⚙ Factory floor 🎬 Producing constructive visual stories

Training suggestions

Learning outcomes

At the end of this chapter, trainees...

… can identify a constructive visual language.

… are able to critically reflect on visual representations and their constructive quality.
… are able to build a visual narrative illustrating the problem and the four key elements of constructive stories.
… are able to develop a visual treatment/storyboard for their constructive stories.
… are able to critically reflect on their visual choices.
… can identify and apply constructive principles during the on-site filming process.
… are able to use constructive principles during post production.
… are able to use data visualization for size and impact of problem and evidence of solution.

Training schedule

Group work / 1 hour
Analyzing visual language (fundamental)

Trainees reflect on how constructive and non-constructive/negative messages are conveyed visually.

Individual exercise / 1 hour
Finding visual representations / Building a visual narrative
Trainees actively search for visual representations for facts, figures and emotions. They reflect on the different steps in the process of building a visual narrative.

Group work / 1 hour
Writing a visual treatment
Groups of trainees collectively select a scene from a visual story and write a detailed description of what they see. They also reflect on other tools such as a mood board that could be helpful for visual story development.

Group work / 1 hour
Visual language for a solution-focused story (fundamental)
On a given storyline, trainees search for images to best illustrate the problem, the solution, insights, limitations and evidence.

Brainstorming / 40 minutes
Being constructive on filming site (fundamental)
Trainees brainstorm all together on what could be understood by "constructive awareness" when filming in a community with the team and doing interviews.

Group work / 1 hour
Assembling a constructive story
Trainees prepare an assembling plan for a constructive story on the basis of given filming material.

Group work / 1 hour
Being constructive in post-production (fundamental)
Trainees identify constructive principles in the different post-production stages: editing, narration, graphic symbols, music, colors.

Homework

The beginning and end of a constructive story
Each trainee chooses one shot for the beginning and one for the end of their individual project, feedback by trainer. (This individual work could also be done in the workshop, takes 15 min., then create 2 groups, each with 1 trainer, trainees present their ideas and get feedback.)

Writing a complete visual treatment for a visual story
Each trainee builds a visual narrative, prepares a visual treatment and sends it to you. You give individual feedback and tips for improvement. Beginning & end of CJ story

Requirements

Technology
Internet
Face-to-face: laptop, boxes, projector / video screen (trainer), laptop, smartphones (trainees)
Online: laptops and smartphones (trainer + trainees), headsets

Materials (face-to-face)
Board/whiteboard, flipchart stand and paper, cards (if available), markers.

Tools (online)
Video conference: Zoom (Back up: WhatsApp)
Visualization: Miroboard, JamBoard (Zoom offers digital whiteboards as well)
Quizzes: Slido, Mentimeter
Communication: WhatsApp, Email
Documentation, shared documents: Google Drive folder

Session Details

● Analyzing visual language (fundamental)

Objectives
Trainees are able to differentiate between positive and negative messages in visual storytelling.

Duration
Video presentation: 5 min.
Group work: 15 min.
Presentation and discussion: 20 min.
Trainer presentation, Q & A and discussion: 20 min.

Preparation
Choose a visual story, e.g. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V38keAmTjKs
Prepare task and charts on (virtual) board for 2-4 groups - 2 columns: (+) and (-)
PPT

20 min., group work

Show all trainees a visual story and ask them to look for positive and negative visual messages. Then divide trainees into 2 groups and ask them to make snapshots of the positive and negative visual messages they have identified in the video - minimum 2 snapshots of each category and put them on the board.

The groups present their results and discuss further on how constructive and non-constructive messages are conveyed visually.

20 min., Input / discussion

Building a constructive visual narrative
Presentation: PPT The power of images, slides 2-7

● Finding visual representations / Building a visual narrative

Objectives
Trainees search for visual representations and reflect on challenges of developing a visual narrative.

Duration
Individual exercise: 25 min.
Group work, presentation and discussion: 35 min.

Preparation
Come up with a list of words (facts, figures, abstract concepts, words indicating emotions, etc.)
Online/Offline: Prepare a digital board that participants can upload pictures to.

1 hour, individual exercise, group work, discussion

Ask all trainees to individually match the prepared list of words with pictures from the internet and/or quickly take a photograph themselves.

In case you are working in a trainer tandem: Divide trainees into 2 groups, each run by a trainer. Within each group, trainees present and defend their choices, together they critically reflect on them.

If the trainer is alone, trainees can do the exercise in pairs, otherwise you would need a lot of time for presentation and discussion.

● Writing a visual treatment

Objectives
Trainees are able to describe visuals for a storyboard and explain why this description is a useful part of pre-production.

Duration
Group work: 30 min.
Presentation and guided discussion: 30 min.

Preparation
Choose a visual story with strong visual language, e.g.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nMOMI6P-hmQ
Prepare boards for group work: visual treatment with 3 columns for (1) duration, (2) visuals/sound, (3) goal of visual/sound

40 min., Group work / presentation / discussion

Show trainees a constructive video report that has strong visual language. Then divide them into groups. Ask each group to select a different scene (20-30 seconds max) and write a detailed description of what they see and hear in the scene. Share/distribute a storyboard template with columns for (1) duration, (2) visuals/sound, (3) goal of visual/sound and ask trainees to make use of it.

