

Audiovisual ethnographic and tradition: a contribution to the identity and development of the municipality. The experience of San Juan Atitán (Guatemala)

***Audiovisual etnográfico y tradición: una contribución
a la identidad y el desarrollo del municipio. La experiencia
de San Juan Atitán (Guatemala)***

Dr. Luis Bruzón Delgado¹

lbruzon@demuca.org

Abstract

This article summarizes the experience developed in the municipality of San Juan Atitán (Guatemala) by means of audio-visual ethnographic entitled “Los guardianes del tiempo”, which collects a tradition of election of local authorities which merges practices inherited from the Mayan and colonial eras. This tradition is relevant from different angles and a projection towards the development when implementing public policies for the strengthening of local governments. The custom was intended to be filmed and disseminated to assist in their tangibilization and perpetuation as intangible manifestation of cultural heritage and good practice of indigenous social organization. So we planned an approach to the reality of study with the purpose of contributing to the collective understanding of this practice and the strengthening of local identity, through community return. The research findings show the importance and validity of the audiovisual Ethnography applied to processes of cultural revitalization and local development as a way of contributing to the field of communication for social transformation in Central America.

Keywords

Audiovisual, ethnography, culture, tradition, indigenous, municipalism.

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1 Coordinator of the Social Communication area. DEMUCA Foundation. ORCID: 0000-0002-1958-788X.

Resumen

Este artículo expone la experiencia desarrollada en el municipio de San Juan Atitán (Guatemala) mediante la realización del audiovisual etnográfico titulado “Los guardianes del tiempo”², el cual recoge una tradición de elección de autoridades locales que fusiona prácticas heredadas de las épocas maya y colonial. Esta tradición es relevante desde diversos ángulos y supone una proyección hacia el desarrollo a la hora de plantear políticas públicas para el fortalecimiento de los gobiernos locales. La costumbre pretendía ser filmada y difundida para contribuir a su tangibilización y perpetuación como manifestación inmaterial de patrimonio cultural y buena práctica de organización social indígena. Para ello se planificó un acercamiento a la realidad de estudio con el propósito de contribuir a la comprensión colectiva de esta práctica y al fortalecimiento de la identidad local, mediante actividades de devolución comunitaria. Las conclusiones de la investigación demuestran la importancia y validez de la etnografía audiovisual aplicada a procesos de revitalización cultural y desarrollo local, como una manera de contribuir al campo de la comunicación para la transformación social en Centroamérica.

Palabras clave

Audiovisual, etnografía, cultura, tradición, indígenas, municipalismo.

Cultural identity as a factor for social cohesion

In the era of new information technologies, vertiginous transformations in communications, the paradigm shift in messages-receiving processes with the “prosumer” model (Toffler, 1999), culture erupts as an element of counterbalance and maintenance of identities, becoming the fourth axis of development (Hawkes, 2001) and the focus of international conferences, as evidenced in recent decades by the successive conventions and declarations of the United Nations Organization for Science, Education and Culture (UNESCO) - especially those of 2003 and 2005 - and other related organizations.

Culture, as a forger of identities in contexts of undeniable multiculturalism, also welcomes the concept of tradition³, whose meanings are based on

2 Los guardianes del tiempo can be watch in: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9XPAECNrQds>

3 From the Latin *traditio*, -ōnis, among the meanings of the term “tradition” offered by the dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy include the following: transmission of news, literary compositions, doctrines, rites, customs, etc., made from generation to generation ; news of an ancient fact transmitted in this way; doctrine, custom, etc., preserved in a village by transmission from parents to children.

various variables, such as the epoch and the particular ends of historians, sociologists, linguists, anthropologists or communicators. Arévalo (2004) infers a sense of temporality, since it changes from generation to generation. Different cultures or social groups vary their traditions, depending on each time, thus influencing their identity.

Tradition is not exclusive to the past, it is renewed in the present, it abandons the obsolescence of anachronistic practices and represents the cultural continuity of the collective heritage. It contains in itself the germs of stability and change. And change, in terms of sociocultural adaptation, is consubstantial to any society (Arévalo, 2004, p. 926).

