is less and less now.*

## Balancing Act: Between Arts and Commerce

The research findings highlight how community filmmaking is often perceived by creative practitioners as a balancing act between pursuing artistic goals and creative economically viable or at least self-sustaining projects.

In the discussions, many of the interviewees reflect on how much their community filmmaking work is embedded within their broader professional practice. For many, community filmmaking is described as one form of their professional practice, alongside other creative or filmmaking work. Community filmmaking is described as being predominantly funded through grants (projects initiating from the filmmaker/communities) and various 'not-for-profit', private and public organisations to represent/for their communities of interest. Many are pessimistic about the possibility for community filmmaking to garner financial support. For others, it is not a matter of finance but of community filmmaking being part of a range of creative work and film they wanted to be involved with but not exclusively.

*You're very passionate about something. And you have a medium that suits it best. People come to us because they want to work with us because we want to say something different, rather than necessarily because they have a film background.*

Many of the community filmmakers who are identified in the research project and involved in our interviews do not even define themselves as 'community filmmakers' or are sometimes critical of the term. Many think of or identify themselves as artists, animators, filmmakers but also recognise the importance that engaging with a range of different communities played in their work. Interviewees are also keen to explain the contractions of funding within the sector and that 'commissioned' filmmaking can sometimes be more restrictive than privately funded opportunities. Therefore, the funding model does not necessarily correlate to the freedom and innovation of the content.

Talking with a range of filmmakers, it seems clear that in order to be a community filmmaker one has to be able to negotiate across a variety of platforms and opportunities. Amongst our interviewees a number of 'business' models for community filmmaking are mentioned, from crowd-funding, to participatory productions and commissioned work. It is clear that there is no 'one-size fits all' solution and that filmmakers need to rely on different models for different projects in order to maximise the value of their work and make their engagement with communities sustainable.

*I had developed an interest in filmmaking. It was the accessibility of it. And working with film... enabled me to connect with people.*

While the financial motivation is never considered the main drive to engage in community filmmaking, many filmmakers suggest the need to make their practice sustainable. Using different models and engaging in a range of film-related work (across commercial, public and 'not-for-profit' sectors) is giving them the opportunity to do so. Differently from general filmmaking practice, the main drive is also not necessarily the creative or artistic ideas – as often community filmmakers try very hard not to impose their own creative agenda but to source and support the creative aspirations of the people they are working with. The main drive mentioned by most filmmakers is the desire to give a diverse (culturally, socially, and economically) range of people, who often are not heard in mainstream media, an opportunity to be heard. This therefore links closely with the emphasis on issues of representation overall.

*For me as an artist and a filmmaker I'm always really interested in working with people, so that's one of my primary motivations, and the medium that I use on the whole is animation, and the way I like to use animation is in a documentary approach.*

*I think that for me working with community groups absolutely means that it's not about me (...) it's about those participants and it's about their experience. And if I want to go and make a film for myself, well I'll go and make a different film (...) Because I'm also a film artist, so I make my own work separately*

*I don't search it out but I am always looking for people who have a need to say something. (...) because she had something that she needed to say but she couldn't say out loud, for her family's sake, for all sorts of things, but this was a way of saying it that helped her to say it (...) I do find it difficult to make work about things that don't matter*

## Building Networks and Sharing Knowledge across Communities

Not surprisingly, networking is key for community filmmakers. These networks often start at a young age or with the filmmakers' first experiences. Many interviewees highlight the role played by the initial networks and opportunities offered by training-providing organisations (such as City-Eye, WORLDwrite and Light House). At these initial stages, the opportunity to share ideas and knowledge is vital to allow inexperienced filmmakers to work with a variety of stakeholders, communities but also with other creative professionals. These organisations also offer help to showcase local work and connect new filmmakers.

While the city-region is often perceived as an anchor, especially outside London, filmmakers need to travel and expand their networks nationally and internationally following the availability of work and the opportunities to undertake different projects. There is an acknowledgement of the great wealth of knowledge and support present also within communities and independently from location, and how people will come and help each other across projects.

