

Gathering and highlighting intangible cultural heritage in an outlying neighborhood through audiovisual methods. A Learning-Service experience from design studies

Recopilación y puesta en valor del patrimonio cultural inmaterial de un barrio periférico a través de métodos audiovisuales. Una experiencia de Aprendizaje-Servicio desde el diseño

Alicia Morales Pereyra*
Universidad de La Laguna (ULL),
Calle Padre Herrera, s/n, 38200,
La Laguna, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, España

amoralep@ull.edu.es
<https://orcid.org.0000-0003-2435-6557>

Carlos Jiménez-Martínez**
Universidad de La Laguna (ULL),
calle Padre Herrera, s/n, 38200,
La Laguna, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, España

carjimen@ull.edu.es
<https://orcid.org.0000-0001-9219-3492>

Editor: Rogelio del Prado Flores

<https://doi.org/10.36105/stx.2024n12.11>

Fecha de recepción: 28 de agosto de 2023

Fecha de aceptación: 30 de agosto de 2023

* Investigadora predoctoral en el Departamento de Bellas Artes de la Universidad de La Laguna y miembro el Grupo de Investigación e Innovación en Diseño de la Universidad de La Laguna y de la Unidad de Transferencia de su Fundación General: “BISAGRA, Diseño, Pensamiento Visual y Facilitación Gráfica”. Licenciada en Diseño en 2017 por la misma universidad, posee también dos másteres oficiales: Máster en Innovación en Diseño para el Sector Turístico por la Universidad de La Laguna y Máster en Evaluación y Gestión del Patrimonio Cultural por la Universidad de Salamanca. Actualmente compagina su investigación con su trabajo en la Oficina de Innovación Cívica, una cooperativa de arquitectura, urbanismo y diseño con sede en Santa Cruz de Tenerife.

** Profesor Contratado Doctor del Departamento de Bellas Artes y coordinador del Grupo de Investigación e Innovación en Diseño de La Universidad de La Laguna. Ha sido director del Departamento de Diseño de Producto e Interiores de ESDi, docente e investigador contratado en Italia en la Università degli Studi di Sassari, y en Túnez en la Université de la Manouba e ISBAS de Sousse, como parte del equipo la Universitat de Barcelona para la implementación en el país del “Máster en Diseño para el Desarrollo Local Sostenible de las Producciones Artesanales Locales”, en el marco del Programa Europeo de Cooperación TEMPUS, para la modernización de la Educación Superior en países socios de la UE.

ABSTRACT

This article explores the utilization of audiovisual methods to gather, safeguard and showcase intangible cultural heritage within an outlying neighborhood, Las Moraditas de Taco (Santa Cruz de Tenerife). This paper will specifically discuss the experience of *Telecafecito en Las Moraditas* -"a nice cup of coffee in Las Moraditas neighbourhood- an strategic proposal to assist community engagement while ensuring oral memory compilation during the COVID-19 confinement. This action is framed in Amoraditas initiative, which employs participatory action-research and service-learning strategies from the design studies, in order to dignify and screen collective memory and promote sense belonging. The study, by means of several valuations, reveals the successful outcomes of the experience, indicating its impact on community engagement, empowerment, and intergenerational relations. The assessment highlights how the initiative effectively adapted during challenging circumstances, enabling the ongoing provision of tangible value to the community.

Keywords: intangible cultural heritage; memory of place; virtual communities; online learning environments; participatory design; design for social innovation.

RESUMEN

Este artículo aborda la aplicación de métodos audiovisuales para recopilar, preservar y visualizar el patrimonio cultural inmaterial de un barrio periférico, Las Moraditas de Taco (Santa Cruz de Tenerife). Se analiza específicamente la experiencia *Telecafecito en Las Moraditas*, una propuesta estratégica destinada a fomentar la participación comunitaria y garantizar la recopilación de la memoria oral durante el confinamiento por COVID-19. La experiencia se enmarca en la iniciativa Amoraditas, que emplea estrategias de investigación-acción participativa y aprendizaje-servicio desde el ámbito del diseño con el fin de dignificar y poner en valor la memoria colectiva promoviendo el sentido de pertenencia. A través de una serie de cuestionarios, el estudio revela resultados exitosos de la experiencia, atestigüando su influencia en el compromiso y empoderamiento comunitario, además de en los vínculos intergeneracionales. La evaluación refuerza la capacidad de esta iniciativa de adaptarse a circunstancias difíciles para seguir brindando un valor tangible a la comunidad.