Tradition, therefore, with its changes, reproduces from the past with a projection of the future, keeping symbolisms that contain in themselves a sense of vision towards the development and the social promotion community. In the heart of the Cuchumatanes mountains in northern Guatemala, traditions worthy of consideration persist in collective (re) construction processes of a political and social nature, which at the same time become an opportunity for the audiovisual ethnographer who, as well as his research work, can contribute from a collaborative perspective to such construction as a cultural mediator. Since the 1996 Peace Accords, which ended 36 years of internal armed conflict, Guatemala is a country immersed in development initiatives to overcome its secular indices of poverty and exclusion, which particularly affect indigenous communities. However, culture, identity, tradition are often invisible, imposing vertical models of intervention from approaches and attitudes rooted in the western and economic model of development (Bruzón & Hernando, 2016).

Paradoxically, the cooperation projects influence the importance of the territorialization of actions, emphasizing the relevance of the local, the strength of the endogenous capacities for the planning and management of public policies that assert the municipal autonomy, taking into account cultural relevance and, in this way, the achievement of objectives such as social integration, democracy and sustainable, equitable and balanced human development (García González, 2005). In this context, cultural identity comes into play, which synthesizes and fosters the social capital of the communities, their different expressions (objects, rites, ceremonies, festivities, arts, worldviews). Cultural expressions provide an opportunity to weave relationships of complementarity, trust and collaboration among the

different social actors, making the development of the municipality emerge as a common project for all, not forgetting that the cultural identity of the municipalities creates conditions for the effective exercise of the democratic governance, with a more cohesive community, based on a sense of belonging to the territorial area. All this, in a communication space, such as the municipality, with its multiple messages and interlocutors (Bruzón & Hernando, 2016).

It can then be inferred that the cultural heritage in its material and immaterial forms can be placed in a position of prestige in the configuration of municipal public policies:

That we understand the why and for what of each cultural expression, to become aware of its true value so that actions, programs and projects in each area are focused, which will bring benefits even of an economic nature through entrepreneurship initiatives. Otherwise, it will at least contribute to social peace, the fight against racism and social exclusion, while at the same time fostering respect for the cultural and ethnic belonging of the people living in the municipalities (Max Araújo, personal communication, February 26, 2015).⁴

It seems more than acceptable, therefore, to carry out a work of ethnography, mapping, description and interpretation of cultural expressions, for which the role of the audiovisual researcher will be key, more so taking into account the need to work together with the communities in the rescue of the symbolism of culture. In many cases, they have suffered ruptures in endoculturation processes (Harris, 2001), as a result of circumstances such as the armed conflict itself, poverty, the permanent emigration of the youngest to the United States, among other contributing factors in the disarticulation of social fabric. The case of San Juan Atitán does not escape it.

Los guardianes del tiempo (Guardians of time), ethnographic audiovisual about the tradition of the election of local authorities in San Juan Atitán

Justification

The DEMUCA Foundation and the Guatemalan Association of Mayors and Indigenous Authorities (AGAAI) produced this ethnographic audiovisual in order to systematize and disseminate the political organization of San

4 Max Araújo is currently the Deputy Minister of Culture and Sports of Guatemala.

Juan Atitán around the election of local authorities of this municipality of the department of Huehuetenango, in the northwestern part of the country. The idea came from the AGAAI itself, which included in its strategic plan a point on supporting and promoting the organizational structures of indigenous peoples through communication actions that respect cultural identity and promote intercultural dialogue. The purpose of the Spanish cooperation, through the mentioned Foundation, strategic partner of AGAAI, came together in this vision. The final result was a product of 35 minutes duration, which captures this immemorial tradition, which combines custom, cultural identity, local governance and citizen participation.

