HOW TO CREATE AND PUBLISH

A PHOTO NOVEL

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Acknowledgements

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A PHOTO NOVEL

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PREFACE

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UNESCO's current six-year strategy[1] assigns the Organization five fundamental functions or methods of work: a laboratory of ideas, a standard-setter, an information clearing-house, a capacity-builder in the Member States and a catalyst for international cooperation. Developing such original educational tools as this handbook relates to all these functions. On the one hand, it seeks to catalyse international best practice and to promote debate and sharing of ideas about it. On the other hand, it is a practical resource for capacity-building programmes and points to the way ahead, as does a framework of standards in the wider sense.

Through its Culture Sector, and in particular through its Section of Creative Industries for Development, UNESCO has long been engaged in developing advisory literature, handbooks and guides for professionals in the creative industries.

In the specific field of the book alone, it has produced – to cite just two well-received publications – a work entitled National Book Policy[2] and one on Book Donations for Development.[3] How to Create and Publish a Photo Novel is part of a long tradition relating directly to field work by UNESCO specialists and to the experience that the Organization has acquired at international level.

This new tool concerns a specific area of publication, the photo novel, which is sometimes underestimated and even disdained, but which lies at the heart of a number of strategic educational and training projects in the campaign for sustainable development.

A fascinating blend of photographs and text, accessible and entertaining alike, the photo novel can be a valuable vehicle for well-designed texts and important topical messages that could not otherwise be delivered to some sectors of the public. It can play a capital role

in the fight against illiteracy and in publicity campaigns surrounding major social problems such as endemic diseases. Consequently, it is altogether desirable to facilitate its growth by training professionals capable of feeding local markets with high-quality products that are culturally and linguistically appropriate.

This document is based on field experience and gives trainers a comprehensive step-by-step summary of this kind of project, from the budget to the human resources, from the photo shoot to the production and including the script.

Since the approach we have taken to designing our previous information and training publications has proved popular among professionals, we decided to retain that method whilst aiming to improve it further and so to speed up the spread of the necessary knowledge and skills.

This handbook will, or so we hope, support our ambition. In the always vibrant context of the creative industries and of vocational training, UNESCO welcomes criticism and suggestions that would enable it to improve the content and the form of this initiative.

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INTRODUCTION

What do we mean by a photo novel?

The photo novel is quite a well-known genre in Europe where it appeals chiefly to a female and popular audience, particularly because it usually tells love stories. Its essential feature is that it is a story in photographs, just as the strip cartoon is a story told in drawings. Graphically and structurally, it is very close to the strip cartoon, as we shall see later: the page is divided into boxes, dialogue is presented in balloons, etc.

Its relationship to the cinema is equally important, especially in the case of those publications that lay claim to a certain editorial quality, through its use of techniques designed to make the story more vivid and modern: switching angles, reversing shots, day for night, etc. We shall return later to these borrowings from cinema techniques. Like the film and the strip cartoon, the photo novel is based on a script, which contains the story's plot, and uses pictures, dialogues

and voice-off commentaries. Consequently, producing a photo novel calls for skills both in writing scripts and dialogues and in photography, as well as the usual publishing skills – project management, working with various team members, page composition and digital processing of pictures, printing. Since photographs are used rather than drawings, actors must also be involved.

A popular and useful genre

We have emphasized that the photo novel is a "popular" literary genre. The term is in no sense pejorative, especially if we look to see the reading population grow. Remember, too, that the word "popular" can simply mean "very successful". In this regard, we believe that the photo novel is an excellent way of giving new readers a taste for reading. Its greater accessibility and less forbidding format as compared with the pure and dense prose of the novel, the brevity of the texts, the help given by the pictures and the "cinematographical"

attraction … everything conspires to take the drama and the ritual out of reading, to attract a public that is disinclined or unused to reading and to make them wish to persevere.

Additionally, the content must be close to the target readership and should give them pleasure, by presenting characters who achieve the readers' unattainable secret ambitions, by making them dream (without appealing to their baser instincts!), giving them hope, in short, by telling them stories which, at least for the time they are reading, allow them to sublimate their everyday lives. Is that not the role of all literature?