Palabras clave: patrimonio cultural inmaterial; memoria territorial; comunidades virtuales; entornos de aprendizaje digitales; diseño participativo; diseño para la innovación social.

INTRODUCTION

In this article, we describe an ongoing experience to promote intangible cultural heritage (hereinafter ICH) compilation, preservation and valorization, from the design studies area: Amoraditas initiative. Under a participatory action-research and service-learning approach, several visual methods are thoroughly applied and developed in different phases of the Amoraditas process. This project aims to contribute in the recovery and dignification of the collective memory and sense of belonging in Las Moraditas de Taco neighborhood (hereinafter LM), Santa Cruz de Tenerife city, in which small-scale actions have been carried out since 2016, through art, design and community creation.

This humble¹ but persistent initiative is being led by the Design Research and Innovation Group at University of La Laguna (ULL), together with local stakeholders. It is committed to give continuity and “designerly ways of knowing and doing” (Cross 2006) to the principles in which it was born, within the widest framework of the Intercultural Community Intervention ICI-TACO² project, recently completed and addressed to the whole Tacos urban district.

About ICH importance and its safeguard thorough oral memory compilation in the research field

Cultural heritage is much more than monuments and tangible objects, it also includes the oral living of our ancestors, the traditions and expressions which have been passed over generations (UNESCO, n.d.). We talk about ICH, a key part of the maintenance of cultural diversity which allows a better understanding of history. However ICH safeguard becomes a challenge if knowledge, skills and meanings are not continuously transmitted from one generation to another (UNESCO, n.d.). Thus, as elderly disappears, some anecdotes and relevant passages in history could pass away with them. Whence the importance of oral memory compilation, a method which guarantees oral living preservation.

As the voice of “ordinary people” is usually less considered than data in most investigations: “The role of biographical research is to provide a diverse methodological and interpretative way to enable individual accounts of life experiences to be understood within contemporary cultur-

¹ Being a fluid and modest group of people working with community resources and punctual collaborations and minor funds obtained.

² The ICI Project is a community process powered by Fundación “La Caixa” (Caixa Foundation), successfully followed out in 36 territories of Spain –one of them Taco district, in Santa Cruz de Tenerife–, which encourages coexistence and social cohesion in high diversity areas in order to build a more cohesive and integrated society. (Obra Social “La Caixa”, 2015).

al and structural settings” (Batty, 2009, p. 110). Researchers can have a better comprehension through close experiences and views in order to understand a particular territory or living circumstance through different perspectives, avoiding bias. “Letting research participants tell their own story directly rather than having their lives written about by a distant outsider is the basic tenet of oral history approaches [...]” (Batty, 2009, p. 110).

Theoretical framework

Our framework includes strategic design, co-design, placemaking and participatory approaches from the designer perspective. From Amoraditas, we design, coordinate and implement urban scale actions which pretends to have impact towards the social welfare of LM inhabitants. We closely work with local institutions and organizations in order to build integral design solutions which encourage self-promotion construction of the citizenship, boosting its development and enhancement. We follow a “culture of process” methodology, emphasizing accompaniment, needs identification and, together with the neighbors, action creation, respecting the community rhythm and combining its wisdom together with multidisciplinary professional collaboration³ in order to find richer solutions. All of this followed across participatory action research (PAR), an approach which involves researchers and participants working together focusing on social change, democracy promotion and challenges resolution of a particular context, seeking its participants to have a greater awareness of their situation and so take action (Participatory Research Cluster, Institute of Development Studies, n.d.). “It is an ongoing organizational learning process, a research approach that emphasizes co-learning, participation, and organizational transformation. [...] participatory action research enhances problem formulation, hypothesis formulation, data acquisition, data analysis, synthesis, and application.” (Greenwood *et al.* 1993, p. 177).

