How I See You:
Creating a digital community

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ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

With this publication, we would like to provide you with comprehensive materials on participatory media methods and how they can be used for enhancing intercultural dialogue by creating a safe space for sharing young people's personal life stories. It is designed to give you an overview of the theories behind the methodology as well practical descriptions on how we have used it the project in order to build more meaningful dialogue between youngsters having different cultural background.

All the materials in this guidebook are a result of a collective work done by youth workers and facilitators who cooperated together on **"How I See You: Creating a Digital Community"** project that was funded and supported by the Anna Lindh Foundation.

We hope the methodologies we use as well as our experiences from the local labs that are collected and presented in here will serve as an inspiration for your own digital workshops in which together with youngsters you will explore the power of sharing personal experiences.

Good luck with your stories!

Yours,
How I See You Team

PART 1: METHODOLOGICAL OVERVIEW

Introduction: Intercultural Dialogue in a Digital Era

The world we live in is changing rapidly – the global pandemic we are still experiencing has changed the way we live and our perception of ourselves, our communities, and other people. This has affected everyone, but the impact has been especially visible among young, vulnerable people. Not being able to move freely and interact with each other made it very challenging to maintain the existing social connections or build new ones. Being deprived of direct contact with their peers, creates a risk for young people not only to feel alienated and lonely, but also to be more prone to base their idea of "the other" on the information they find in social media or in traditional news. And this information as we know it, is often very biased and full of stereotypes. This problem is a central issue when we talk about dialogue between people having different religious, ethnic, or cultural background – if they do not have contact with each other and a chance to interact in a safe, peaceful space, it is easy to see people different from us as a threat or as those with whom dialogue will never be possible because of the differences.

Digital era we live in brings a lot of challenges in this regard – it is very easy to fall into a dark hole of fake news and easily accessible information that is incomplete or false in ways that are hard to realize. Modern media are not encouraging reflection from the audience. At the same time, we believe that digital tools and their accessibility can be seen as a great advantage. Using the opportunities wisely can help us build a world where individual voices are heard and young people can be taught how to create their own content that can not only show their true selves, but also help them see "the others" in a completely new perspective, focusing on seeking similarities rather than differences.

Right now we see that it is more important than ever to provide young people who have diverse cultural and religious background with an opportunity to reflect, share, connect, and to use simple tools such as videos, photography and collages to build meaningful dialogue across borders and cultural differences. This was the main reason why we created and implemented our project.

Participatory Media Methods: Youth Raising Their Voice

Participatory media methods are based on a philosophy that seeks to distribute digital content created by individuals in order to empower them, encourage them to reflect on their personal stories using different methods, and finally to share what they have discovered with others. The main idea is to boost participants' creativity and show them simple tools they can use to convey messages they feel are important for them, for the community they live in, and for a wider world. Using this approach is based on a very strong conviction that what young people have to say is truly important and worth sharing, because bringing their personal stories to the others can help them see that in the end, no matter where they are from, they indeed have a lot of things in common.

Participatory photography

Participatory photography is an approach of community building using simple artistic/visual tools. Based on the idea that people do not have to be professional photographers to be able to express themselves and their emotions visually, the method can be used with any kind of public regardless of their age, cultural background, or previous experiences. In participatory photography we focus on community building – despite the fact that participants are taking their photographs/create their collages individually, it is a collaborative method as we put a lot of emphasis on sharing, reflecting, discussing, and analyzing what the pictures participants are taking say not only about themselves, but also about their communities and a broader socio-cultural environment they live in.

Digital Storytelling

Digital storytelling in itself is similar to participatory photography as it shares the same essential goal of giving voice to those who are normally unheard as individuals. Here as well the main focus is to reflect, and empower young people by showing them easy and accessible tools to convey their personal experiences in a digital form. In this method we are asking participants simple questions about the past, present, and future, encouraging them to connect deeper with their emotions, memories and values and to record all this in a simple yet powerful short film.

Both participatory photography and digital storytelling aim at producing content that is by no means professional. Our main goal is to show that media content should not be only produced by journalists and influencers – we believe that "regular" or "average" people are those who also have the right to create and share their stories and thus present their unique perspectives as opposed to the mainstream media narration that focused on groups rather than individuals.