Alongside the networks amongst filmmakers and practitioners, community filmmakers recognise the importance of their connections with the third sector, including a range of charities and 'not-for-profit' organisations that are key to engage with communities but also to give filmmakers new projects. The specific knowledge and skills these organisations bring to projects is highlighted in the discussions, as they have an engaged view on local and national policies but also specialised skills and experts to liaise with marginalised groups. Often the filmmaker needs to acquire some of these skills in order to understand the subjects or collaborators he/she will have to work with.

Community filmmakers acknowledge that formal networking events may play a role (especially in relation to international festivals or national awards) but also recognise that, within the wider filmmaking world, community filmmaking needs to raise its profile and value perception.

Alongside networks with communities, charities and support organisations, there seems to be a burgeoning of festivals and organic filmmakers associations to help access information and other networks and reach critical mass (particularly in the case of areas outside London)



Figure 3: Representation of the network of organisations and communities that community filmmakers work with.



*probably the biggest part of my learning is community of filmmakers, more than my community filmmaking actually. Because many of us are either freelancers or we are maybe partnerships, you know. All the people I work, I bring into a job (...) they know specialists, a cameraman, an editor, a sound man, a lighting man, studio owner – I need a studio – and I know all these people through the community. And actually initially, 10 years ago, that was through City Eye*

*without my Film Council grants, and actually I don't think I'd be doing what I do now, because my first films that got grants went off to around the world and some film festivals, and based on what I was able to do there I then got more work. And actually, although those films I've not gone on to make a feature film or....I think the amount of business I've probably generated based on that initial funding - you know, I got £10,000 funding for a short film – based on that I employed, just within that film, all the people I work with now. I worked with...how many, this is going back 8 years or so, I still work with 3 of those people and I generate business for them, and they generate business based on working together from that first grant*

*So the people that I worked with, and continue to work with, are people I've just kind of either met along the way or people I actively sought out [...] the network was really good, it was a really vibrant network of people. But that's changed now because there's far less funding. Now I don't know if [the project] would have survived, because I mean we got National Lottery funding then, (...) relatively speaking we were quite well funded. I don't know what we'd do now, I don't know whether we would have survived or not*

*(it) is an organisation that deals with domestic violence. (...) It is strange to call it a 'corporate film' because, in a way, it is one of the most artistic films I have ever made in my life. (...) Although we have got women's voices from interviews, which is a very traditional documentary style, it has the most abstract visuals. I was like: "I can't really believe a client is agreeing to this and encouraging it." As it is so unusual and very beautifully filmed, it has really had a lot of power for them as an organisation to get that message out there.*

## Practices and Innovation

Interviews with the range of community filmmakers in our three case studies highlight that their practices vary greatly with regards to how they involve communities in filmmaking depending on how they understand community filmmaking but also depending on projects' ethos. As such, communities can be involved in various or specific stages of the filming process - from contribution to screen writing, acting, filming, directing, editing, or disseminating - with various degrees of formalisation of these processes. However, involving the people from the community at one point in the filming process is seen as crucial as they constitute the primary audience of the film which is being made; filmmakers want to make sure that they feel adequately represented to preserve authenticity.

This is particularly important as community filmmaking is seen as a source of content innovation – there are stories to tell in every community and these are authentic stories from people that normally do not have a voice either on TV or in films. Correlated to this, many filmmakers see community filmmaking as a way of diversifying the content of mainstream TV and cinema, which is considered biased in its under representation of specific parts of society and/or UK geography or in its reproduction of stereotypical images for certain communities. As a consequence, community filmmaking tends to lead to innovation in terms of the content that is produced. At times, though, involving communities is also seen as leading to compromises in terms of the creative vision of the filmmaker but this is accepted as part of the process.

