

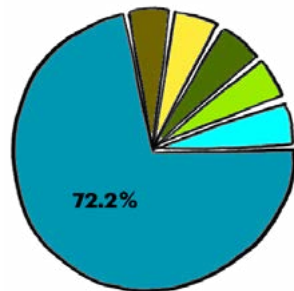
APPROACH & PROCESS

The session was planned using a discussion-based model. We divided the participants into smaller groups that shared enough common affinities to feel safe but were also diverse enough to offer different perspectives and engage with others' perspectives before reaching any conclusions. Participants were asked to answer specific questions that prompted conversations during the session, where they were able to further explore the questions from the initial survey.. Although we came up with a list of recommendations at the end, our process involved many disagreements and nuanced discussions. We were not looking for one right answer, rather, we wanted this process to be a process of constant questioning that opens our eyes to complex understandings of what community-centered, non-extractive filmmaking practices means in different contexts.

As we see in the following graphs from the survey, participants responded to questions after considering their context both within their communities and within the film industry. For instance, some of the answers we provided in the survey didn't represent what the participants wanted to share, so some of them chose to write their own answers instead. This flexibility helped enrich the discussions we had during the sessions and allowed us to expand our thinking about what community-centered, non-extractive filmmaking practices mean to different film professionals.

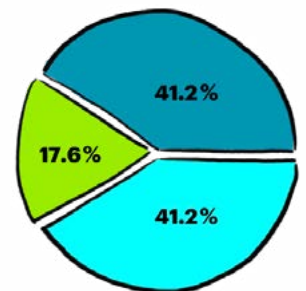
“Do you believe that your community/ communities is ignored, alienated, or exploited by film and media (wether documentary or fiction, mainstream or independent)?”

- Yes
- No
- Yes but getting better with awareness raising.
- Yeah but this isn't a yes/no question. Way more complex than that.
- Yes, but I think there is more representation and consideration coming.
- Honduras doesn't have much a film Industry to say this, but the phenomenon of institutional or NGO documentary exploitation is terrible.



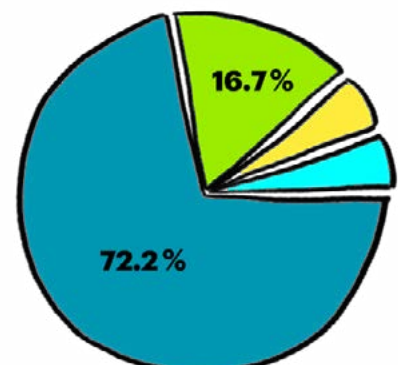
“Funding applications, more often than not, do not reflect my community centered/non-extractive practices”

- Agree
- Disagree
- It's complicated



“Do you think there is an apparent gap in the funding support available to documentaries? (i.e. does the current ecosystem come short in serving talent, and allow films to empower communities?)

- Yes
- No
- It's hard for me to say. I haven't had much fnding or support for my documentaries, so I don't really know. I've found the funding and support network frustrating and difficult to maneuver.
- I don't make films. I wouldn't know how to answer that.