During our project we have taught multipliers from our partner countries how to use both of the methods described above so that they were able to use them locally in their own communities in order to provide maximum safety and comfort to their participants. In result, we had many young people with different background going through the similar workshops based on the same set of methods. Content created in this way was subsequently shared and discussed by young people who had a chance to see stories of their peers and reflect on them in the spirit of focusing on differences while appreciating and acknowledging their differences.
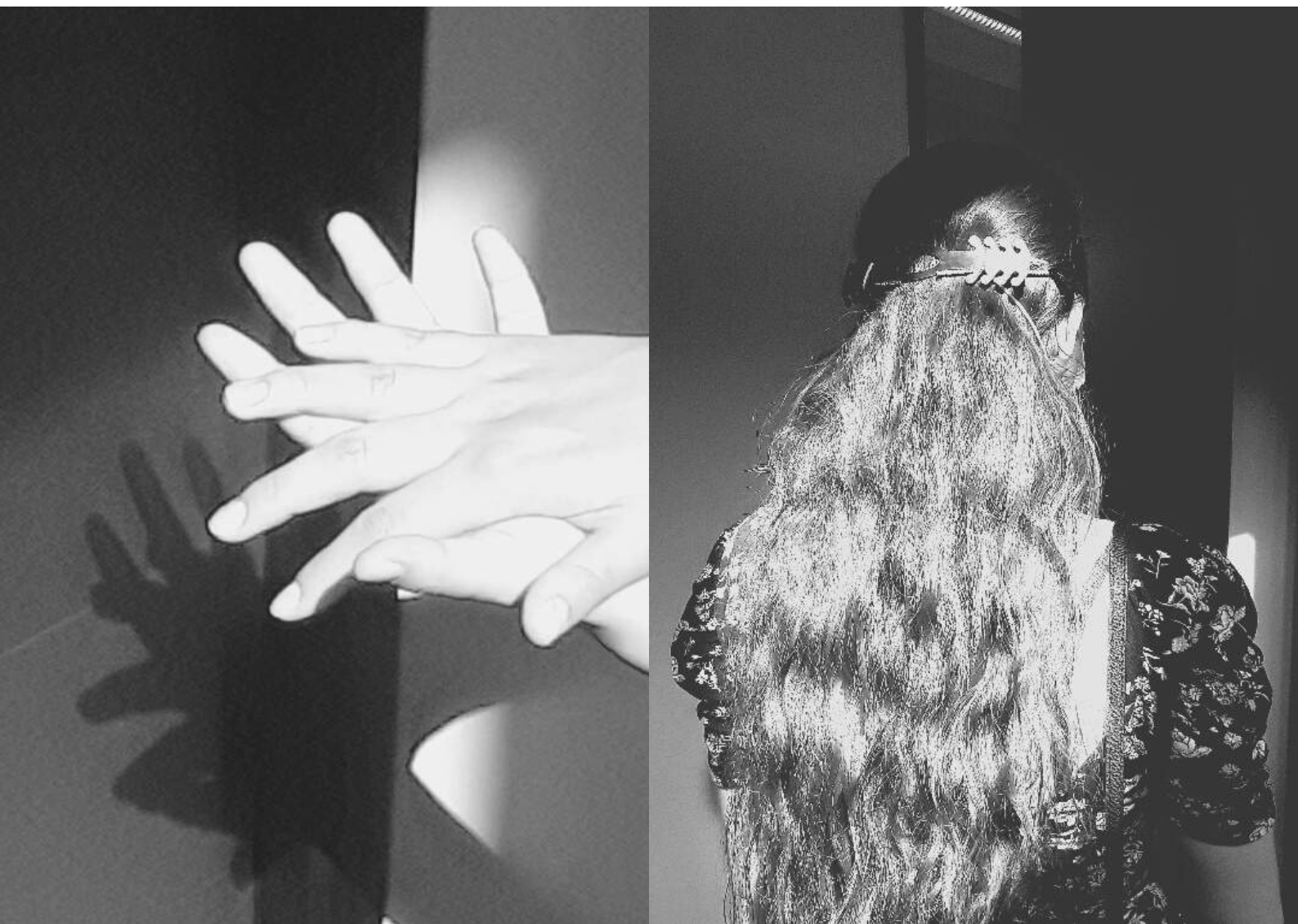
PROJECT OVERVIEW