Community filmmaking is also seen as a fantastic terrain for experimentation by filmmakers as they feel that through this practice they can escape what they see as a highly regulated broadcast /mainstream cinema environment. For example, some will experiment with a new genre (for example, zombie movies, or enacted documentaries) or in a new way of filming (for example, the 72h project , OFFline film competition ). Nevertheless, this experimentation may be constrained depending on the imperatives of the sponsors of each community film project. Interestingly, these imperatives or the challenging nature of some community issues/subjects (i.e. domestic violence, disability) can also lead to more creative filmmaking, visually and/or with regards to narratives.

Finally, given its nature and the limited financial resources associated with community filmmaking, one of its challenges resides in the dissemination of the film produced outside of its primary audience – its community of interest. While many filmmakers use festivals to disseminate their films, many also have experimented with online interactive media strategies (sometimes associated with crowd-funding), aiming to build an audience before and during the filming process and after the film is produced.

*Sometimes, though, when somebody has got no preconceptions, which can be if somebody is coming from a community background, that can also lead to great innovation as well.*

*I think that some really interesting stuff is coming out of it, that you are seeing some really, really great film making going on from different communities that would otherwise never have been portrayed in that way, because they would have been waiting for their money or the council to give them big cash or whatever. The idea that they've motivated themselves to make things is really exciting.*

*I have done some bonkers stuff, and some wonderfully creative and brilliant things in my career through community filmmaking, and probably less creative when they have been funded by the mainstream because, actually, there have been very specific boundaries about broadcasters or funders in that set, who have reduced, in some ways, the creative boundaries.*

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.filmbirmingham.co.uk/news/the-72-project/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.offlinefilmfestival.com/#!filmmaking/c1yws>

*so the training that happens, happens in situ I would say. (...). So when I took people on I would...I mean you don't realise until you start having to train somebody how much there is that you know, and then unpacking it is quite a demanding thing in itself*

## Skills and Training

Interviews show that most community filmmakers have stumbled into community filmmaking either by participating in other people's projects, through training or as part of their professional practice by working for organisations representing specific communities. Nevertheless, some community filmmakers have also opted for this approach to achieve individual projects; in many of these cases, working with communities came first and film was initially used a medium to achieve other social objectives.

In addition to the general filmmaking skills require to make a film, community filmmaking is dependent on the various skills necessary to develop and broker relationships with people in communities who have never made a film before. This involves a high degree of explaining of the film process, mobilising and managing people with different expectations and creative experiences, in addition to teaching of specific practical skills. While some organisations in the UK, like the partners in this research, City Eye, Light House and WORLDwrite, deliver some form of formal training to support such practices, many filmmakers have learnt on the job and have adopted specific approaches depending on their personality, character and ethos.

One of the key concerns for many community filmmakers is to keep up to date with latest technologies and practices in an ongoing and dynamic changing sector. While formal training is considered important, it is in most cases seen as expensive. As a consequence, many filmmakers either learn on the job or practice skill swapping with other filmmakers.

Finally, one important training element of community filmmaking resides in the teaching of filmmaking to people in communities who would not necessarily access such skills. Community filmmakers see this as a way to make filmmaking skills/career more accessible to a wider public and to democratise the medium, which is made even more possible with digitalisation.

*Yes, I do still feel I need training. I think professional development, you need right throughout your life, really, but I am afraid it has to be on a national scale now.*

*So I have done training but I haven't done any in the last couple of years just because I haven't had the...you know, there's been nothing in the budget to be able to do that, which is frustrating because I like to do... you know, previously every few months I've been away on a training course which is great and I think it's really valuable to do that.*

*My relationship with Light House has been continuous in different forms, really. One, in that we have used the Light House as a film centre to show, screen and share work. For a variety of film projects and community projects that we have worked on, we have used Light House as a place to share, disseminate that and celebrate that. I have also worked very closely with a number of people who have come through the training programme at Light House and who have worked as crew for me. That is sound operators, camera operators and that sort of thing.*

*Our core objectives now: is to survive for the city. We are intrinsically linked with all the other cultural venues within the city as we do still get core funding from the Local Authority through the economic development team. So they still value us and they still want us to exist, but they're having to reduce their support understandably due to the cuts.*

## Policy and Place

Findings from the project suggest that despite the strong concentration of the film industry in London, community filmmaking is thriving across England and, as such, is offering more opportunities for representation of British cultural diversity and its communities as well as generating innovation in terms of content and practices in the film sector.