The municipality of San Juan Atitán has about 30 000 inhabitants. Virtually all of them belong to the Maya-Mam ethnicity and retain ancestral customs. The most notorious are the *mam* language, which is the most widely spoken, because Castilian is little used by them and it is difficult to understand if they speak in this language. The other great distinctive of their cultural identity is the traditional dress, which is preserved by both women and men. The fact that the men maintain their characteristic dress is almost an exception in Guatemala, since in most municipalities this practice has disappeared.

San Juan Atitán is an eminently agricultural population, which stands out for its water sources, which supply other important municipalities in the area. For this reason, their ancestral practices are related, to a great extent, to the conservation of the forests that crown the mountains surrounding the locality. This sense of respect for natural resources and awareness of preservation of water reserves is an inheritance of Maya culture, which bases its worldview on the symbiosis of the human being with the environment. For this reason, in San Juan Atitán has survived since time immemorial a figure of local authority called "Forest Wardens". Wardens provide an *ad honorem* vigilance service to prevent tree felling, which is sometimes produced by the very conditions of poverty in which the population lives or by the search for firewood to use the kitchen or simply to warm up. The Town is cold - it is 2,500 meters above sea level - and especially at night the low temperatures predominate.

Along with the wardens, there are a number of additional authorities - all of them working equally disinterestedly - to support the work of the local government, that is, the town hall (called "municipality" or "municipal mayoralty" in Central America). In this way, the mayor and councilors have always had the support of almost two hundred local authorities, who under different denominations (mayors of custom, auxiliaries, mayors, councilors and the wardens themselves),

have provided their work in different areas, to maintaining roads, bridges, public order, the proper functioning of markets, the natural environment, etc.

The election of the local authorities has been carried out every year in a public ceremony in which the whole community participates. It is a rite that has symbolisms that can be found in traditional sources of the Mayan cosmovision, such as the calendar or the Popol Vuh. The rite - which is recorded in the video - ends a whole process of choosing these authorities depending on the values that the person has: honesty, respect, obedience, solidarity, among others. Four councilors are in charge of choosing the authorities and make the announcement publicly. Whoever is elected must take office and cannot give it up. They must stop working one year to serve the community. This form of indigenous organization, although it may appear to contradict the legal system of the country (no one can work without compensation in exchange), is supported by the Municipal Code, which allows this type of practices based on municipal autonomy.

The audiovisual presents the emotional dilemma that crosses the locality, since the fact of being chosen to be authority supposes a great economic effort in modern times. Therefore, becoming a local authority has been transformed, rather than an element of satisfaction, into a problem, since the economic conditions of today do not allow easily having to abandon a job, whether agricultural, commercial, etc. Many local authorities, when elected, must borrow or ask for support from family members in order to support themselves and their families during the period of their communal work.

Another notable aspect is that this tradition has remained only among men. It is they who can be chosen, not women. This could be interpreted as an example of marginalization towards women. However, if a man does not respect the woman, he cannot be elected as an authority. On the other hand, women have gradually found spaces of organization and participation, supported by the municipality. Perhaps, in keeping with the constant revision of the tradition advocated by Arévalo (2004) as an element of the future, women can soon be elected as authorities. The documentary offers, therefore, an opportunity not only to tangibilize the custom, but to dialogue about it in the search for elements of balance in its perpetuation and participation as a form of cohesion and social inclusion.

Figure 1
Pictures of San Juan Atitán on the day
of the election of local authorities



Methodology

Production phase

The AGAAI made every possible effort to facilitate the realization of this audiovisual, mediating to obtain, by the authorities of San Juan Atitán, the consent to capture with the camera the authenticity of the tradition. There was, therefore, a first stage of respectful approach to the community to achieve a consensus in the terms of the work that was intended to be undertaken. The objective was not to carry out an audiovisual for research purposes from the perspective of anthropological science, but to construct a communication tool for its use in forums for dialogue on the importance of indigenous forms of organization in Guatemala and to raise awareness of population in general.

