Quadraginta: A project for a collective Audiovisual Reflection in the Era of COVID-19.

Carlos Escaño
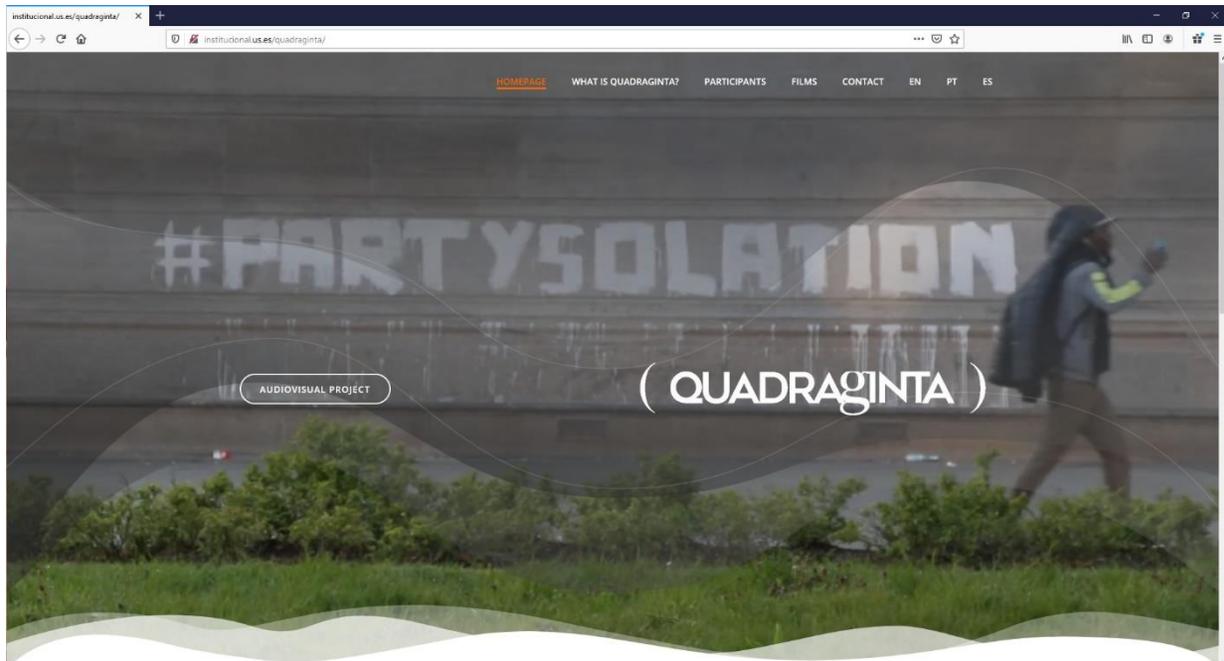

Figure 1. *Quadraginta* project website. Screenshot at http://institucional.us.es/quadraginta.

The purpose of this contribution is to present the international project titled *Quadraginta*[1].
This audiovisual project was carried out during the lockdown period in 2020 and sought to reveal a collective refl ection during the COVID-19 era (Figure 1). The project encompasses 10 short films produced by a diverse group of international contributors interested in audiovisual arts. The project aim is to develop a collective audiovisual reflection through an intersubjective diversity and personal action from dissimilar cultural points of view. *Quadraginta* has been supported by the research group Education and Audiovisual Culture of the University of Seville, among others, [2] and proposes a reflection that aims to contribute to the development of the

conceptual framework of art education. The premise of this audiovisual work starts with the following questions: What unites human beings in such a situation? How are we experiencing it from our contexts? And fundamentally, what are we learning as a society in this exceptional situation? To provide relevant answers, the international group of participants developed a working methodology characterized by its collaborative, open, and proactive approach to the development of cultural heritage.

Figure 2. *Lockdown by COVID-19 in India*. Women from Anantapur, India (recorded by Ritesh Katuwal). Frame from footage shared for *Quadraginta* project. Image licensed under Creative Commons BY-NC-SA.