Knowing your readership

To satisfy a readership you have to know them in depth. That requires knowledge of their sociocultural environment, their gender, their age, their educational standard, their habits and their lifestyle, as well as their problems, their anxieties, their daily worries, etc. Almost universal stories do indeed exist, but most frequently the subject and style should be adapted to the target readership. With that in view, the publisher or at least the writer should themselves be members of the target community or should have as close as possible a link with it. Should that not be the case, we cannot recommend too strongly that publishers and writers wishing to start producing photo novels should research thoroughly and test out the target readership.

The challenge of quality

In photo novels as in strip cartoons or indeed in novels, quality varies greatly. The biggest danger as regards the photo novel is that of purveying "rose-tinted" stories, stereotyped, conveying dubious values, seeking so much to prettify reality that they end up lying about it. Rather than making the readers dream, this sends their minds to sleep. The characters become stereotypes (rich, handsome hero, submissive, timorous woman – or, conversely, dangerous, treacherous woman, etc.), the stories spread illusions rather than hopes; they stupefy instead of energizing.

This trap is not easy to avoid. Among the chief challenges for publishers and writers must therefore be to create rich, intelligent, pleasing and amusing stories that are far from being off-the-peg plots. That requires thought, work and talent. Writing and publishing a photo novel is a difficult task that should not be undertaken lightly.

Budgetary questions

Proper evaluation and control of the budget required are essential in any publishing enterprise. The requirement is the stronger in the case of photo novels in that the use of photographs firstly means that there are more team members to pay and secondly calls for a higher quality of digital processing, printing and paper than is needed when publishing text alone.

We think it important to stipulate right now that the cost of creating a photo novel is too high for an African-language publication,

for instance, unless it is funded by a development aid programme. The public's low purchasing power and the restricted readership mean that there is not really a market that can cover the cost of the project and still less make it commercially viable. That does not mean that the undertaking is not greatly to be recommended, for all the reasons we have given above. The benefits of the project are ample justification for the publisher's quest for funds and for the funder's investment.

That said, we shall seek throughout this book to reduce the impact of budgetary issues on the feasibility of the project by describing various ways of cutting costs without affecting quality, wherever possible.

I. THE TEAM NEEDED

The publication team

The project manager

In any project involving several people, there has to be someone to coordinate and take responsibility for the project. In the case of a photo novel, the coordinator is responsible for raising the finance, selecting the participants, supervising and remunerating everyone's work, managing quality, keeping within timescale and budget and lastly seeking distribution channels for the finished work. This is usually the publisher in person, but it might equally well be the writer if the latter has the requisite skills and dependability – organizational sense, rigour and ability to lead a team.

The publication secretary (editor)

The publication secretary's role begins as soon as the text has been written and the photographs have been taken. It is to check the quality of the style, grammar and spelling of the text, to ensure it is coherent and intelligible, to help to select the photographs, to pass the chosen elements to the DTP designer, to read the proofs and to pass the complete file to the printer. In smaller publication teams, the publisher acts as publication secretary and also checks the quality of the printing.

The DTP designer

The DTP designer devises the page composition together with the publisher and/or the producer and/or the photographer, integrates the text and the digital pictures using a DTP package (Pagemaker, XPress or InDesign), makes the corrections requested by the publication secretary and prepares the complete file to be passed to the printer. This is a difficult role in respect of the photo novel because the text, enclosed in balloons or text boxes, must not spoil the photographs or hide important elements. Consequently, it calls not only for complete mastery of the design software but also for artistry and resourcefulness.

The writer

Required qualities

Not every writer can write a script or appeal to every readership. A photo novel writer must be able to invent and narrate fiction in a vivid and captivating way, but must also be concise and to the point, one of the chief problems of the photo novel being lack of space. Depending on the kind of story to be brought to the public, the writer must have a sense of humour or of drama, suspense, emotion, etc., and must know the target readership.

Where can you find one?