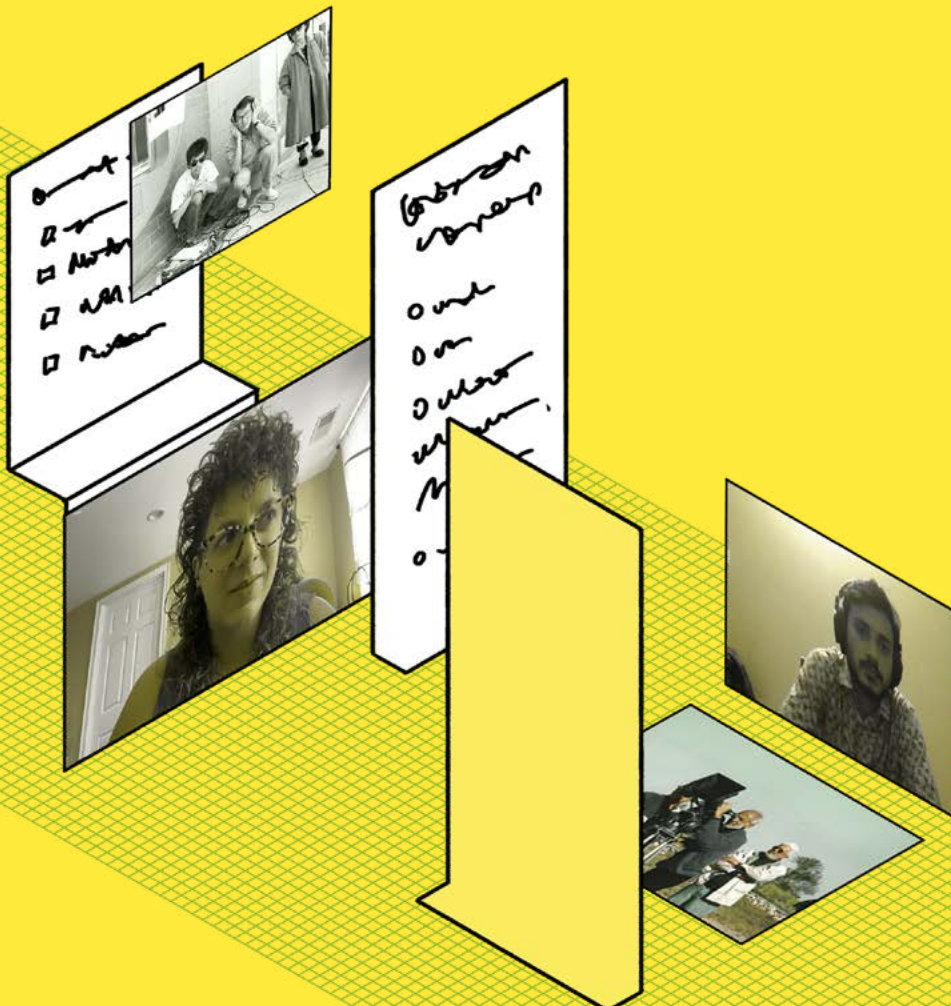


DISCUSSIONS

The graphs show participants' answers to a central topic in our discussion, which is the relationship between film/media funding institutions and the communities they work with/represent. The majority of participants agreed that funding institutions are distanced from communities they work with/represent in their work, and that the reality for filmmakers on the ground is different than what the funding institutions perceive worthy of funding. This perceived "value" gap between funding institutions, filmmakers, and communities is a driving force in the normalization of unethical, exploitative practices. This gap makes it harder for filmmakers who are committed to following community-centered, non-extractive filmmaking practices to receive the funds and support they need to continue their work. More often than not, their and their community's needs and values aren't taken into account in funding decisions.

During the sessions, participants continued to dig deeper into these discussions and to question the terms we often take for granted, such as "community." Many participants expressed their concerns with essentializing the term "community", as it assumes specific guidelines that could work for different communities. For instance, a tough question was brought up regarding the relationship and ethical considerations a filmmaker should have while making a film about a community that causes harm. Where does the responsibility of the filmmaker begin and where does it end? Is it a life-long commitment or does it end with the film production?

Another topic that brought a heated debate was the creative control and authorship of the film. While some participants expressed that the filmmakers should have complete control over the creative process of the film as this is their job, others thought that the communities concerned should have a say in the creative process of the film. With this conversation of creative contribution, another point was brought up about who claims authorship of the film vs. who actually participated in the creative process of a film. Do we see community members as mere participants or as creative co-producers and co-owners of films?