Consequently, the final audiovisual presents a script based on the research, incorporating interviews with the bearers of the tradition, as well as a soundtrack and other technical elements to confer a suitable communicative aesthetic for its presentation to different audiences in the context of Guatemalan municipal system and, by extension, Central American.

The AGAAI supported the recording stage with the contribution of two indigenous people who attended the filming and facilitated the communication with the ethnographer through the translations into the mam language and mediation for the understanding of the indigenous manifestations. After the research work of the ethnographer and the preparation of the script and assembly, the AGAAI validated it for later dissemination.

The production of the video had the steps established from a perspective of ethical approach to it. The participant observation was developed in a pretended condition of equality for the capture of the rituals proper to the election of local authorities in their daily life (Pulido, Ballén & Zúñiga, 2007; Micelli, 2009; Kapuscinski, 2014), a fact that happened in a manner synchronous to the presence of the ethnographer, accompanied by all the symbolic charge of a tradition of these characteristics. In this dimension, a high collaborative level was sought in the research-participant relationship (Lisón, 1999, Flores, 2005, Grau, 2002, Cárdenas & Duarte, 2010, Espinosa, 2012, Ranocchiari, 2015 and Zirión, 2015). The experience generated positive results, but it was a constant challenge to maintain the tension throughout the process until the achievement of the final product. It was not easy, given the

dependence of the commitment and responsibility of the true protagonists, each of them with their characteristics, personality and cultural codes.

The final narrative has a level - to our understanding justified and respectable - of ethnographic authority (MacDougall, 1995; Cadenas, 2008) by the ethnographer, who is responsible for preparing the script and editing on the basis of description and interpretation. Even a voice-over was used to facilitate the comprehension of a dense description (Geertz, 1987) to an audience (receiver / reader) that undoubtedly also incorporated its interpretations and conclusions - thus enriching discourses derived from audiovisual- , as demonstrated by the subsequent dissemination and dialogue forums.

The purpose of the AGAAI initiative sponsoring the realization of this audiovisual was to contribute to dialogue and social cohesion, facilitating democratic spaces of communication and feedback for strengthening the rule of law. It should be added that the audiovisual was selected for the final phase of some international festivals (Espiello -España-, Ícaro -Guatemala and other samples in various countries at the local level), which contributed to its dissemination in wider circles.

Devolution phase

Through the techniques of focus groups and discourse analysis (Santos, 1993; Alzaga, 1998; Íñiguez, 1999; Contreras, 2014), the findings are presented below, based on the collective projection of the finished audiovisual. This dynamic allowed for observation and reflection exercises in two joint positions: a) return of the audiovisual product to a group of local authorities of San Juan Atitán, in order to explore collective feelings and responses; B) projection to institutional actors at national level (especially the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports of Guatemala and AGAAI), in order to reflect on cooperation initiatives, the convenience of incorporating audiovisual tools and achieve commitments on future activities for the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage.

The activity had the orderly participation of the attendees, who, often, expressed themselves in the mam language, given the difficulty of speaking in Castilian. In this case, two people acted as translators, because they knew the Spanish language well. The participants were explained the reason for this

group work, with the intention of being used in a qualitative research on the importance of the use of ethnographic audiovisual for the strengthening of the cultural identity of the mam culture that contributed to its development. It is important to note that not all the attendees intervened in the same way. At the meeting it was noteworthy to note the cultural differences and difficulties encountered around the issue-receiving of messages. However, an interaction of great dialectical richness was established, which generated important information conducive to the establishment of a series of conclusions.