Each group presents their scene and collects comments and feedback from the other groups. Guide the discussion and collect ideas for a checklist for good verbal descriptions of visuals that helps them to have a clear image in their mind while shooting film/video or communicating with a cameraperson.

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● Visual language for a solution-focused story

Objectives
Trainees search for visual ideas to illustrate the main constructive story elements.

Duration
group work: 30 minutes
presentation and discussion in plenary: 30 minutes

Preparation
Choose a constructive visual story and write down a short storyline that includes main information about problem, solution, insight, limitations and evidence. Example:
https://www.dw.com/en/a-greener-way-to-cook-and-farm-in-peru/a-57767172
(only part one, until 3:30)

30 Min., Group work

Share the prepared storyline which summarizes the main constructive elements of the visual story you have chosen.

Divide the trainees into two groups and ask them to come up with ideas on how to translate the problem, the solution presented in the story, evidence, insights and limitations into visual metaphors, different shot sizes, light, color, background, symbols, focus, unusual and attractive shots, music, rhythm, graphics.

One group focuses on problem, solution and limitations, the other on problem, evidence and insights. Both groups document their ideas on a whiteboard (via images, paintings or verbal descriptions).

[Fictional example: 3 min. TV news report about the current Covid situation at an informal settlement at the outskirts of Lagos, Nigeria (whiteboard)]

30 Min., Input / discussion in plenary

One person from each group presents the collected ideas. Trainees then watch the original video from which the storyline was taken. Discuss.

- **Being constructive on the filming site** (fundamental)

Objectives
Trainees critically reflect on non-constructive situations they might have experienced when approaching protagonists, alone or with a film team. Together they collect ideas to avoid such situations and to improve the relationship with protagonists and their team.

Duration
Think, pair and share; present: 20 minutes
Discussion and further brainstorming: 20 minutes

Preparation
Prepare board for collection of problematic scenarios and for collection of ideas for improvement.

20 min., Think, pair and share

Let trainees reflect on their own for 5 minutes, then pair with another trainee and discuss identified problems for another 10 minutes. Trainee-pairs collect their ideas on a board. Let one or two groups then present their findings, the others add what is missing.

20 min., Discussion

Together, the group identifies solutions (setting, behavior, timing, wording) for a more constructive approach on filming sites.

- **Assembling a constructive story**

Objectives
Trainees are put in the scenario that they are actually video editing a story with given material and reflect on how to make choices and assemble it by following constructive principles.

Methods
Group work: 30 minutes
Presentation and discussion: 30 minutes

> **Preparation**
> This exercise demands some preparation.
>   1) Choose a produced visual story (with constructive elements)
>   2) Explain the storyline on a card
>   3) Prepare a set of cards with transcription of interview soundbites, key word description of images or sequences
>   4) Copy this set of cards in frames for each group.
>
> A face-to-face-training will require sufficient time plus the necessary technical equipment (laptops with an editing program), you can ask trainees to physically do the montage. But the learning impact can also be achieved by this kind of "dry run".

30 min., Group work

The trainees are divided into 3 groups and given cards representing isolated parts of filming material ready for editing (soundbites, scene, v.o. text etc.) of a story that has been produced. Each group gets the same set of cards. The task is to assemble the parts following constructive principles.

Trainees don't have access to the existing visual story itself, but receive the following from the trainers:

- a storyline explaining what the story is generally about (example: a man with physical disability trained himself to become an athlete competing on an international level and helped people in his poor neighborhood integrate physical exercise into their daily lives).
- different cards the contain interview soundbites related to the story (some important and other less important interview quotes)
- different cards explaining the visuals (example: the protagonist enters the gym, protagonist talking to his neighbors)

The trainees' task is to edit all the data they have - not by physical montage but by choosing and arranging the cards. They start by excluding some quotes and footage (like they would do with their interviews when they filmed their stories) and discuss how and why they created the sequences that they did.

30 min., Input / discussion

The groups then present their arrangement for the story, the trainers present the original video and open discussion to see if it was best sequenced or could have been different for a constructive narration.

● **Being constructive in post-production**

Objectives
Trainees get an understanding of how to apply constructive principles in post-production steps.

Methods
Group work: 20 minutes
Presentation and discussion: 30 minutes
Presentation: 10 minutes

Preparation
Prepare boards for each group, one for editing, one for narration, one for graphic symbols and music, one for data visualization.

20 min., Group work, 20 min. discussion

Divide trainees into groups of 3-4 and let each group analyze a different stage of post-production. Ask them to brainstorm ideas on how to add constructive elements to each of the stages: editing, narration, graphics, music, data visualization, etc.

Each group shares their results. Others comment or add ideas.

20 min., Input / discussion

Preparing visual story production / What makes filming constructive / How to create a safe environment / Filming with smartphones / Editing constructively / Narration /Music
Presentation: PPT The power of images, slides 8-27

Trainer recaps main chapter ideas in PPT form if needed.