2. Background

Art educators Dipti Desai et al. (2020) pointed out how symbols and images are used to reconvert and resignify their content and turn them into tools for social action in the times we are facing. The COVID-19 pandemic has made visible, on an international scale, significant political imbalances and inequities in our different societies. Likewise, the global pandemic is challenging us as an opportunity for reflection and action from the collective and the individual (Jandrić et al., 2020). Our current condition invites us to bracket concepts and emotions to analyze and learn from them. *Quadraginta* is the etymological root of "quarantine." It is a Latin term that means "4 times 10" and symbolizes a reflection that goes to the root from plurality and participates in the implicit idea of "parenthesis." Thus, our project aims to be a parenthesis for reflection within the urgencies of our time, providing answers to the questions formulated above and through a concrete working methodology (Figures 2 and 3).
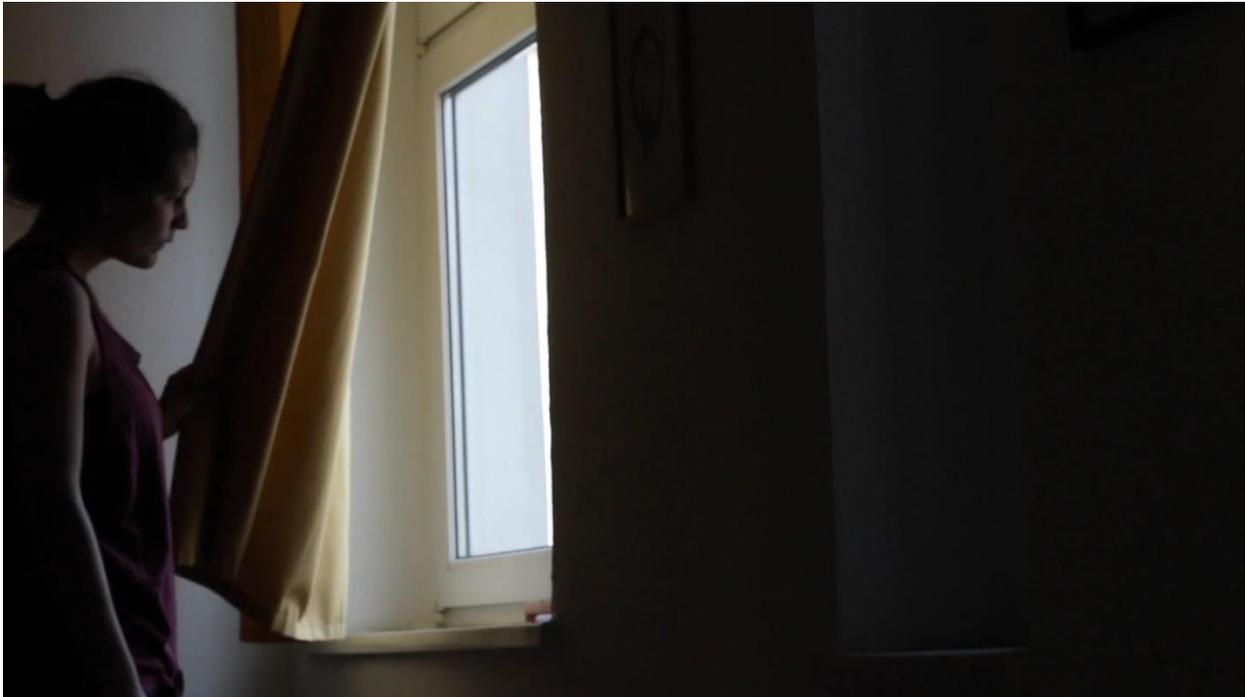
Figure 3. *Lockdown by COVID-19 in Germany*. Corona lockdown, Berlin, Germany (recorded by Constanza González Bernstein). Frame from footage shared for *Quadraginta* project. Image licensed under Creative Commons BY-NC-SA.