Figure 2
Return of the ethnographic audiovisual “The guardians of time”
to local authorities of the municipality of San Juan Atitán
(Huehuetenango, Guatemala)





Ethnographic narrative

The following is a fragment of an ethnographic account of the participant observation process, carried out at the time of research and recording of the audiovisual product (field work). Its form is narrative, as Angrosino (2012) points out, a story “whose main goal is to engage the reader in a real community experience in which the ethnographer has lived and interacted” (p.36). It includes the researcher’s interpretation of the symbolism of tradition, in which it is intended to have contributed to a collective (re) construction of cultural senses tending to strengthen the identity of the municipality and contribute to intercultural dialogue and, therefore, to orderly and sustainable community development. For this, the interview and the bibliographic documentation are considered key elements in the research. It proposes an ethnographic account built on the basis of the invisibility of the ethnographer in the text, although it is he who finally configures its form and content. Underlying this relationship is the visibility of the ethnographic facts that the researcher considers, paying attention to the details, the contrasts and his personal reflections, always from a perspective of respect towards the *others*:

The celebration takes place the last days of November, when in San Juan Atitán prevails a climate of cold and fog at certain hours of the day. In the early afternoon, there is a party atmosphere. It is the eve of the moment when the custom will be repeated and the new authorities will be elected. All the people are called to participate. The aldermen have prepared the list and have submitted a proposal to the mayor and councilors. The focus of attention is located in the House of Customs, a simple construction of adobe and tile, next to two sheds that, together, form a 'U' leaving a small esplanade in the center. Inside the main building, the mayor, councilors and chief aldermen analyze the lists of the chosen. No one in the community knows their names. The lists are written by hand and are now subject to a close and exhaustive review, which lasts several hours. Outside, a rustic marimba, played by three musicians, enlivens the progressive concentration of hundreds of San Juanians who arrive at the House of Customs and the nearby promontories, forming a tide of color. The women, dressed in their typical red ribbons on their heads, wash the giant pots in which they prepare typical foods in firewood. They also bring flowers, yellow, red and white, which will play a key role in the ceremony. The wait becomes long, that's why those concentrated there meditate, converse, even dance to the rhythm of traditional tunes. They've brought drinks for everyone. The atmosphere is relaxed, in the middle of a pack of voices in the mam language.

After a few hours, the session is adjourned. The names of the nearly two hundred new authorities are already assigned for next year. The councilmen step outside followed in the end by the mayor. They join the current aldermen, mayors and wardens. All, scrupulously ordered in single file, walk towards the municipality. They blow their whistles as they go. The noise is lost in the immensity of San Juan Atitán.

The afternoon falls and the lights of the villages begin to timidly populate the mountain. It is presumed a cold and long night. Practically no one goes to sleep. Some will wait impatiently for resolution, others will populate canteens without promising anything about their effects. The pronouncement will be at dawn. At four o'clock in the morning, the moon tries to break through the mist. In the House of Customs, a motley crowd awaits in silence the arrival of the mayor and his entourage. They form an impressive auditorium of thousands of faces, whose quiet expressions can only be guessed among penumbra. Timidly the notes of the marimba begin to sound, which mix with the sounds of the roosters and the explosion of

some other rocket. On the steep street that leads to the House of Customs, the whistles sound, a sign that the authorities are approaching. The women are grouped together and begin to crack the coals that will heat the food for all. The mayor and the councilmen sit at the main table they have arranged in the courtyard. The current authorities occupy the seats placed in a U-shape, but first, in single file, take several walk around until several concentric rings are formed. It is an improvised rite, rehearsed only in the hundreds of years of custom, symbol of the meanings emanated from the Mayan calendar and its circular conception of time. The Mayan calendar is considered more exact even than the Gregorian system, for which we are currently governed. The calendrical round or “long count” of the Maya is a combination of, on the one hand, the calendar year, called haab by the Maya of Yucatan and masewal q’ij by the Maya-Quiché (Tedlock, 2002). It was a 365-day solar calendar with 18 months of 20 days and 5 additional days. And on the other, the sacred calendar, called tzoltin or cholq’ij, depending on the case, which in total lasted 260 days.