All this calls for a talented writer, popular in the best sense of the term. In Africa such writers can be found broadcasting in national languages on radio or TV stations. They are the ones who make the listeners and viewers laugh or cry uncontrollably: you cannot miss them! Some storytellers can also be trained to write scripts, as we shall see later in the chapter on organizing writing workshops. Some novelists writing for adults can benefit from such training or creativity workshops, provided they do not think they are "on a pedestal" – they must be flexible and adapt to their readership and to the concision of the genre, avoiding difficult terms, long sentences and over-complicated plots.

How do you choose a writer?

An interview and an essay seem the best way of choosing a potential photo novel writer. During the interview the publisher can judge the writer's appetite and adaptability. Some are visibly amused and intrigued by the change and the challenge. Others feel a degree of contempt for a literary genre that they view as minor and are neither inclined nor necessarily able to adapt.

The essay would appear essential in every case. It should be presented as the basis for agreement between the publisher and the writer: the photo novel is a genre that imposes many constraints, and before any contract is signed it is important to be sure that the writer can and will work within those constraints and that the publisher can use the work in a high-quality publication. The essay might take the shape of a short scene from a novel to be changed into an episode for a photo novel.

Rather than choosing the writer, you could select the script, which is safer but more complicated. It involves organizing either a writing workshop (see the chapter on this below) or a competition through the press. Organizing a writing workshop is more onerous, even if the publisher runs it in person. However, it can be viewed as a training event in return for which the writers freely relinquish their rights to the text produced during the workshop. In this case the training must be of a quality to justify that surrender.

In the case of a competition the prize is publication, with or without copyright royalties depending on the available budget. If it is without

royalties, a number of copies could be kept back for the writer to sell privately for profit or to distribute to acquaintances.

The actors

Required qualities

The job of the producer and the photographer will of course be easier and the result will be better with professional actors than with amateurs. They will position themselves better, instinctively strike natural poses and avoid the trap of "over-acting" as in the old silent movies. However, good actors are not as important for a photo novel as they are for a film. If an actor declaims, moves badly or has too weak a voice, etc., it will scarcely be noticed in a still photograph. Conversely, each actor must exactly match the role (age, physical appearance, poses...). Just as in the cinema or the theatre, there will be the juvenile lead, secondary roles, comics, dramatic roles, etc.

Where can you find them?

If the budget is too small to employ professional actors, some members of the publication team or their families or friends may take roles. You can also advertise for actors in the press.

If resources are available to employ professional actors, it is advisable to use well-known actors, which will make the photo novel more popular and easier to distribute. Television or production houses are the best places to make contact with such actors. You can sometimes negotiate a reasonable fee with them by pointing out that the work is less restrictive and less difficult than the cinema or the theatre and that the commercial aspect of the venture in its entirety is incomparably smaller than the budget and income of a film.

A middle path between celebrity and unprofessionalism can also be found by looking for actors in amateur theatre groups or drama schools, if there are any in the country.

How do you choose them?

First the project manager chooses the ideal cast. If everyone selected is available and willing to take part, a discussion suffices to define expectations and ensure that everyone knows what is involved, feels able to adapt to the specific context and accepts the terms of production and distribution. Should there be any doubts, auditions should be organized for potential actors with the producer and if required the photographer in attendance.

If some roles have not been filled, a casting procedure is organized with auditions, as for a film, to select the most suitable actors.

The producer

Required qualities

To define the qualities that are important in the producer we must first explain this fundamental role. It starts before the photo shoot, continues during it and ends after the photographs have been selected. Before the shoot the producer may take part in selecting the actors, going on to check the feasibility of the script and to organize the

schedule for the shoot – the scenes are not necessarily acted in the story's chronological order, as we shall see. Together with the project manager, the producer supervises the organization in respect of the choice of locations, scenery, props and costumes. Another task is to create a basic design of the photo novel which can be remodelled to some extent as the shoot progresses, but which provides working instructions such as, for instance, whether individual photographs should be in portrait or landscape, wide-angle or close-up, etc. For more details on this part of the producer's work, see the beginning of Chapter IV, "The photo shoot".