3. *Quadraginta*'s production method

The international participants include 13 people interested in visual creation and production who developed a working methodology characterized by its collaborative, open, and proactive approach to the development of the cultural commons. This results in an experimental proposal in which two consecutive methodological stages are clearly differentiated:

- *Production.* Each participant developed a personal research work by recording a set of shots that tried to reflect on the experience. The recording was conducted within the specific context where each of them experienced the initial moments and months of isolation. It seems important because the duration and application of the lockdown measures have been different worldwide; however, the emotions, sensations, and reflections have been common. Subsequently, each group member had to select 20 recorded shots and share them with the rest of the participants, allowing them to use and edit freely.

- *Scripting and post-production.* After this stage of making and selecting shots, each participant had access to the common audiovisual set. This set included more than 200 shots ready to be used, scripted, and postproduced by all the participants. All the members had access to this collective material, and they were allowed to script and edit a personal audiovisual reflection with total freedom of extension and thematic use.

However, there was one unavoidable premise: Each film had to contain at least one shot from each set of footage provided by each participant in the project. In this way, collective participation was guaranteed in each work.

This collaborative method symbolically and explicitly acknowledges that art is a social product (Wolff, 1993). The method makes visible that personal artistic work depends on a cultural heritage that is always collectively generated, and that both knowledge and learning are always shared and articulate a common good. The scientific tradition has pointed out how discovering knowledge is both a personal and a social process (Hess & Ostrom, 2007; Polanyi, 1958).

Figure 4. *Lockdown by COVID-19 in Peru*. Masks hanging up in the sun, Lima, Peru (recorded by Christian Ugarte). Frame from footage shared for *Quadraginta* project. Image licensed under Creative Commons BY-NC-SA.

4. Project Results and Some Conclusions

The result of *Quadraginta* is a set of 10 short films. [3] The participants in the project have made their audiovisual reflections from countries such as Brazil, Chile, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Germany, India, Mexico, the Netherlands, Peru, and Spain (Figures 4 and 5). The explained methodology has favoured that each audiovisual work implies an individual reflection but is inevitably linked to the collective reflexive action, where all narratives are interrelated. The *Quadraginta* project is connected to nonfiction cinema and proposes an overall essay that can be appreciated both from the particular contribution of its members, and the collective as a whole. This significant experience emerges as an invitation to collective audiovisual production where the value of the collective is the premise of the work, where authorship is exercised and conditioned by intersubjectivity and context, and where the spectator also participates in the reflection. [4]

In conclusion, it is worth noting that the questions arose as a starting point of this reflective exercise of audiovisual collaboration. These questions have found an answer with a common link: The pandemic has shown the weakness of our physical nature, and at this delicate and dramatic conjuncture, global political strategies must fall on the side of common protection and care. This learning is shared in both international and communitarian ways, and it is represented through a collective view, which also highlights the idea of interdependence. All the contexts shown from the different countries highlight Paulo Freire's (1968/1970) key idea: the dialogical I is precisely constituted by the thou; we are all interdependent on the social and cultural level.

Figure 5. *Lockdown by COVID-19 in Spain.* 8 pm applause for doctors and health care professionals, Seville, Spain (recorded by Carlos Escaño). Frame from footage shared for *Quadraginta* project. Image licensed under Creative Commons BY-NC-SA.

5. References

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[1] http://institucional.us.es/quadraginta).

[2] In addition, the project has been supported by the R&D Project, "The Internet as a Thematic Area and Field of Research in New Artistic Practices." Ref: HAR2017-82825 (Spain).

[3] The films can be viewed at http://institucional.us.es/quadraginta.

[4] All works are licensed under Creative Commons CC Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike, which allows the reflexive work to continue to develop. *Quadraginta* was presented at the 2020 Creative Commons ccALM festival in Spain: http://ccalm.es