Tedlock (2002) explains that the first day of the first month of the solar calendar is called the Mam in several Mayan languages and marks the destination of the rest of the year. The four chargers of the year are Kej, E, No’j and Iq ‘. At the time of our ethnographic account, I’q is the key day for the election of local authorities, which in this case is combined with the Aq’ab’al day, auspicious for choosing. The two regular mayors have been performing their ceremonies all night around the sacred fire, invoking the Heart of Heaven and the Heart of Earth to enlighten the new authorities. In this regard, Jose Vicente, as usual, indicates: “I’q is a suitable day to ask for everything good to the Supreme Being, for him to grant it. That is why people are chosen today. Aq’ab’al is the auspicious day to name, to make the call. They combine these two nawales so that all the work of the new government for a year comes out the best way. The first beams of light are divined in the sky. It dawns. The silence breaks with the mayor’s voice, which is heard, metallic through a megaphone. He greets in man all the people present. Then he gives the microphone to the first alderman, who recites the list of new authorities in a relentless litany that the auditorium assumes in dead silence.

Only the melancholy tinkling of the marimba dares to make noise at the end of the appointment. The silence breaks. Slowly, the masses in purple, red and white tones begin to move and the thousands of straw hats,

seen from above, make uneven mosaics. The corn tamales and beef broth circulate patiently for all of the women, some of them without letting go of the children, tied behind their backs.

Where are the chosen? Some have taken the news to their homes and now, with their hands under the capishay, head down, and inadvertently, walk through the muddy and narrow streets to dialogue with their women. It will not be easy to make the decision. Where do you get the income for a year to support the family? In the improvised colloquium of a group of mothers, we have been confessed that many get loans through microfinance companies, which offer soft credits so that they can afford them. What if they oppose the appointment? It is the last option. You cannot be against customs.

Flowers are the witness of power, the symbol of transfer of authority. They are white, yellow and red. The bouquets are tied by a white adhesive tape where the aldermen have written the name and the position of each of the new authorities. They are then placed in four large baskets, which should be carried by each of the four aldermen, from the House of Customs to the municipal palace. The print emulates the image of the shipper of the Mayan year, that nawal or calendar sign that marks the destinations of each year. Now, the four flowerpots go down the main slope, reminding us of the importance of number 4 in the Mayan worldview: the full and universal, like the sun; four are the cardinal points and their colors. Together with the black, they are the same as the flowers they hold: white, red and yellow. Next, again in an orderly row, the majors, aldermen and wardens. All of them are now calendrical signs, each bearing a nawal, a spiritual meaning.

The procession takes on a deeply sacred meaning and recalls the episodes of the creation of the world that relates the sacred text of the Popol Vuh. The twin heroes of the “Mayan bible”, Hunapuh and Ixbalanqué, deceived the lords of the Underworld-Xibalba-and defeated them, carrying in four cups the white, yellow and red branches of a leguminous plant called chipilin, which the same malignant had commissioned them:

And carrying the flowers in the four cups, they left, and when they came to the presence of the Lord and the other Lords, it was pleasant to see the flowers they brought. In this manner those of Xibalbá were defeated (Recinos, 2006, p. 143).

Probably, the inhabitants of San Juan Atitán today are not aware of the notorious mystical charge of ceremonial. Even so they go to see the procession

on the way to the municipal building. Everyone, dressed in their typical costume, cram the square. Meanwhile, in the town hall, the mayor harangues the outgoing authorities. They are the ones who, with their corresponding bouquet of flowers, will hand over the power to the new authorities. Each one leaves with his bouquet in the hand to go to his destination. They will go on foot and it does not matter if it is a neighborhood, a village or an isolated house. Some take up to more than two hours to arrive. Below, in the square, their closest friends wait to accompany them. The stage decomposes into multicolored movements around each branch. The groups are dispersed in different committees that start their march. Most of them run along the main road, barely separated by a few meters. In all of them the whistles echo, the echoes of which are descending along the valley. The pace is fast and generates maximum expectation along the route, especially by the women, because the groups of this particular pilgrimage are composed only by men. There are improvised stops along the way, which serve to refresh themselves with a soda and to ingest some food. The day is long. It started at dawn and some will finish it late at night.