During the shoot the producer ensures that no scene is over-looked, positions the actors and gives them acting instructions. He or she works with the photographer to select the best sight lines, etc. They also have to check for discrepancies between scenes, such as an unfortunate change in dress or an unintended change in the scenery.

After the shoot the producer works with the photographer and the project manager to select the best photographs for passing to the DTP designer.

This long list of sometimes complex tasks clearly shows that the producer has a central role, calling for competence, observation, rigour and even meticulousness. It also requires a degree of natural authority for everything to work well, in as little time as possible, during the shoot. Finally, artistic sensitivity is essential.

In short, this is probably the most difficult person to find, especially if the project has a limited budget.

Where can you find a producer?

A film director is of course the most suitable person. Everything depends on the budget, the conditions in the country (in several African countries, for example, you cannot necessarily earn your living just by making films) and the intuition of the project manager. Here too, you may be able to negotiate by pointing out that this is an opportunity to gain different experience.

In a descending order of competence, you can look in production houses or in television, in drama schools, as for actors and, if there is really no other option, in the publication team, since publishers are famously "one-man bands"! The chapter on the photo shoot is designed to help non-specialists if necessary to undertake to best effect the producer's activities.

The photographer

Required qualities

Professional photographers are more numerous and easier to find than producers. That does not mean that any photographer can work on a photo novel. Given equal technical skills, an events photographer (weddings, celebrations, concerts, etc.) will be preferable to an art photographer. The former is used to photographing people on the move, snapping live action, adapting to less than ideal lighting conditions. This flexibility and adaptability are exactly what is needed for the photo novel.

Where can you find him and how do you choose him?

Photographers working to commission sometimes have a studio or shop. Otherwise, they usually leave small advertisements in film or photography shops and they can also be contacted through the press. The right choice will be made by reviewing the candidate's photograph portfolio or "book" and through an interview. You need to feel that this is a person who understands a situation quickly and can invent lighting or technical solutions for all kinds of minor problems arising from the location, the actors' movements, the available light sources, etc.

Equipment

The chosen photographer must have a good digital camera with a minimum range of various or zoom lenses so that wide-angle and close-up shots can be alternated. A photographer with that kind of camera will probably also have a computer with enough memory to operate picture editing software (usually Photoshop) and to open and store large files. If not, such a computer must be available in the publishing house.

The photographer must also have one or two flood lights for interior shots if required, and light reflectors. Light reflectors can be made up cheaply by using plywood sheets covered with tin foil.

The support crew

The people we discuss in this section do not have to be professionals, but they are essential members of the team.

The props person

First and foremost this person is the "finder" – of clothes, special props, furniture, pieces of scenery and so on. The props person reads the script and lists everything needed at every point. His or her job is to find everything, within the budget allocated, and to remember to keep the receipts!

During the photo shoot, the role is to provide the actors with the right costumes and supply the props and scenery when they are needed for photographs. The props person must therefore know exactly what is happening and when with regard to the scenes on the photo shoot schedule. They will also need to number each actor's various costumes: e.g. the leading man wears a red T-shirt for the first 10 shots, then a suit and shirt for the next 12 shots because the action takes place the following day, then the red T-shirt again because there is a flash-back in the story, and so on.

As a reminder, matters are complicated by the fact that scenes are rarely shot in the order of the story.

The make-up artist

The actors usually have to be made up if only to avoid light reflections and signs of sweating under the flood-lights or reflectors trained on the face. Some actors can make themselves up, but by no means all can. It may not be at all possible or necessary to call on a professional make-up artist, but as in everything, self-reliance and resourcefulness should get the right result. Of course, the make-up artist or the person acting as such must at least have make-up and tissues.

The extras

Rarely does the script call for no extras at all. It may not be a crowd, perhaps just a shopkeeper, a civil servant, one or more children … and they may only be needed for a couple of shots, but they are still essential. If they are of the right gender and age, that will usually be enough because their role is not important. Sometimes they are just there in the background.