RECOMMENDATIONS

We divided the recommendations from the survey responses and the session into four categories:

1. Baseline, essential points that film professionals should always be mindful of throughout their film process;

2. Dismantling The Gaze in Praxis, practices for examining and being aware of the power dynamics between film professionals and the communities they work with;

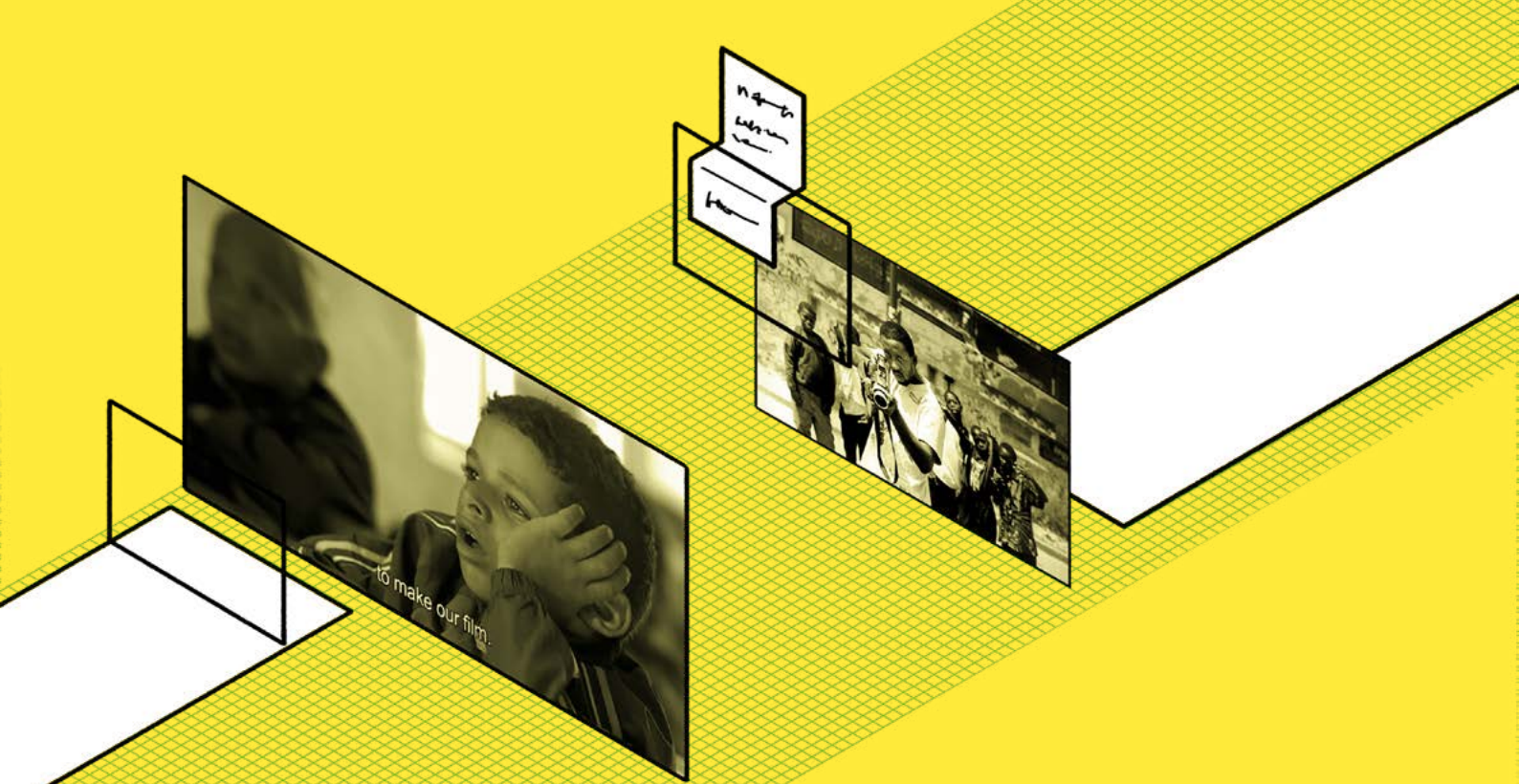
3. Collaborative Approaches, recommendations for working “with communities” rather than “about communities”;