Changes in national film policies and local and regional governance in addition to funding cuts have obviously had a strong impact on [community] filmmaking ecology in the past three years – leading to financial uncertainty and short-term survival strategies (sometimes disappearance) for many supporting organisations and cultural intermediaries in the sector.

Given the role of cultural intermediaries in connecting new and established filmmakers, offering venues, equipment and training opportunities, etc. and representing the film sector in their area, this weakening support system creates issues in terms of retention and support of new talents, especially in regions outside London, like the West Midlands, where talent is present but the film sector can be less structured and organised.

While Creative England and the BFI and its hubs are a key part of the mainstream film landscape, current organisations and funding for community filmmakers seem to be mainly coming from training organisations (i.e. Skillset which is playing an important role), the Heritage Lottery Fund, cultural educational programmes, local authorities, as well as 'not-for-profit' organisations, charities, foundations and public and private organisations representing specific communities.

However, many of the funding opportunities offered by these may impose some restrictions with regards to the creative filmmaking process depending on their funding criteria. Alternatively, crowd funding is also used increasingly by some filmmakers. Related to this, earmarked public funds to promote ethnic diversity/cultural diversity in the film sector are seen as crucial to better represent the make-up of existing talents as well as improve access to filmmaking from otherwise disadvantaged parts of British society.

Finally, the obvious creativity of community filmmaking production across England and the challenges associated with its dissemination raises questions with regards to its access to wider audiences and its incorporation into the mainstream film industry.

*I think in a way when Channel 4 was set up and the post-period bit after that, there was a political and cultural – both things together – willingness to hear diverse voices, to sort of say, "We cannot ignore certain communities that live within us." I think the change has come since Cameron (...)*

*The funding element has changed quite a lot recently. Obviously, with a lot of the government cuts, a lot of things have been cut. That has had a knock-on effect in terms of the film community and in terms of people being funded to make films. (...) Funding, at the moment, is more around specific filmmaking, with specific messages or agendas attached to them. Another way is 'Crowd Funding'*

*I came back to the Midlands and that was again where the Light House stepped in and were really helpful. They told us about lots of different opportunities a lot of the time. I had always kept in touch with Light House through all this, and they told me about an opportunity to get funding to make a film. I was like: "Wow. This is amazing."*

# Conference Report

At the 'Community Filmmaking and Cultural Diversity' conference (British Film Institute, January 2014), Malik, Chapain and Comunian presented some of the preliminary findings from the research. There was also an opportunity for academics, experts and practitioners in this field to contribute through papers, presentations and networking. With in-depth case studies conducted in three English regions, Hampshire, the Midlands and London, an important part of the project was working with community partners, City-Eye, Lighthouse and WORLDwrite and also giving them an opportunity to share and discuss their community filmmaking and also present their work at the showcase event, one of the highlights of the BFI-hosted conference.

Drawing in delegates from a range of countries, including France, Spain, Canada, New Zealand and the USA, the international dimension of the project ensured that the themes around community filmmaking practice and diversity were discussed at both the local and global level.

Professor Yudhishtir Raj Isar from the American University of Paris and author of the United Nations Creative Economy Report 2013 opened the conference. In his opening keynote, entitled "Community cultural expression and human development in a global perspective", he offered a critical view on the narrow perspective that has allowed the creative economy discourse to be imposed from the Global North to the Global South. Against this sterile policy transfer,

Professor Isar used examples from community filmmaking project in South America and India to highlight the value of locality and local stories. He concluded that the cultural economy should not be seen as a highway but a collection of complex multiple trajectories, which are situated and path dependent.

