

"THE MAKING OF..."

Some remarks on the film made at the 2009 conference of the ESREA Network 'Between Global and Local': *Local Development, Community and Adult Learning – Learning Landscapes between the Mainstream and the Margins*, University of Magdeburg, Germany, 28-30 May 2009.

Research films are an innovative contribution to the future of researching learning landscapes. Using video in qualitative research faces criticism: it is too journalistic, too media-related, it disregards the ground rules of qualitative research (such as 'the lifting' of anonymity which challenges accepted research paradigms). All these criticisms, indeed, should be addressed, critically, *at all times*. But ignoring video-related multimedia is the wrong path to go. The modest aim of this conference film was/is to bring video as a research tool right into the discourse of adult education.

Making the film involved:

- developing a concept out of an idea and creating a structure for the project
- generating video material, i.e. motivating people to let themselves be filmed
- screening of all material and editing
- getting informed consent for a public release

The initial thoughts about the *content* of a conference film were taken from one of the aims of academic conferences: *networking*. How does networking work? How does it function? How do people meet? Questions like these helped to create a preliminary structure for the actual filming. An important part of the film draws on the methodological implications of participant observation. The film material shows people at a conference giving interviews to a peer about 'academic' topics and ideas. Positioning oneself on site in front of a camera can bring out fear and reluctance even though it is a peer-planned intervention to support the visualizing of discourse. The research film gives faces to opinions and it gives voice(s) and visuals to theory. It lets the filmed persons see themselves in another light when they watch the product later – yet another layer of reflection, yet another self-conscious twitch of humility – it may be hoped.

The setup allowed us to put some questions to the interviewees. These questions did not necessarily relate to the interviewees' theoretical knowledge per se, as some questions generated 'narrative' answers. The interviewees were asked to tell a story about one of their first networking situations, where they met someone extraordinary. Other questions evoked very descriptive 'visuals' of people the interviewees have met.

Not in this edited section of the film are the many paper presentations, the Keynote talk as well as some discussions. Some of the film material here shows the surroundings of the Otto-von-Guericke Universität in Magdeburg, the venue of the conference.

We see a great innovative potential in producing films on researching learning processes, but this needs to be set into relation with ongoing research paradigms, and it needs to be contextualized, and this, we argue, is a task for the research community. By providing access here to the film, the ESREA community is cordially invited to look, react and respond.

Sol Haring (Graz) and Rob Evans (Magdeburg)