How I See You: Creating a Digital Community was a long term collaboration scheme that brought together expert organizations specializing in working with youth. Two of them were based in the EU (Fundacja Autokreacja from Poland who was the partner coordinating the consortium and Jovesolides from Spain) and two were based in the MENA region (Jovesolides Egypt and Jordan Youth Innovation Forum).

The project aim was to foster dialogue between youngsters having different cultural backgrounds by providing them with a space for exchanging experiences and sharing their life stories, focusing on finding similarities while respecting their differences.

Project objectives:
- Raising professional capacities of NGO staff working with youth
- Increasing young people's ability to reflect on their cultural identity and to express it to the outside public using digital tools
- Creating a virtual space for dialogue and exchange of experiences between young people having different cultural background
- Strengthening cooperation between civil society actors from the EU and MENA

To achieve all this, we designed a scheme that was based on sharing experiences, exploring and experimenting with new methodologies, testing innovative approaches with young people locally, organizing community events based on participatory media methods and sharing content we produced with an international audience.

Intro training in Cairo

Within the project we first went to Cairo, Egypt, to train the professional youth workers in participatory photography and film making (digital storytelling). During our five days stay we met with activists from Spain, Egypt, Jordan, and Poland to explore how tools based on digital means of expression can help build a meaningful dialogue across cultural differences. The main idea behind it was to train the multipliers and to give them full and in-depth understanding of both of the methods, so that they were later on ready and prepared to conduct the local labs in their respective communities.

To achieve this, in Cairo we did exercises and theoretical sessions on self-portraits, collages, photo-collages, and short, personal films. All our activities served one main purpose: to reflect upon who we are and to share it with the others in the spirit of focusing on similarities while at the same time respecting and acknowledging the cultural differences existing between us.

Local labs and screenings

After the intro training, each partner organized their own local activities in their local communities. Each of them based their workshops on the methodologies that were presented in Egypt but adjusted to the specific needs of their target groups. In result, in each country we had young people creating their own content that was subsequently discussed internationally online in order to build more meaningful intercultural connections. The content (films, collages, photographs) that were produced locally were later on presented during the local screenings in every country, so that our results were shown to a larger public thus instigating a more in-depth discussion on the importance of sharing personal stories of young people for fostering more meaningful dialogue.

Local labs: Spain

How I see You

Técnicas de autorretrato, storytelling y filmmaking.

Jovesólides developed on July 12 a face to face workshop addressed to young people. With this training, the participants were able to discover that being different is something common. They were also able to develop their critical sense, reflected on their identity and learned how to tell a story in a different way through different methodologies such as storytelling or participatory media.

The participants received creative training on the use of participatory video and photography, nowadays an essential tool to work on the construction of individual and collective identities within the framework of intercultural education. All this with the ultimate goal of showing diversity as a positive phenomenon and to value the representation of diverse discourses not always present in the media, and a way to flip the roles and make who normally is behind the scenes tell their own stories in first person. The training took place in Paterna and was attended by 18 people who identified relevant issues such as the loss of family members to covid, homesickness, and fear of uncertainty about the future.

The participants express that the creation of these stories talking with the others in a different way made them feel better after having worked on their emotions with these innovative methodologies.

Local labs: Egypt

The local lab was led by three facilitator from Jovesolides Egypt who took part in the intro training in Cairo: Osama Annashar, Sara Grab and Arwa Agag.
In this workshop, the three participants/trainers successfully delivered different activities with 19 local participants to fulfill the main goal of the project that is creating a digital community and cultural dialogue via storytelling through participatory media and filmmaking.

The workshop took place on the 14th, 16th and 17th of July 2021. The first day was online through zoom, and both second and third days were offline in English Capsules (Nasr City branch) with total number of hours 18 (3 online + 15 offline).