State of art

Las Moraditas is an outlying neighborhood of Taco (Santa Cruz de Tenerife) with an heterogeneous urban landscape and internal mobility complexities due to the combination of topography, self-construction and functional diversity. It is an area with a relevant migratory dynamic, representing a significant part of the population growth and its multicultural nature. This immigration responds to important internal migrations that occurred during the second half of the XX century, immigrants from inside of Tenerife and non-capital islands, mostly from La Gomera, who migrated from the countryside to the city (Zapata *et al.* 2020,

³ From local institutions and organizations as well as some Amoraditas supporters.

p. 59-61). Our aim is to make visible the development and memory of these types of territories, which are usually excluded from history.

The retake and preservation of the living memory of LM, started in 2016, not only because of its risk of disappearing, but also in order to empower its inhabitants which somehow feel invisible towards the rest of the island. The initiative which responds to the previous objectives through strategic design and participatory methodologies answer by the name of: *Amoraditas*. Since its beginnings several comunitary actions have been prototyped and carried out in order to pursue empowerment, communal living and public space use. Some examples will be further described.

Since 2016, for almost 5 years, we have been compiling, preserving and transforming ICH into “products” through visual methods. Besides, all of these visual and audiovisual actions have enabled us to narrate *Amoraditas* initiative. Some examples, as shown in Figure 1, that could be highlight are: *Hermiguas Street artistic mural* (2017), *Amoraditas Encounter* (2018, 2021), *Telecafécito en Las Moraditas initiative* (2020).

FIGURE 1. HERMIGUAS STREET ARTISTIC MURAL RESTORATION, AMORADITAS 2021 ENCOUNTER



SOURCE: PREPARED BY AUTHORS.

METHODOLOGY

The COVID-19 confinement evidenced the emergence of using digital platforms in order to adapt to the living situation and continue our daily routines and developing projects. Therefore, new strategies had to be conceived, leading into these 10 virtual Friday gatherings. These online meetings represented a virtual sharing space to the community of LM as it eased outsiders getting to know its inhabitants and history.

Description of the proposal design

Nevertheless our “research question” is centered in ICH recopilation and its future impact, the proposal was designed with multiple purposes:

First, in order to represent a safe space where to express ourselves and share during enclosure, responding to emotional and psychological needs and stimulating community interactions. How? by having a continuity through time and enabling visitors to participate not only in every session but also in the decision making, becoming part of the initiative.

Second, as a way to bring technology close to vulnerable groups which usually don't work with them. How? by introducing the platform before the encounter by gathering previously with them and explaining its basics.

Third, so as to strengthen intergenerational and intercultural relationships. How? by gathering neighbors and visitors from different ages and backgrounds among common interests.

Fourth, for the purposes of running into particularities by gathering life lessons, landmarks and particular anecdotes and perspectives of the same story. How? by having a different guest every Friday, enabling actors to narrate their own experience and memories.

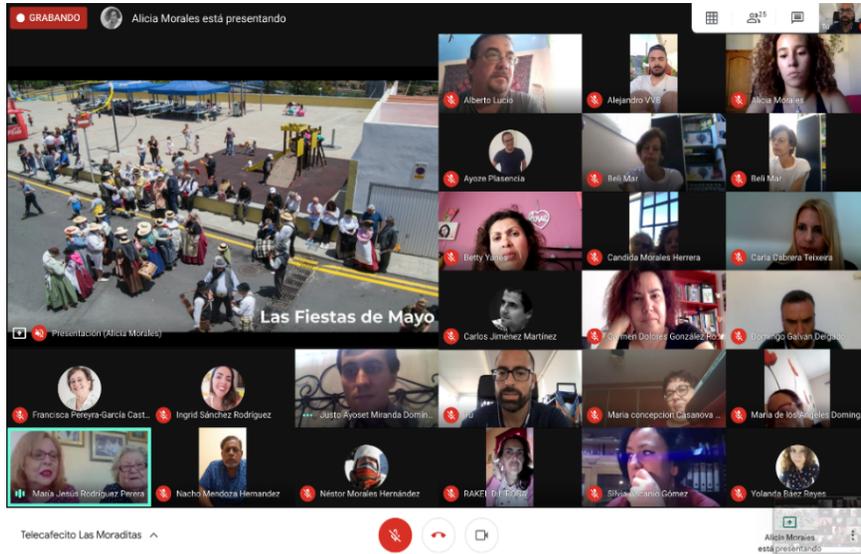
Fifth, in order to lead to the production of digital products which, while gathering ICH, could also lead to other products, future actions, or even the enhancement of the ongoing Amoraditas actions. How? by continuing with the oral memory retaking labor, recording every session and making them public, acting as products themselves and socializing knowledge.