The printer

Equipment

We are discussing the printer's equipment before the qualities required in the printer because, unfortunately, a good printer who is badly equipped can get nothing right. Even a black-and-white photo novel needs:

- good quality plotting for producing the films: the tracings used for plain text in some African countries are unsuitable for photography, especially in colour;
- good paper: even with good films, if the paper is too transparent the photograph on the back of the page can be seen as well as the one on the front, and it becomes incomprehensible. If the paper absorbs too much ink the photographs will be blurred;
- a good press: the setting must enable the four films to be perfectly aligned in the case of four-colour printing and the paper to be well positioned even for black-and-white. The inking must also be perfect or there will be stains and leaks;
- a good guillotine: if the brochure doesn't sit well at the point of cutting, or if the blade has too much play – which happens with old machines – the margins will be irregular and the cuts will be slanted;
- a good stapler: if the staples are not positioned exactly in the middle of the fold, the brochure will be hard to open.

We shall return later, in the chapter on production, to the detail to be checked in plotting, printing and binding.

The printer's qualities

Machines are not enough. The printer must above all be reliable: if your agreement stipulates paper of a certain grammage, you should not find yourself later with a book made of too light a paper on the pretext that the stock was exhausted. The same applies to the timescales and the quality of the overall job.

The printer must also be rigorous and careful. A book that has been well printed but not had enough drying time will be full of blots. Books stored in inadequate premises may be damaged by humidity or rodents, etc.

Consequently, a good standard of printer is needed if you want to get a job of acceptable quality. It is better to have known one for a long time, or to have very good testimonials, rather than to discover the truth when the photo novel is issued. It is also a good idea to visit the print-shop and inspect some previous work before signing off the estimate.

II. THE SCRIPT

A particular form of story-telling

Unlike the conventional novel which relies on words alone to tell a story, the photo novel relies primarily on photographs supplemented by dialogues. The story is then told through the interaction between these two powerful elements, the characteristics and role of which we now propose to study.

The photographs and their role in telling the story

The photographs contain the most important and greatest quantity of information:
- they set the scene, which does not need to be described in words;
- they show the various characters, relieving the writer of the need to describe their appearance, gender, age or even their social status which can be suggested through their clothes and poses;
- they can express relationships of family, dependency or employment between the characters: a woman and her child, a teacher and class, an employer and an employee, etc., are easily recognized;
- they show gestures, actions and relationships between the characters, and sometimes emotions (gestures of tenderness, distrustful looks, an irritated expression etc.).

In short, a large part of the story is told primarily through the photos. That does not mean that the writer should expect to be able to say everything through pictures, and this relates especially to expressions. Some, such as anger or surprise, are easy to detect and understand, but although an amused expression is obvious, the finer differences between the sickly smile, the open laugh or the concealed chuckle, for instance, are far more difficult to portray and there is a risk of misunderstanding unless dialogue is used to supplement the pictures. Similarly, it would be pointless to ask a photographer to capture the expression on the face of someone coming up from a distance.

On the other hand, some photographic tricks can help to convey the story or to create a special atmosphere. A low-angle shot makes a person look imposing and even frightening. A high-angle shot, looking

down from above, tends to make the character look vulnerable and create an impression of fragility. Close-ups dramatize facial expressions. And so on. The writer can play on this to enrich the story without resorting to text, which takes up space and is always less vivid than pictures.

The dialogues

Consequently, the dialogues are there not just to transcribe what the characters say, but also to fill out essential elements of the story that cannot be seen in the pictures. An example: in the initial photos of a story, we see two people greeting each other. We can see their gender, their age and perhaps their social status and/or their occupation, but their names, civil status, number of children and relationships, etc., are not written on their foreheads. Therefore we have to obtain that information from the dialogue if it is essential to the story, and it must be conveyed as naturally as possible.

The ridiculous aspect of the following dialogue is plain:
"Good morning, Amadou, you are married and you have two children!
– Good morning, Boureïma, you have been my friend for a long time."
The "scene setting" of the photo novel, when we learn the most important information about the characters, should rather be written like this:
"Hello, Amadou, it's good to see you, my friend. How are your children?
– Boureïma! OK thanks, how about you?"

