

## Understanding Documentary Film-Making Permissions: A Sociological Perspective

**Authors :** Nivedita Ghosh

**Abstract :** This paper undertakes an analysis of permissions that are required by documentary filmmakers in order to access the locations and respondents that they desire to film. The attempt is to bring out the manner in which the practice of documentary filmmaking becomes embedded within complex social structures and relationships within/around which the film is being made. These social relationships may not only influence the direction that the film takes with respect to its final story, but may also impact the very method of filmmaking undertaken by the filmmaker. The following essay presents four types of filmmaking permissions, each revealing the specific social dynamics between the filmmaker and the filmed, and intra social dynamics between those who are intended to be filmed. The analysis shows how documentary filmmaking permissions derive from the community norms and values of the respondents. The paper is based on fieldwork carried out amongst documentary filmmakers filming in Delhi and Gujarat in India and Sardinia, Italy.

**Keywords :** documentary film, documentary film shooting, India, permissions

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