We believe that the 5 components and the decisions taken in order to achieve them, contributed to the success of the experience design, being its combination the main engagement reason during its course, as well as in view of its future usability and projection.

About the proposal method, in order to guarantee coherence and a free-flowing conversation, virtual meetings were framed in themes, as shown in Figure 2. In contrast with our usual type of physical-presence meetings, this concept through videoconferencing platforms was designed to mimic physical dynamics, promoting a warm and comfortable atmosphere. Therefore, these sessions included a 15 minutes talk with our Moraditas resident daily guest and another 15 minutes for asking, debating and sharing. The format chosen, thanks to its participatory nature, provided a friendly environment as it facilitated the fluency of the discourse, by avoiding interruptions

using the chat to participate. In addition, talks were illustrated with old photographs and supplementary information, allowing comfortable pauses and promoting a familiar environment.

FIGURE 2. SCREENSHOT OF THE FIRST TELECAFECITO, SHOWING ITS FORMAT



SOURCE: ICI-TACO.

PARTICIPANTS

It is difficult to analyze the number of participants of this initiative due to the fact most of them repeated the experience several Fridays. However, it should be noticed that the sumatory of participants of the 10 Telecafecitos carried out was a total of almost 200 visitors and actors. The approximate profiles of those attending our gatherings were, on the one hand, neighbors of not only Las Moraditas, but also from Taco in general, and on the other hand, ICI-Tacos technicians and active related people of the project. Therefore, the origin of the highest percentage of attendees was Las Moraditas or another neighborhood of Taco and in third place, other neighborhoods of San Crsitóbal de La Laguna. Furthermore, most of the participants were between 18 and 50 years, but people between 51 and 80 years also attended.

Data collection and analysis: Variables measured and valuating platforms

Although our main research instruments were electronic surveys via Google Forms, we followed a mixed method research approach which also took into account audience and participants statements during and after gatherings. The survey was designed to achieve qualitative

data collection, using closed-ended and open-ended questions, besides a five-point Likert scale in order to measure the convenience of various aspects of the proposal. It should be noticed that the assessment format and questions varied session by session as its convenience and effectiveness in order to answer our objectives and research questions was evaluated and verified. This allowed an progressive enhancement of the format as included the participant in part of the decision making. Consequently, the proposal was framed in a trial and error learning and a constant adaptation towards community settings.

The variables measured were mainly those which gave us feedback information in order to enhance the proposal session by session and help us to evaluate its role and success. Asking participants about the format itself (times, platform or theme), the adequacy of the photographs shown, the usability or inconvenience using Google Meet and even encouraging them to suggest improvements or future guests. This, together with valorations around the objectives above mentioned.

It should be noted that the role Telecafecito played during the COVID-19 situation was progressively changing as the living circumstances changed: from a confinement to one hour possible walks and finally to a “new normality” where going out was possible. Therefore, the number of participants decreased as the situation advanced, from being an average of 27 participants to 10 which attended the last one. We believe this is an excellent indicator, showing the relevant role the proposal had during a period of serious isolation and how it had to be adapted as the living situation developed. However, despite the number of people attending decreasing every session, the percentage of participants carrying out the valuation never stopped increasing, showing the engagement and knowing the power they bear in the decision making, since their opinions were always taken into consideration.

We carried out 8 valuations, as the last two sessions had a complex format (half on-site, half on-line) and low attendance. From the average of 16 people attending every Telecafecito, over half carried out our short form, enabling every Friday gatherings could count with several improvals.

Results

From the results and data analysis of these 8 valuations with a total of 73 answers, five recurrent themes (RT) emerged with favorable assessments of the participants. Over a 70% of the answers agreed the following RT as supported with several testimonies written in the open-ended questions:

RT 1. Telecafecito helped to respond, somehow, to psychological and emotional needs emerging from the living situation.