Generally speaking, the more natural the dialogues sound the better the photo novel will be. Firstly they must "fit" the characters, sound natural in their mouths both with regard to vocabulary – familiar or more formal, sophisticated or plain – and in relation to matters of age, status, mood and relations. They must not feel "literary". People do, not talk as they write: dialogues in a photo novel can therefore consist of incomplete sentences, interjections or exclamations. To check the quality of the dialogues, you should read them aloud and act them out.

Ellipses and transitions

So photos and dialogue can work together to tell us the key points of the story. But the space problem in the photo novel and the need to tell a story that never bores the reader compel the writer to dwell on the highlights and to cut out the unnecessary. For example there is no need to show all the intermediary steps between a photo of a child getting out of bed and one of the child sitting in class: they are well known and of no interest. So the story is elided, to change the location or to allow time to pass. Often the transition is obvious. Sometimes, however, things have to be spelled out by, for instance, using a little commentary such as "The next day" or "An hour later at Awa's home" inset at the top or in a corner of the picture.

Additional commentaries

Commentaries set in at the top of a photo can also be used to give information that cannot be conveyed by the picture or the dialogue.

One example is a person's inner feelings: "Bakou is unconvinced" or "But Aliou is still angry with him".

The qualities of a good script

A strong story line

As with any story, the theme selected and the way it is narrated must stand out. Even if the characters and the action are set in everyday circumstances, the reader must be moved: the story must take place at a time of crisis and present strong emotions (love, distress, fear, hatred, doubt, etc.), or else it must make the reader laugh.

The characters must not be simply dull stereotypes but should be psychologically rounded and possess a past and a personality. Finally, the important points and the highlights must be selected and only they must be narrated.

A living story

We wrote above of the need to create dialogues that sound right. That is the surest way of bringing the story to life. The reader must be plunged into a coherent universe which seems true. Over-long scenes and drawn-out dialogues should also be avoided. Concision must be sought systematically and throughout. Once the story has been written, the writer must review it and weed out any redundancies.

The interplay between photos and dialogue assists that concision and lends the story dynamism by avoiding monotony of tone and device. To optimize that interplay, the writer should always proceed in the following order:

- first decide what can be told through pictures;
- then complement it with dialogue;
- only use commentaries as a last resort, if they are unavoidable and if the story cannot be understood without them. Beware of slipping to the opposite extreme, which leads to an unintelligible text in which ellipses make the story line confused.

The "feasibility" of the script

It must be made clear to the writer or writers that some of their choices have significant consequences for feasibility, as regards both the budget and the casting, the choice of locations, the props used, etc. If, for instance, the script has the characters changing location 20 times in the novel, the project manager's work will be quite difficult and the cost may rise. The same is true if the script calls for a scene on top of a New York skyscraper. Another complication and cost to be avoided is the use of animals. A dog at most, but no horses and absolutely no leopards! Finding people with really unusual physiques is also challenging for the person responsible for casting.

Page composition and photo format constraints should also be kept in mind when the script is written. For instance, there is no point in wanting to fit an entire procession into a 10 x 10 cm box or in thinking that the expression on someone's face can be seen in a long shot.

So the writer should avoid off-beat requirements and ensure that everything asked for is reasonable. Here are a few examples of infeasible or difficult photos:

- exterior night scenes;
- crowd scenes;
- scenes that take place in more or less unusual locations (e.g. a palace, a mountain top or an aircraft cabin).

And here are a few examples of scenes that are too expensive:

- scenes involving expensive props or props that are hard to find without purchasing them;
- scenes in which the characters have to wear luxury clothing;
- scenes set in a far-off country or region that is easily identifiable (a desert or a Western city);
- scenes that call for complex staging (an election meeting or a rock concert).

The project manager, the producer and the props person will call for any changes that are needed, but it is best to take account of budgetary and technical imperatives from the outset.