4. Putting Resources Back in the Community, ideas on how to cultivate symbiotic, two-way relationships with communities.



Baseline

- **Informed consent and full transparency with the community/ film participants**
- **Prioritizing community care, wellbeing, and safety from start to finish**
- **Not being exploitative or manipulative; not using financial reward as an incentive for participation or approval.**
- **Avoiding reducing people, lives, and bodies to “subjects”**
- **Risk assessment: Being mindful about the potential impact on the communities implicated, especially after the film release**
- **Not causing harm, and taking responsibility and making the reparations needed by the community if one causes harm**
- **Identity doesn't automatically grant a shortcut to responsible storytelling: Ask yourself two important questions: why you want to make this film? And have you done enough preparations and research for it?**
- **Funding institutions should hold filmmakers accountable to their community pacts as part of the granting process**



Dismantling The Gaze in Praxis:

- Making sure to do your homework, especially if you work with a community that you're not part of
- Embracing complexities and avoiding stereotypes and clichés
- Community is something that is becoming; alive and dynamic. Avoid essentializing or reducing a community to a fixed or a static entity
- Being aware of different privileges and positionalities and how they play into power dynamics based on gender/class/disability/sexual orientation/race/geographies/historical legacies
- Prioritizing the language/s of the community, especially if the filmmakers/film crew don't speak this language/s
- Prioritizing community-centered narrative instead of so-called universal narrative
- Being open to adopting new perspectives and approaches throughout the process
- Communities are not homogeneous, always seek various voices and perspectives from a community

Collaborative Approaches

- Working with community, not about community
- Spending enough time to build trusting relationships with the community you're working with
- Cultivating open dialogue, negotiations, and engagement with the community
- Engaging the community in the decision-making process and asking for their creative input and opinions throughout the film process, especially their feedback of the final cut

Putting Resources Back in the Community

- Giving back is an act of appreciation for the community time, collaboration, and for trusting filmmakers with their stories and lives
- Resources don't have to be just financial
- Prioritizing screening the film within the community and making travel arrangements for members of the community to international screenings
- Providing funds, networking opportunities, and production studios for communities that don't have enough privilege to produce films by/about themselves

CHALLENGES

Participants highlighted various challenges in relation to applying community-centered, non-extractive filmmaking practices. The main challenge is the different understandings filmmakers and funding institutions have of what community-centered, non-extractive filmmaking practices are. Some participants believe that it's easier for filmmakers to adopt ethical considerations and feel an obligation to the communities they're working with, in comparison to how difficult it is for funders and distributors to bring ethical considerations into their mission and practices. They agreed that film-funding institutions with crucial resources do not always see the reality of the situation on the ground as the filmmakers do.

Some of the participants wondered about the potential and limits of community-centered, non-extractive practices under a global capitalist system. Filmmaking, as an industry and practice, doesn't exist in isolation of socio-economic and political contexts. Several points were brought up about how funding structures enmeshed in these systems make it harder for filmmakers to adopt and prioritize community-centered, non-extractive filmmaking practices including not covering money spent towards community as part of the filmmaking process, not allowing for longer timeframes for film projects to truly build strong relationships with communities, and the competitive funding systems in the film industry.

CONCLUSIONS

Filmmaking, especially when it involves working with a community, is a complex process that brings up a myriad of ethical questions and concerns. Even though it is difficult—and perhaps futile—to adopt a set of universal guidelines for working with communities, we attempted to bring voices from diverse film professionals across the world to imagine what community-centered, non-extractive filmmaking practices could look like. Our hope is that this report ignites much-needed conversations in the film industry around the kinds of changes needed to empower communities around filmmakers while placing the values of responsible filmmaking at the very center of present and future funding practices.

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