Testimonies:

“Lo que más me ha llamado la atención es la naturalidad y cercanía de la comunicación” [What surprised me the most is the naturalness and closeness of the communication].

“La gente era muy amable” [The people were very friendly].

“Me ha gustado escuchar a vecinos/as” [I enjoyed listening to neighbors].

RT 2. It has contributed to reinforce the community and enable relations making.

Testimony:

“Lo que más me ha llamado la atención es conocer a nuevos vecinos como Blas” [What surprised me the most was meeting new neighbours like Blas].

RT 3. The initiative appears to be a proper way to bring technology closer to vulnerable groups which usually do not work with them.

Testimonies:

“He aprendido una nueva forma de compartir con la gente” [I have learned a new way of sharing with people].

“El encuentro en sí me llamó mucho la atención, para nosotros era impensable este tipo de comunicación” [The gathering itself caught my attention, this type of communication was unthinkable for us before this experience]

RT 4. These meetings were a way to promote LM by showing a realistic picture of the neighborhood.

Testimony:

“He reforzado la idea de lo importante que es conocer la historia de los lugares contada por sus protagonistas. Muy importante y valioso.” [I have reinforced the idea of how important it is to know a history’s place through its main actors. It is very important and valuable].

RT 5. The proposal was a good alternative to our usual physical ICH gathering presence meetings.

Testimony:

“Lo que más me ha llamado la atención es poder compartir con las vecinas del barrio incluso desde mi casa.” [What surprised me the most is being able to share with neighbours even without leaving my own house].

Beyond this qualitative and quantitative analysis, positive qualitative appreciations also show off in the form of informal conversations and feedback from either the local community,

ICI-TACO's technicians and other stakeholders. In fact, this Telecafecito format, has been further refined and applied throughout the 2020 summer (as "Telecafecito del verano") by ICI-TACO technicians in other relevant initiatives such as the Open Summer School ("Escuela Abierta de Verano") together with different collectives and groups involved, to address issues such as LGBTIQ and social innovation initiatives by citizenship,⁴ among others.

Analysis and discussion

Telecafecito en Las Moraditas proved to be a suitable method for ICH gathering during isolation periods. This initiative and study make it possible for new visual materials and testimonies to gather every session, running into particularities and different perspectives as enriching the investigation and enabling Las Moraditas memory of place preservation. Additionally, these 10 recordings or "audiovisual products", which were uploaded weekly to Youtube in ICI-Taco's channel, actually have between 39 and 288 visualizations. This is because this content has been a way for visitors and students to get to know LM during this academic year. As several subjects from the Design Degree of La Universidad de La Laguna were framed in this neighborhood, as seen in Figure 3, the study of these recordings was one of the most relevant research materials, leading even to its transcription. Furthermore, Telecafecito has also been a manner to narrate Amoraditas initiative by an audiovisual and brief example. Thus, our "research question" has been answered.

FIGURE 3. STUDENTS FROM THE DESIGN DEGREE OF LA UNIVERSIDAD DE LA LAGUNA VISITING LM AFTER WATCHING AND ANALYZING SOME OF THE TELECAFECITOS



SOURCE: PREPARED BY AUTHORS.

In regard to the other objectives this proposal had, it should be noted that data analysis also gives evidence of its positive impact on the social welfare inside and outside the community, making boundaries, attracting new visitors and easing interactions. This initiative proved to

⁴ Summer Telecafecitos, "Citizen initiatives in times of COVID": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bh-Kxme4qHRM> [Accessed 20 September, 2020].

be, during the COVID-19 confinement, a convenient alternative to our usual physical presence meetings, representing a safe place where to share, learn and express ourselves.

As shown in the Results, opinions were mainly similar and most of the favorable, leading to high percentages to the given statements. Eight out of ten participants agreed this initiative represents a suitable promotion to the neighborhood, enabling getting to know its inhabitants and the territory's history and heritage through their narratives, showing a realistic picture of it.