Local labs: Jordan

An instructor specialized in Multimedia production provided both workshops and were considered very useful by its participants. The first workshop was held on 28th of July and addressed the theory of photography and videography. After an introduction and history of digital media, participants looked more in-depth at topics such as: Lighting, types of photography, shooting angles and picture framing. They discovered that photography and videography can be a very accessible tool and professional equipment is not required to create good content.

The second workshop took place on the 1st of August and had a more practical character. Were participants learned a lot about the composition of photography and videography in the first workshop, this session was more about editing. The participants got introduced to some mobile editing apps, such as, CapCut, Picsart and Snapseed. Among others they learned how to make smooth transitions and applying effects by using these apps.
All the 12 participants enjoyed both workshops and believed it was very beneficial for them. The short film produced, filmed and edited by the participants and under supervision of the instructor also proved this. Through the workshops participants were able to learn how to communicate their perspective and emotions through photography and videography.

Local labs: Poland

In Poland Fundacja Autokreacja as the leading partner implemented a series of local events gathering young people with migration background and youngsters of Polish origin who recently came back to the country with their families. The local labs were also attended by Polish youngsters. The important aspect of the workshop to be underlined is the fact that although we had participants coming from very different cultural background, they were able to truly connect and find how many things they have in common. We have focused on the idea of home and investigated how young people were building a sense of belonging to a place despite the fact that they were born and raised in different countries. Having a diverse group of both Polish and non-Polish participants was an interesting experience as it showed that it is possible to really build meaningful connections based on the many things these young people have in common despite their differences.

During the workshops we focused on photography, creating a collection of visuals that reflected the idea of home that were later on accompanied by short films where young people were talking about aspects of their life that were important to them.

Final Conference in Amman

As our project has reached its final stage, together with the project partners and young people from each of the targeted communities, we have met in Amman, Jordan, to share and discuss our experiences in using participatory media methods. The conference was a four-day event held from August 20th to August 24th and it aimed at sharing all the final results, discussing how digital means of expression can be helpful in enhancing dialogue, and planning for the future.

Part of the event was open to public so that we could promote participatory media methods wider. During the presentation of the digital materials created by youngsters during the local labs we had around 50 guests from both local communities in Jordan as well as representatives of international NGOs. All the invited guests are actively involved in working with youth at risk and implement projects aiming at enhancing intercultural dialogue, thus providing them with an overview of methods and tools for sharing personal, digital stories will hopefully lead to creating new international and local partnerships.

Having a chance to once again meet with all the partners and discuss the project successes and challenges made us realize both the power of sharing personal stories and the need for intensifying our efforts to connect youngsters from different cultures and provide them with a space for dialogue.

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PART 2:
THE TOOLS

Organizing your own participatory media workshops

Participatory media methods – photography and film making – can be successfully used in a variety of contexts. You can address your participatory activities to any groups at risk of exclusion whom you would like to support in their journey of creating their personal stories. There are no entry conditions – your participants do not need to have any previous experiences in photography/filmmaking, nor do they have to have any professional equipment, such as cameras or computers. All you need is each of your participant to have a mobile phone and a willingness to explore and share their stories visually.

Both of the methods we use are particularly useful while working with youngsters, as they are already using technologies in their everyday life so in most of the cases they have some skills, which is a really great basis to build upon. The crucial element in here is to support them in changing the way they use photos and videos, encouraging them to discover a new motivation: sharing stories is not about gaining instant gratifications such as like or shares on social media, but rather it is a process in which they can reflect on themselves in a deeper way and create more profound connections with the others.

As mentioned, the methods can be successfully used while working with participants whose cultural, ethnic, or religious background varies. This is because making films and taking pictures helps people discover and focus on what they have in common – the materials they create are personal thus showing really individual life stories. In this way, participating young people can see each other as what they really are, and this is usually very different from what is presented in the mainstream media who rarely show individuals but rather focus on depicting groups, such as migrants or minorities, in very often negative light.

