

Creating Shared Experience – Sensory Ethnography and Collaborative Filmmaking
Bauhaus-Universität Weimar

Auto-Ethnography and People's Film Collectives. Current Collaborative Documentary Projects in India

Ulrike Mothes

Against the backdrop of her research on open narrative and experiments in contemporary Indian documentary, Ulrike Mothes discusses recent Indian approaches of collaborative audiovisual productions. India looks back at a long and complex documentary tradition that is marked by the struggle for political independence and the postcolonial nation building process. Since the 1970s, Indian documentary is strongly shaped by activist filmmakers who perceive documentary as a medium of social change and ally with their marginalized protagonists.

By reference to various filmic examples and interviews the presentation traces video training initiatives by filmmakers actively involving members of the subaltern communities into the production to give them a voice. It contraposes them to grassroot initiatives like *Dalit Camera* that programmatically challenge the dominant Indian mode of media production to achieve an interpretational sovereignty on the subjects of their community. It furthermore draws parallels to artistic approaches of filmmakers such as Anoopama Srinivasan / Pushpa Rawat that open or dissolve their authorship by entering into a collaborative work mode to achieve a documentary narrative that is immediate and authentic.

The question is raised to what extent collaborative practice can lead to a different understanding of filmic aesthetic, visual codes and narrative structures. How would it allow for a multiverse cultural interpretation? In her presentation, Mothes explores the complex relationship of the film-auteur, the media curator, the training instructor and the creator of a platform in the process of collaborative documentary making.