



Welcome to My Place: Video Workshop Manual

By Christophe Bruchansky and James Thomson, May 2010

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Please let us know how it goes (info@curatedmatter.org) and feel free to publish your videos on the dedicated Vimeo group: <http://www.vimeo.com/groups/welcome>.



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Aim

This video activity is for people of any age and background to share the places that matter to them. It can be used as:

- A tool to better understand the identity of a place or an area (in the context of an ethnographic study for example).
- An Introduction to a collective urban planning effort (e.g. design charrette, <http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charrette>) or in combination with a community mapping exercise (see for example <http://www.mappingforchange.org.uk>).
- An Introduction to video making.

Case study: Welcome to Finsbury Park

This manual is based on the workshops organised between February and March 2010 with the Transition Finsbury Park association (<http://www.transitionfinsburypark.org.uk/>) and on individual contributions to the Welcome to My Place project.

The Transition Finsbury park association intends to find ways of living that are based on localised food production, sustainable energy sources, lively local economies and an enlivened sense of community, rather than cheap and polluting oil. It was looking for new ways to engage with local communities and so organised these Welcome to My Place workshops.



- See the videos made at the workshops: <http://www.curatedmatter.org/welcome-to-my-place/>
- Read more about the Finsbury Park use case and the conclusions we drove from the workshops: <http://www.curatedmatter.org/2010/05/09/welcome-to-finsbury-park/>



Concept

The concept is easy to grasp: participants are invited to choose places that are important to them, perhaps within a specific area marked out on a map by the organisers. The participants are then asked to create videos of less than one minute which welcome viewers to their place.

It is designed to be easily understandable by both children and adults, while offering enough freedom for creativity and artistic expression. The concept is the result of a series of brainstorming and tests made in collaboration with Nathan Johnson from the small world project (<http://www.smallworld.wiseman.com.hk/>). The welcome practice is very rich, expressive and participants can welcome the viewers the way they want.

There are many variants possible for the execution of the activity, here are two.

Option 1: Conducting a workshop

1. Prepare the material:
 - a. Find out who has a digital camera or a mobile phone that can capture videos. Make sure the videos can be transferred from the cameras to the computer where they will be edited. The simplest way is to provide the participants with your own cameras.
 - b. Choose your video editing software. We recommend the free and easy to use Windows Movie Maker for Windows, or iMovie for Mac users. We used Sony Vegas Studio which requires a little more practice but provides more functionality. Many other options are available on the market.
2. Introduce the project to the participants and ask each of them to think about a place that matters to them. It is advised you do this introduction a 1 week before the day of the workshop. From our experience, the results are better when the participants have been able to meditate on their choice for a while:
 - a. Insist that the places they choose to make their film need to hold personal value to them.
 - b. Make clear what restrictions there may be in choosing their place. Should it be in a specific area defined on a map or in a specific building? Or can it be anywhere? Should it be a public place? Can the same place also be chosen by other participants?
 - c. If they need help choosing a place, offer a range of examples - but insist that the choice is up to the participant. The place can be a room, a wall, a street, a garden, a



building, a window, a table, a location, a city, anything that the participants can think of.

- d. Explain how the participants will create the videos (see point 3)
- e. Mention if the videos are going to be published and where. For any participant, being part of a public exhibition can be a great source of motivation, but naturally may worry some parents if you are working with children.

3. Making the videos:

- a. Split participants into small groups of between two and four people, each with one camera and accompanied by one facilitator. (1 minute)
- b. Ask the groups to choose between 2 and 4 places where they would like to film. Draw a quick itinerary onto a map before leaving. (15 minutes)
- c. In between filming the different places (it may be up to 4 locations), make sure you leave time to walk or travel from one place to another. (1hour)
- d. When you give the camera to a participant, you are handing over power - so try not to take it back from them, as facilitator you are there to lend a hand if they need it. Filming a video requires a cameraman, a presenter and/or actors (maybe even a director, a writer and some technicians – depending on your budget and Hollywood ambitions). Negotiating who gets these roles within a group is part of the creative process. It is always up to the participants how they welcome the viewers to a place; whether they choose to stand in front of the camera or just talk from behind it – it is up to them.
 - i. A warm up period before heading out to make the film might be necessary – perhaps show a few examples of our films first for inspiration. If you have children in your group maybe show a few photos of television/film sets and give a little explanation of how it's done.
 - ii. While you are on your way to the first location ask who is going to be filming, who will be presenting, etc.
 - iii. On location –it's a good idea to use sentences like '1..2..3.. action' to get the ball rolling. As facilitator, you may need to play Director at first - particularly if you're working with children. But the participants will quickly pick up the rules of the game and fingers crossed start playing by their own ones.

Participants might find it difficult to describe their place initially, if so ask them questions that can help prompt them into action: Where are you? Why do you like



this place? Why is this place important for you? What would you say if you welcomed a friend to this place?

- e. We edited the videos ourselves, but if the participants are keen to learn how to edit their own videos, it could become part of another separate editing workshop.
- f. For children younger than 10 years old, it's nice to reflect on the places they chose after the filming exercise. One option is to organise a second workshop where the children watch their films and create some big drawings of the places they have just seen. By taking a digital photo of the drawings you can add them into the beginning or the end of the film sequence - further adding to the children's perspective.

Option 2: Asking for individual contributions

1. Prepare the material and introduce the project, see option 1
2. Making of the videos
 - The most effective approach is to ask participants to film the places that matter to them while commenting what they see from behind the camera. It provides the more insight into their perspective and is easier for beginners.
 - That being said, participants are free to film their places the way they want, and for them to present in front of the camera or behind, in one shot or several ones.
 - Keep an eye on the one minute limitation. It might be challenging but it is necessary in order to make the screening of all videos manageable.
 - Participants can either edit the videos themselves or let someone else do it. The second option may change what the participants wanted to convey but is necessary to get people not necessary interested in video making involved.



What to do with the videos

The use of the videos depends on your objectives. Here are few possibilities:

1. Organisation of a screening for the participants and others to talk about the videos, and indeed places discovered. It is a good way to kick-off a debate about a place's identity. This is what we did to introduce the subjective maps workshop described here: <http://www.curatedmatter.org/2010/05/09/welcome-to-my-place-workshop-manuals/>
2. The videos can be part of a wider range of documents about a place or area and could inform further research projects on its identity.
3. Create a public Exhibition of the videos and publish them on the Internet. The videos can revolutionize the public's perception about one place, raise awareness or provide informative insights. Make sure you have the agreement of the authors and the people that were filmed (or in the case of children - their parents or guardian). This manual has been written as part of the Welcome to My Place project and we encourage everyone to publish their videos in the Vimeo group too so it can help form a global catalogue of what places mean: <http://www.vimeo.com/groups/welcome>.

We hope that this manual will be useful. If you plan to use it for one of your activities, please let us know how it goes: info@curatedmatter.org

Thanks for reading, Christophe Bruchansky and James Thomson