In the end, these 10 recorded sessions about different topics of LM, represent public digital products themselves, including both image and sound testimonies. Thus, these recorded Friday gatherings represent the strongest and complete testimonies we could have, enabling the oral memory compilation of those who contribute to build-up the community through the years, guaranteeing their ICH survival and transmission.

CONCLUSIONS

Reflecting on the experience, Telecafecito en Las Moraditas proved to be a successful initiative during a period of serious isolation, enabling encounters and ICH compilation during difficult times, making possible and showing the importance of adaptation towards society living circumstances and to the community itself. Thus, this can be verified by the continuous participation of visitors and the positive valuation of the assessments.

Besides, these recordings have had a vital role in the students' process of investigation of this territory during the 2020-21 academic year, enabling them to run into neighbors' particularities and own experiences in a Covid-safe way. In consequence Telecafecitos also proved to have an educational purpose, acting as audiovisual research material themselves.

Within a wider framework, Amoraditas initiative establishes multiple ways of gathering and highlighting ICH through visual and audiovisual methods at Las Moraditas neighborhood. As multiple examples have been displayed, this approach through design methods and "designerly ways of knowing and doing" (Cross, 2006), is showing to be a valid approach towards communitary intervention. In a humble but persistent way, our participatory approach through co-design and strategic design together with multidisciplinary professional collaboration, have successfully implemented several actions which somehow have had an impact towards the social welfare of LM inhabitants as collecting and showcasing its oral memory.

REFERENCES

- Batty, E. (2009). Reflections on the use of oral history techniques in social research. *People, Place, Policy Online*, 3(2), 109-121. <https://doi.org/10.3351/ppp.0003.0002.0004> [Accessed 15 June, 2021]

- Cross, N. (2006). *Designly Ways of Knowing*. Springer-Verlag London.
- Greenwood, D., Whyte, W., Harkavy, I. (1993). Participatory Action Research as a Process and as a Goal. *Human Relations, Studies towards the Integration of the Social Sciences*, 46(2), 175-192. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001872679304600203> [Accessed 9 July, 2021].
- Manzini, E. (2018). *Design when everybody designs: An introduction to design for social innovation*. Experimenta Theoria.
- Morales-Pereyra, A., Jiménez-Martínez, C. (2020). Designing community engagement experiences while collecting oral memories from the elderly. A case study through videoconferencing platforms under coronavirus confinement. In D. Jordà Bou (Presidency), *I Congreso Internacional de Creatividad e Innovación en el Diseño "Design Challenges"*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350754980_Designing_community_engagement_experiences_while_collecting_oral_memories_from_the_elderly_A_case_study_through_videoconferencing_platforms_under_coronavirus_confinement [Accessed 1 April, 2021]
- Obra Social" La Caixa". (2015). *Juntos por la Convivencia. Claves del Proyecto de Intervención Comunitaria Intercultural. (Volumen 1: Convivencia y Cobesión Social)*. <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/libro?codigo=714272> [Accessed 4 March, 2021]
- Participatory Research Cluster, Institute of Development Studies, supported by the Swiss Agency of Development and Cooperation. (n.d.) *Participatory Action Research*. <https://www.participatorymethods.org/glossary/participatory-action-research> [Accessed 9 July, 2021].
- Pilay, L., Neves, M. (2020) Diseño para la valorización del patrimonio cultural-gráfico de la ciudad. *Gráfica*, 8(15), 55-61. <https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/grafica.171> [Accessed 15 April, 2020].
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (n.d.). *Safeguarding without freezing*. <https://ich.unesco.org/en/safeguarding-00012> [Accessed 1 April, 2021].
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (n.d.). *What is Intangible Cultural Heritage?*. <https://ich.unesco.org/en/what-is-intangible-heritage-00003> [Accessed 1 April, 2021].
- Zapata, V., Mesa, A., Fonte, M. (2020). Procesos comunitarios como vías de inclusión social: La participación de las personas inmigrantes en el proyecto ICI Taco de Tenerife. *Revista "Cuadernos Manuel Giménez Abad"*, 7, 58-69. <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=7278515> [Accessed 4 March, 2021].

Esta obra está bajo Licencia Creative Commons Atribución-NoComercial-SinDerivadas 4.0 Internacional.