Each outgoing authority delivers the bouquet to its successor. Then, the main street, on the side of the mountain, is slowly becoming normal. The square is empty of people and color. The town takes its habitual image, its calmness and its silence of any day without history in the calendar. From the twilight, watch the tradition, with its imposing size, the volcano Tajumulco. The waters of the Cuilco River resonate below. And, at dawn, when Mayan time is renewed, local authorities will begin a new cycle in San Juan Atitán.

In the different forums of return of the audiovisual important exchanges and discussion of ideas happened, some of which we raised to the category of main findings in the present investigation:

The ethnographic audiovisual highlights the participation of indigenous peoples. Cultural diversity is an opportunity for the development of countries like Guatemala, and this often goes unnoticed. Despite the recognition of such participation in peace agreements and other international forums, it is often not effective or simply not visible. The audiovisual contributes in this way to consolidate processes towards a quality democracy, through the participation of indigenous communities, key references in the design of municipal public policies.

Figure 3
Preparation of bouquets in San Juan Atitán,
symbol of transfer of power⁵



Main findings

Visibility contributes to social inclusion, to putting on the surface the many cultural heritages that exist in the midst of diversity and are often unknown to us. Audiovisual documentation based on ethnographic research and its participatory vision stimulates the critical reflection of the community regarding its cultural traditions and practices, and the importance of its sustainability.

The ethnographic audiovisual strengthens the cultural identity and the self-esteem of the people. Watching oneself reflected in images supposes, in the first place, an emotion for the protagonists. Emotion gives them joy, enthusiasm and motivates them to dialogue. It is a recognition of the otherness of which they are part, which becomes a recognition of the self (Grajeda, 2013). In general, they accept the ethnographer's interpretations of

5 All the photographs have been taken by Bruzón, L., author of this article.

the symbolism of thier culture, despite the author's degree of ethnographic authority that he can incorporate through his subjective gaze. Nevertheless, they recognize that the respectful approach to the reality under study is correct. Somehow they feel "co-producers" and even "co-owners" of the final video (MacDougall, 1995). They complain of other works that, since the anthropological investigation, have lacked the process of return of the final product. For example, A. J., alderman, participant in the act of return, states: "The interpretations are valid and necessary. Many times the word tradition does not go according to what the manifestation shows. It is important to go back, investigate and make other interpretations. Making relationships with the past, with the Mayan calendar, is good, in order to understand what the tradition means for these peoples."

For his part, S. H., warden, states: "The documentary reflects reality. It is a memory of what our ancestors have left behind. We liked the way in which the video narrates, we have been reflected." In short, the work of mediation - not just documentation - of the ethnographer, towards processes of empowerment and social cohesion is valued.

The ethnographic audiovisual is a tool of municipal communication. The processes of documentation and dissemination of tradition constitute an added value to the design and implementation of municipal public policies, as they foster spaces for participation and intercultural dialogue towards social transformation, improvement of the conditions of citizen coexistence and the intergenerational transmission of culture. F. V., Warden, says: "Video is a tool for dialogue between the community and the authorities and to stimulate tradition among young people." Communication, therefore, must be part of such policies and, for this, documenting and disseminating culture is an essential element.

Conclusions

Ethnographic audiovisual can be a useful tool of strategic communication to investigate, document, interpret and disseminate tradition, understood as a legitimate form of identity of the peoples and a demonstration worthy of consideration for processes of endorsement of the community-based public policies designed and implemented from the legitimacy of municipal governance. In the case of the indigenous communities of Guatemala (and by

extension of Central America), struck by the marginalization and disarticulation of the social fabric for various causes throughout history, ethnographic audiovisual is an element of strengthening self-esteem, recognition of cultural diversity and respect for the cultural rights of individuals, conceived and accepted by regional bodies as fundamental human rights. The work of the researcher from the field of communication for social transformation is key in processes of collective construction. To this end, a necessary and increasingly specialized university education in the field of culture and local development (Bruzón & Hernando, 2016) will have to contribute, in order to broaden its focus towards spaces of mediation and intercultural dialogue.

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