Isar's powerful presentation was followed by the parallel sessions that took place in the buzzy surround of the BFI. The first panel session in NFT3 focused on the themes of 'Film and Cultural Diversity' which were skilfully elucidated by Daniel Ashton from Bath Spa University in his talk on how amateur filmmaking meets the quality discourse in the BBC's *Life in a Day* and *Britain in a Day*. Marion Vartaftig from the long-established community filmmaking organisation, Manifesta, talked about how the collective has enabled forms of diverse social expression through participative filmmaking both in the UK and Paris. And finally Marta Rabikowska and Matthew Hawkins from the University of Hertfordshire and Coventry University respectively, suggested that the creative act of filmmaking was a social act and highlighted how this has informed their own research process.

Meanwhile in the Blue Room the 'Generation and Media Participation' session started with Edward Webb-Ingall, a writer and filmmaker, presenting the case study of the community filmmaking project 'Reframed Youth' with a self-identified LGBTQ group of young people. Alicia Blum-Ross from the London School

of Economics critically reflected on the involvement of adults in youth film community projects, as intermediaries and often leaders or facilitators. The final paper of the session by Ryan Shand from the University of Glasgow commented on the amateur documentary film *Escape to Freedom* (Coleman/Lanark Cine Club, 1981) and its role presenting children within the historical context of Vietnamese refugees in Scotland. David Buckingham's keynote after lunch linked his own extensive research on amateur media with the matter of community cinema. The esteemed Loughborough University Professor provided a 'critique of the euphoria' that has materialised with the notion that the masses are now taking charge of the media. Buckingham offered instead 'a defence of banality', including 'banal filmmaking' and the role of emotion, subjectivity, memory and coherence behind and in front of the camera.

In the 'Practices, production and innovation' presentations in NFT3, three papers explored different aspects of community filmmaking process and their challenges - there is no one model of community film making but a wide spectrum of practices with regard to the involvement of communities from dialogue, collaboration to participation. Eileen Leahy from Trinity College, Dublin talked about community film response to the disappearing social housing estates in Ireland. Daniel Mutibwa from Leeds University in an ethnographic study of social documentary filmmaking in Britain and Germany over the period 2009-2011,

brought to the fore the way filmmakers navigate the dilemma of producing such documentary films for mainstream broadcasters. Finally, Mark Dunford from the University of Brighton and Digitales, discussed various public funded digital storytelling projects in which he has been involved.

The parallel session 'Place and Community Filmmaking' critically reflected on geographies of filmmaking and their contextual dynamics. The first paper by Shawn Sobers, Jonathan Dovey and Emma Agusita at University of the West of England considered the case study of South Blessed Community Channel in Bristol as an example of contextual platform between community, pedagogy but also entrepreneurialism. Anita Chang, from University of California at Santa Cruz presented a case study from her work as Asian/American Independent Filmmaker and reflected on the collaborative praxis behind her work but also on the importance of linking the past and the losses experienced with contemporary communities. Finally, Anwar Akhtar, Director of The Samosa and Jane Barnwell from the University of Westminster discussed the RSA Pakistani Calling project, reflected on the educational value of engaging students in community filmmaking but also on the role of community filmmaking in bridging across national boundaries and its use for conflict resolution, citizenship and integration.

Charles Davis from the Roger Communication Centre in Canada provided the first keynote paper on Day Two of the conference, looking at the issue of diversity in screen media in Canada. Whilst diversity is a fundamental element of Canadian media policy, the industry is characterised by white males in position of power and self-reinforcing networks with little acknowledgment of de-facto exclusionary practices.