On the next pages of this publication, you can find different, ready to use tools for organizing your own participatory media activities. You can either treat this is as a whole and based your entire workshop on it, but you can also choose the exercises that fits your target group the best, adjusting the whole content to their specific needs.

Human Bingo

Objectives:
- Facilitating knowledge
- Active listening of other stories
- Bonding among participants

Duration:
30 min

Materials:
Template with questions to fill

Instructions:
Each participant has a template with generic questions. The objective of the game is to get as many people as possible to respond affirmatively to the questions posed. Participants must ask the questions to the rest of the people in the room until they get as many affirmative answers as possible, as well as practice actively listening to the stories behind the answers.

Treasure Hunt: Photography

Objectives:
- Enhancing creativity
- Getting familiar with the camera function on the phone
- Developing "visual mindfulness"

Duration:
1 hour + reflection

Materials:
Camera or phone (one per participant)
Projector to show the photographs

Instructions:
Divide participants into smaller groups and distribute a list of objects/emotions they have to photograph together. The list can be adjusted to what your needs and include a lot of things to boost participants' creativity, for example:

- Something red
- A portrait
- A close-up4
- A pattern
- A photo which tells us something about how you feel today
- A tree
- A reflection
- A photo that tells a story
- Something that represents time
- Something surprising

Once each group has photographed and chosen pictures for every category, display all of them on the projector and have a discussion/reflection round, asking participants about the process and how they feel.

Guess the picture

Objectives:
- Getting to know each other
- Building connections
- Developing new understanding of visuals

Duration:
30 min + reflection

Materials:
Camera or phone (one per participant)

Instructions:
Divide youngsters into pairs (or groups of three if you have an odd number of participants). The task for every participant is to choose three objects and take two pictures of each: one that is a very detailed close up and one that shows the object in a bigger perspective. Once they are ready, instruct them to sit in pairs and try to guess what objects the other person was photographing.

Visualizing Feelings

Objectives:
- Recognizing emotions and learning how to show them on photographs
- Discovering how people interpret visuals differently

Duration:
45 min + reflection

Materials:
Camera or phone (one per participant)

Instructions:
In this exercise each participant works individually, taking a series of photographs that show who they are. It is important that they should not be taking selfies, but rather use their imagination to find new ways of presenting themselves. As a facilitator you can suggest some ways of how to take a self-portrait like this, for example photographing just part of the face, a body part, a shadow/reflection, or an object that is significant to a participant.

Self-Portrait

Objectives:
- Self-discovery
- Learning new ways of presenting oneself visually
- Reflecting on personal values

Duration:
1 hour + reflection

Materials:
Camera or phone (one per participant)

Instructions:
Give each participant a printed list of feelings they need to photograph (each feeling should be depicted in a separate picture). The list should be diverse so that participants can explore different feelings, such as sadness, indifference, hope, tiredness, fear, enthusiasm, love etc. Once participants are ready with their photographs, divide them into pairs and ask to share and discuss their work.

Collage

Objectives:
- Enhancing creativity
- Exploring new ways of working with visuals

Duration:
2 hours + reflection

Materials:
- Old colorful magazines
- A4 or A3 white paper
- Scissors (one per participant)
- Glue
- Markers/colorful pens/crayons etc

Instructions:
Start with giving participants a short introduction on the concept of collage, its history and some examples of how it has been used by different artists. After this, ask participants to work individually. You do not need to give them very specific instructions other than one sentence/one word that they should visually interpret. This can be anything depending on what is the main topic of your workshop or what you want to achieve in this particular exercise. The example can be to ask participants to create collages that represent "home" or show "the edge of eternity".

When all the collages are ready, place them on a large table or on the floor and put a piece of paper next to each. Ask participants to look at the works and write their interpretations or impressions down on the papers provided. In the end of the session ask each participant to read the others notes, comment on them, and share how the process was for them.

