

# PATH PROJECT

Peace Activism through Lessons from History of Forced Migration

GUIDANCE AND PRACTICAL TIPS TO MAKE GOOD-QUALITY VIDEO

PATH - PEACE ACTIVISM THROUGH LESSONS FROM HISTORY OF FORCED MIGRATION



Guidance and practical tips to make good-quality videos

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## GUIDANCE AND PRACTICAL TIPS TO MAKE GOOD-QUALITY VIDEO

The idea of this brief handbook is to give as succinctly as possible a guidance and practical tips everything activists and volunteers need to know to make good-quality videos for the PATH project.

I hope you'll find these tips helpful.

Feel free to contact me if you have any question (before, during or after shootings).

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### FILMING IS TELLING A STORY

*“Show...*

*\*Where you are?*

*\*What is happening?*

*\*Who is involved?*

*And find a way for your viewer to understand why.”*

## CONTENT

The aim of PATH Project videos is to give a message of experience of 3 generations (those who experienced the Spanish Civil War, the Balkan wars and the nowadays situation) and to learn from the past.

Videos will be collected during seminars, study camps and final event.

In other words participants **will use history and look for ways to link it to present situation** – what was a positive story of solidarity, positive visions in Spain and (ex-)Yugoslavia, involving also different generations (could be questions, answers, ...).

You might focus on:

- Refugee story
- Remembrance
- Solidarity action while looking for refugee
- Added value of living together
- Good practices
- History of the site
- .....

### Questions before starting:

- What's your story?
- Which shots will you need to tell the story?
- What's the beginning, the middle and the end?
- Who should be interviewed (volunteers, experts, activists, refugees, asylum seekers, eyes witness, ...)? Why?

If you have time, draw a "storyboard" of your video (see template in appendix 1). This is a very rough cartoon with one picture for each shot (No artistic ability is necessary. Just draw "stick people" and keep it very basic).

## QUALITY

**The best quality** you can reach: minimum **576x720 (16:9)**, equivalent of HD 1080p

## SHOOTING BETTER VIDEO

Don't use a camera as if it were your eyes. Imagine how it would look if you were seeing through your eyes after they'd been transplanted into someone else's head, so that you had no control over their movement.

**Shoot straight and steady, holding the shot for at least five seconds before moving on.** Get as physically close to the subject as possible (zooming in causes more wobble). If you can't avoid shooting close from far away, breathe in and hold your breath before taking the shot to minimise body movement. You will need a tripod to shoot inanimate objects statically (such as a document) and interviews.

If you haven't got a tripod, put your camera on a table and place the object where the camera can see it.

### Things to avoid:

- Zooming in and out all the time and other uncontrolled camera movement
- Too much "headroom" in the shot. When photographing a person, make sure the top of their head is near the top of the frame. A big gap at the top looks amateur.

## RECORDING SOUND

For everything except interviews, you can get away with using the microphone built into the camera or cell-phone.

For interviews, in absolute emergencies, acceptable sound can be had with the internal microphone of a noise-free camera in a quiet room without an echo. In noisier situations, you can ask the person to speak up.

But really you need an external microphone.

If you can, plug in headphones to your camera, since the camera microphone picks up sounds differently than our ears do.

**Your sound is as important as your image.**

## LIGHTING MATTERS

Don't film people with the sun behind them unless you need to backlight them to conceal identity. The best light for filming is a cloudy day outside. Avoid direct midday sun.

## FILMING WITH A MOBILE PHONE

**Hold your phone horizontally** in order to capture a wider angle. It is important for editing.



Mobile phones have a wide-angle lens with limited zoom capabilities. Physically move closer to record details and move back to show a wider perspective of events.

Don't wave your phone around trying to film everything at once. Choose your shot and hold it steady for at least 10 seconds. Avoid zooming. Use both hands and keep your elbows against your body for added support and stability.

Move closer to your interviewee so the microphone can pick up better audio. Be aware of loud noises that could drown out interviews.

Mobile phones do not record well in low light. Record interviews in a well-lit location. For the best images always keep the sun to your back.

Mobile phones have limited storage capacity. Be selective in what you record. Monitor the amount of space you have available on your phone.

## FILMING INTERVIEWS

Some basic tips to recording better video interviews:

- 1) Ask open questions and get explanations.
- 2) Always use a tripod.
- 3) Use microphone.
- 4) Always strive for full, even light.
- 5) Use the rule of thirds to frame your subject. The rule of thirds is explained below.

## 1) Questions

Respect your interviewee and be sensitive to the individual.

If someone has a tragic story to tell, they will understandably have barriers up.