The subsequent panel session attempted to tackle head-on the ways in which film might be regarded

as a 'radical tool'. This session was particularly rich for the film excerpts that were screened and how these were set within the cultural and political contexts within which they emerged. Deirdre O'Neill from InsideFilm and the University of Ulster talked about the importance of considering class as a specific community that also intersects with important debates around cultural diversity. David Montero from the University of Seville gave a fascinating insight into the "Indignados" movement and participatory filmmaking on the Internet. Orson Nava spoke from the position of a practitioner, about race, youth culture and media participation and proposed that clear industry routes needs to be developed for existing cultural forms engaged in by many young Black communities.

The penultimate break-out session considered a range of perspective on 'Gender and sexual politics'. Nandini Sikand from Lafayette College, USA critically engaged with the concept of collaboration. Highlighting the problematic reality of many community filmmaking projects in the Global South turning 'misery into entertainment' she reflects on how often there is a blurred line between ethnographer and ethnographic subject. Similarly Sarah Marie Wiebe from University of Victoria highlighted the value of community filmmaking in allowing people to 'speak up and act out' and enhances situated knowledge, in the context of a youth group in a highly polluted place. The final paper from Helen Wright representing the filmmaking collective 'Lock Up Your Daughters Filmmaking'



reflected on the relationship between queerness and community filmmaking.

In the afternoon, the 'Engaging communities through film' panel contrasted two modes of community filmmaking practices and environment between the US and the UK. The presentation by Chi Do on the work of the Independent Television Services created by an Act of Congress in the United States in 1989 alluded to the legitimacy and stability that national legislation can bring to community filmmaking production and dissemination. In contrast, the presentation by Karen Gabay and Heather Nicholson on an inter-generational project combining archives footage with contemporary interviews highlighted the difficulties of conducting such community filmmaking projects in the UK.

Although the conference explicitly dealt with a range of international concerns throughout the sessions, one of the last sessions of the conference was on identity and representational politics of community filmmaking in the UK. Steve Presence of the University of the West of England discussed his efforts to develop a Radical Film Network, triggered by the groundswell in community filmmaking organisations in the political domain. Nick Higgins, Director of the University of the West of Scotland's Creative Media Academy shared his experience of leading on the fascinating Northern Lights Documentary Film Project and its resonance for Scottish identities. Kirsten Macleod also from the University of the West of Scotland (and Edinburgh Napier University) developed these themes by stressing how community media as a form of participatory practice allows people to mediate their own identities; thus the idea that community media is a process, which is also deeply connected to ideas of place. The session closed with Rob Coley from the University of Lincoln who explored how disconnection might be utilised as a catalyst that involves change. Concurrently, the Community Politics,



Social Innovation and Space parallel session started by a reflexive presentation from Alistair Scott from Edinburgh Napier University on the way Scottish working class communities have been represented in the television documentary over the last 35 years. The rest of the session focused on the role and use of filmmaking as a tool in researcher and designer practices. Paola Briata and Enrico Masi from University College London and the University of Bologna respectively, who explained how they have used filmmaking to undertake a representation from the

inside of the multi-ethnic community of Dalston in the East of London to better inform urban planning processes in the area. Finally, Elisa Bertolotti from the Politecnico di Milano presented how designers from the DESIS lab have used videos to document, study, communicate, visualise projects, promote dialogue and share and amplify ideas to support their design work and generate social innovation.

**A short film of the conference highlights and selected presentations can be accessed via the project website, [www.communityfilmmaking.com](http://www.communityfilmmaking.com)**



# Lessons Learned

Our vision has been to:

- Create an interdisciplinary approach to understanding community filmmaking
- Use a complexity perspective including five key dimensions: representation and identity, the role of film as media, the tensions in filming practices between arts and commerce, the knowledge and innovation dynamics and the roles of intermediaries, policy and place.
- Situate the community filmmaker as the central node in the complex network of relationships between diverse communities, funding bodies, policy and the film industries.