Short stories using films

Objectives:
- Presenting individual perspectives through short films
- Reflection on personal values and life changing moments
- Building connections with others

Duration:
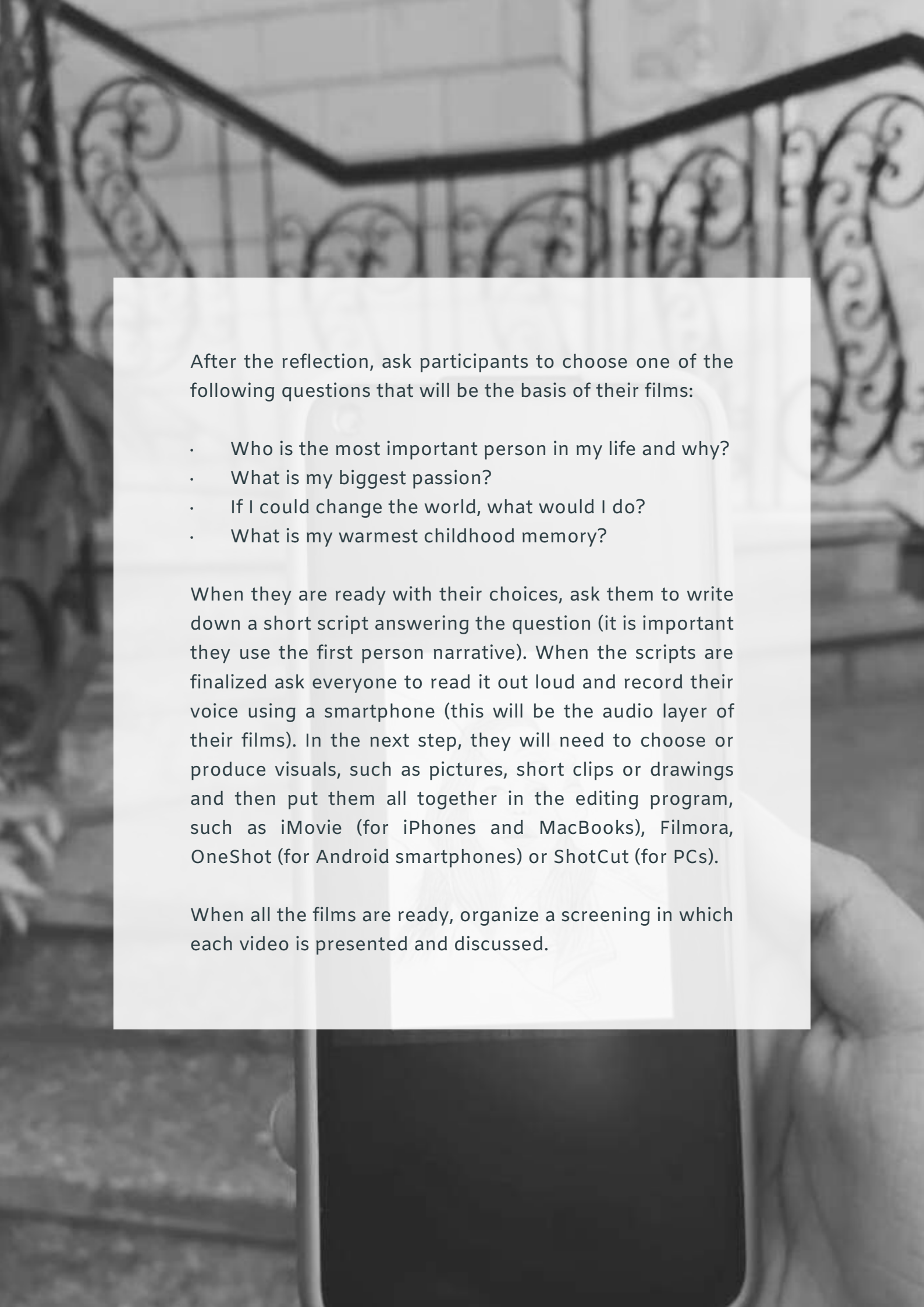5 hours (can be divided into several days if needed)

Materials:
- Phones (1 per participant)
- Headphones (1 per participant)
- Laptops/tablets if available (alternatively films can be edited using phones)

Instructions:
If you are using this exercise after the photography sessions, start with a short reflection, asking each participant to go back to all the pictures they have taken and to list the things they already learned about themselves, such as what is important for them? What are their values in life? What are the emotions they are often experiencing? This will be helpful while creating their films.