**Try to make videos that empower, not disempower:** we will never leave our subjects merely defeated, and will always aim to give our viewers themselves the desire to act.

A good way to get the full story is to ask questions that begin with 'Why' or 'How' or just 'Tell me...' and can't just be answered 'Yes' or 'No': e.g. not "Are you enjoying the demonstration today?", but "How do you feel about the demonstration today?". If someone's not clear or too long-winded, ask them to do it again shorter. Make sure you don't talk over someone.

**Listen actively! Re-word questions as needed.** Ask your interviewee to speak in full sentences and incorporate your questions into their answers. Allow a 3-second pause between the end of your interviewee's answer and your next question. This will help during the editing process.

Try to get people away from treating you as a TV reporter. This makes some people talk unemotionally, or in a cautious and official way (understandably for TV cameras). Instead, **explain what you're doing**, and approach them in such a way that they treat you as the friendly activist that you are.

**Determine whether or not you will need to conceal identities.** Consider the security implications if the interview is shared online or publicly. If anonymity is needed, film interviewees' hands while they speak or adjust the focus to blur the image. Do not film identifying marks such as scars or tattoos.

## 2) Tripod

**Always use a tripod;** it will provide a markedly better result than shooting by hand.

## 3) Microphones

**A video interview cannot be good if the audio is bad, so use external microphones whenever possible to capture the best sound.**

If you are using a camera microphone to record audio, make sure the subject speaks loudly and clearly enough to be heard. If the subject is soft-spoken, suggest that he/she enunciate and project.

If you are using a lavalier microphone attached to the subject's shirt, blouse, or jacket, make sure that the wire is hidden as much as possible, behind a tie or tucked into a shirt or jacket. Also, be mindful of any rustling sounds that may be generated when a garment rubs up against the microphone. With a lavalier microphone, the subject should speak clearly and at a normal conversation level.

If you are using an external microphone placed on a desk, make sure the area is free of extraneous noise. Place the desk microphone in front of the subject anywhere from one to five feet away, the closer the better.

#### 4) **Lighting**

**When shooting indoors, turn on as many diffused (i.e., indirect, covered with lampshades) lights as possible.** Even if the image looks decent in the small viewfinder, it may end up too dark, too noisy, and too lacking in detail. If the subject has a dark complexion, even more light is needed to allow the camera to focus and record properly.

If a subject sits next to a window, one side of the subject's face may have too much light and may washout the shaded side. Strive for even lighting across your subject. Also, look for shadows on the subject's face. If there is too much light coming from one side, balance it by either adding light or removing light, while still maintaining sufficient illumination.

#### 5) **Rule of Thirds**

The rule of thirds is one of the most basic rules of photographic composition. This framing technique applies equally well to video. Divide the frame into thirds, both horizontally and vertically. The points where those lines intersect are optimal locations for the placement of your main subject.

When we visualize the grid on the video, we see that the top line of our horizontal grid cuts across the subject's eyes and the side of the subject's face is touching one of the middle vertical lines. This creates a tight shot, often used for interviews to frame the head and shoulders. **Using the rule of thirds creates a sense of perspective and intimacy** that is often lost with a straight on, centered shot.



### Take care:

- Adjustments, zooms, and constant movement of the camera can be very distracting to viewers. Make pan/tilt movements slowly, deliberately, and sparingly. Frame a shot, and do not adjust unless absolutely necessary. Don't make changes without a reason.
- Avoid letting subjects sit in wheeled or rotating chairs. This will keep subjects from moving inadvertently and generating distracting noises from chairs.
- Watch your time carefully. Know how long your tape, internal memory, or memory card will last.
- Have a spare, fully charged battery standing by as you are shooting. It's amazing how fast they discharge.

## SHOOT FOOTAGE TO EXPLAIN YOUR INTERVIEWS

Think what pictures you can shoot to accompany or explain your interview. But do one thing at a time; don't try to get these shots while the interviewee is talking.

Shoot footage that establish the when/where/who and what.

They can be exteriors of buildings, scenic nature in the area, historical pictures leading up to the time and place, historical documents, landscape, macroshots, events, people involved, flyers, anything that gives background information.



## KEEP TRACK OF SHOOTINGS

Create a document that summarizes the key information about your footage. Be sure to do this while the details are fresh in your mind. The summary information, often referred to as a "Camera Report", can be saved in a folder with the video. Include:

- Date and location of the filming;
- Names and contact information for the:
  - Person filming;
  - People being filmed;
- Language spoken
- Any safety information or security restrictions (use of face and of full name allowed?).
- A short, factual summary of what is shown in the video.

You can use template in appendix 2.