These are some of the highlights of the lessons learned:

- Cultural representation plays a significant role in how community filmmakers themselves describe their work. Broadly, community filmmakers are deeply reflexive about their practice and very conscious of ethical issues and the political contexts that surround the communities that they work with.
- The film medium is noted for its relative accessibility. Film is also perceived to be a powerful space for community participation and engagement that contributes to strong feelings of cultural and group identity and generates modes of belonging.
- Community filmmakers perceive their work as a continuum between arts and cultural practice and financial and commercial sustainability. However, their work is mainly driven by the need to give a voice to a range of groups and issues from the communities that do not reach and/or are marginalised by mainstream media.
- Community filmmakers are connected to a wide range of networks from charities and community organisations, to policy bodies and other creative and cultural producers. They rely on these diverse sets of networks to create, promote and disseminate their work.
- Community filmmaking covers a wide range of practices. It is a terrain for experimentation for filmmakers and leads to various innovations in content, generating new 'authentic' stories, visually and narratively, but also in terms of funding engagement with audiences, notably through online media.
- Community filmmaking requires both general filmmaking skills but also skills to broker and develop relationship with communities. While some formal training exists, many filmmakers learn 'on the job', developing specific approaches depending on their personality, character or ethos. Most importantly, community filmmaking is seen as a way to make filmmaking more accessible to people who would not necessarily have access to this medium or to seeing the kind of material that is produced, from these alternative perspectives.
- An important finding from the project resides in the fact that community filmmaking is thriving in the UK, offering opportunities to better represent British cultural diversity. However, the recent stringent financial climate has weakened its support system; for example with regards to cultural intermediaries or training organisations.



# Moving Forward

## ■ Diversity: the importance of giving voice to ideas and socio-political engagement

The project from the start tried not to impose one single definition of diversity on its stakeholders and respondents. This has allowed for a wider and broader understanding of how diversity plays a role in the work and engagement of community filmmakers. They themselves do not have a prescribed view of diversity - often funding structures impose them a prescribed view – they broadly see diversity as an opportunity to make diverse (often marginalised) voices emerge and communicate with a wider audience through films. The ‘diversity’ is context-specific to the work and project (sometimes relating to ethnicity, sometimes to disability, sexual orientation or income inequality) and its value is in its specificity and its embeddedness in a particular community and context. This makes it ‘authentic’, but there are various challenges in how to share this work with wider audiences.

***The project highlights the need for a non-prescriptive take on diversity, specifically in relation to funding – to allow a wide range of diverse communities to make their voices heard and on their own terms. This also requires current inequalities in the filmmaking sector to be addressed.***

## ■ Funding for community filmmaking: changes and challenges

The sector has suffered from a lot of cuts directly as arts funding have been cut in the UK. Therefore, this has had an impact on the opportunity to create films with communities but also indirectly as the public sector and support services for marginalised people (who might have commissioned these kinds of film projects) have also been cut. However, talking with partners and filmmakers, there is an acknowledgement that the will to work with communities and be community filmmakers is not specifically dependent on funding. Many projects would still have taken place anyway, based on this ‘goodwill’ and using the extensive social and cultural capital of creative practitioners. At the same time, there is a specific kind of funding that is valued and considered to be essential: funding for equipment and training for young people to start in and learn through the community filmmaking process and, therefore, funding to support organisations that are able to link across communities and projects with filmmakers.

***The project highlights the value of funding to support the training, networks and opportunities for learning and sharing, which cannot be covered in standard project-based funding applications.***

## ■ Recognising and building on the innovation of community filmmaking across the UK

Our research has shown that community filmmaking is part of the array of film practices of various filmmakers in the UK. These practices lead to innovation in terms of both content and processes and a better representation of the cultural diversity of the UK’s communities and places. These practices also support a better representation of the various demographic, social, economic and geographical communities present in the UK. However, it is strongly felt that, apart from with a few exceptions, the mainstream film sector (which also crosses over into television) is not really tapping into this innovative potential. More could be done to recognise the role of community filmmaking in the wider film ecology and to create easier pathways or linkages with the mainstream.

***The project raises question with regards to the untapped potential and apparent lack of integration of the innovation potential of community filmmaking.***

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