If you are using film making as a stand-alone exercise, you can ask them the same questions but give them more time and instruct them to write the answers down and then discuss the answers in pairs.

After the reflection, ask participants to choose one of the following questions that will be the basis of their films:

·   Who is the most important person in my life and why?
·   What is my biggest passion?
·   If I could change the world, what would I do?
·   What is my warmest childhood memory?

When they are ready with their choices, ask them to write down a short script answering the question (it is important they use the first person narrative). When the scripts are finalized ask everyone to read it out loud and record their voice using a smartphone (this will be the audio layer of their films). In the next step, they will need to choose or produce visuals, such as pictures, short clips or drawings and then put them all together in the editing program, such as iMovie (for iPhones and MacBooks), Filmora, OneShot (for Android smartphones) or ShotCut (for PCs).

When all the films are ready, organize a screening in which each video is presented and discussed.

Scrible Books

Objectives:
- Finding a different way of showing and developing stories, ideas and experiences

Duration:
1 hour + reflection

Materials:
- A4 sheets
- Colorful sheets
- Pencils
- Crayons
- Stapler

Instructions:
- Give your participants the following instructions:
- Choose a topic
- Brainstorming (group members together) & write ideas to form a story.
- Draw your own scribbled shape that represent you or your ideas, it could be an animal, an object, an imaginary shape, an icon, any character or perhaps
- something not yet invented. (preferred)
- If you cannot draw, easily you would rather cut shapes out of another material or stickers of the same character.
- Everyone will take an idea and sketch it in one page, and start with shape creation representing the idea.
- Give quotes or short said sentences into speak bubbles.
- Collect & gather all sheets in one sketch.
- Make a cover painting & write their names on it.

About the partners

Fudnacja Autokreacja
Coordinator, Poland

The Autokreacja Foundation aims at fostering the active participation in civil society through various initiatives in the field of social economy. We contribute to the civilizational, cultural and economic development of Poland. We want to put the spotlight on problems of diverse social groups that are often marginalized, that is why we focus on cooperation with persons from underprivileged regions, unemployed, elderly people, immigrants.

Find out more at autokreacja.org

Jordan Youth Innovation Forum, Jordan

The JORDAN Youth Innovation Forum is a Private Non-Governmental Organization Licensed by the Jordanian Ministry of Culture. Our work is on the National level, not focusing on a specific city or region of the country.

Over 13 years of youth work, shaped our focus on different priorities and areas of work, but we have never strayed from the desire to serve Jordan's Youth. Since 2007, we have worked with youngsters to create opportunities for them through many projects, including capacity building, youth exchanges, and training courses.

JYIF is working towards increasing youth active participation in the development process, utilizing all resources and means to present a bright image about the youths in Jordan, as the leaders of the future. JYIF is responsible for developing and implementing this project, which is in line with JYIF's missions and ultimate goals for youth empowerment and prosperity.

Find out more at jyif.org

**Jovesolides
Spain**

Jovesolides was created in 1999 in the priority area of La Coma, in Paterna (Valencia, Spain). NGO works for equal opportunities in development, and promotes an active global citizenship that is committed to its environment. Jovesolides works on projects separeted in 5 areas as development cooperation, e-inclusion, education for development, social entrepreneurship and innovation.

Find out more at jovesolides.org

Jovesolides
Egypt

Jovesolides Egypt is a Social Enterprise, a branch of Jovesolides Network which has 6 branches around the world (Spain – Egypt- Morocco- Salvador- Colombia- Nicaragua) and its Head Quarter is in Valencia Spain. Our vision is promoting the creation of new opportunities for developing society through strengthening the knowledge of its individuals by using youth Leadership, Youths Social Entrepreneurship, and Social Innovation.

Our mission is to create a new generation of the Egyptian Youth leaders (18-30) years Old in Social Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship with different backgrounds and career fields. Through making workshops at national and international.

Find out more at fb.com/jove.egypt