The script as a complete working document

Its role

The script is not intended for publication. Only the dialogues and commentaries are written down, and they will in principle only be subject to minor changes during the production phase. Everything else is a list of technical instructions to the various team members. The entire project with all its elements is in the script:

the list and characteristics of the characters;

the list and characteristics of the locations and scenery;

the list of props, etc.;

the complete story, broken down into scenes and boxes and narrated in dialogues and in descriptions of the photographs to be taken, with the space and time frame required and the actors involved, their poses and gestures.

Producers should be able to organize all of their work on the basis of the script alone, the props person should be able to work out everything he or she needs to provide, and the actors should discover their roles in it and the poses they have to take for each shot, etc.

The script, then, is a working document that is both very full and very precise.

Its presentation

Consequently, to be useful and effective the script should set out the elements listed and commented below. The easiest way is to present it as a table (see p. 18). You only need to make a template of the table and to make a lot of photocopies before filling in the columns, preferably in pencil for ease of correction.

Box number	Characters Poses Props	Location	Dialogues	Commentaries		Notes

A table like this is made up for each scene. See below an example
of a script page as it would be passed to the producer.

Box number	Characters Poses Props	Location	Dialogues	Commentaries	Notes
33	The Mayor at Bouba's home. Taba and Setou in the background. The Mayor holds a file.	Bouba's courtyard	Bouba: Mr Mayor! What a surprise! Mayor: It's nothing serious. I'm here to confide in you. We should push the women to set up an association.	The next day, at Bouba's home	Taba and Setou are chuckling quietly over the Mayor's trick.
34	The same characters. The Mayor passes the file to Bouba	The same	Mayor: I'd like you to persuade your wife to go to Bamako to defend this electrification project. Bouba: You mean Taba should go on her own?!		

The box or photo number

Its purpose is to ensure both during the writing and during production that the script is not too long. If the publication is to consist of 24 A4 pages, there will be at the very most 144 boxes (six per page). If there were more, the photos would be too small and it would be extremely difficult to include dialogue inserts. It also matters to be able to vary the page format a little, both to avoid monotony and to make best use of cinematographical possibilities (wide-angle, close-up, panoramic shot, portrait or landscape, etc.). This means that on some pages there will only be four or perhaps even three photos, with some of them replacing two small pictures. This gives us a maximum of 120 boxes for 24 pages, with on average five boxes per page. The box number also helps to keep track during the shoot, to number the photos to be passed on to the DTP designer and, in short, to provide reliable common reference points for everyone involved.

The characters, their poses and their props

These instructions are of use to everyone: the project manager who has to do the casting, the props person who has to find the props, the producer and the photographer who have to get each shot right, and the actors themselves who have to act out every point in the story.
Examples:
- X is standing at the door, hand on the door-knob, ready to leave, car-keys in hand. He is half turning towards Y, to whom he is talking

as he leaves. Y is seated in the foreground, back to the camera.
- Z is whistling as he cycles through an empty street. He has a box tied on behind.

Description of locations

This is primarily of use to the producer who has to organize the shooting sessions. It will be easier to regroup the sessions rather than having to move the entire troupe and all the equipment several times a day.
It also helps the project manager and the props person, who have to find a suitable place, preferably cost-free, when selecting all the necessary locations.
Examples:
- A busy café;
- In front of an iconic monument in the city of X;
- A luxurious lounge with a glass door through which a garden or pot-plants can be seen.

The dialogues

These help to make sense of the story during the photo shoot. They will be finalized and corrected at the point where the publication secretary passes them to the DTP designer. They must be short and there should not be too many lines in a box (three at the very most and two in most cases) or the page editing will be extremely complicated and perhaps impossible.

Examples of how dialogue can be presented in the script:

- Amadou: Well I'm blowed! You live here now? Boureïma: Oh yes, I came back because my mother's ill.
- Awa on the phone: When are you coming? Maïra's voice from the phone: I'll be there in an hour!

The commentaries

As we have seen, these are texts designed to complement the dialogue and the pictures to ensure that the story is completely understandable. They will be put in as inserts in just a few boxes. They are only useful during the DTP.
Examples: "A few hours later…" or "Meanwhile, in Timbuktu…" or "Maïra holds back her tears."

Special notes

These are additional notes from the writer to the actors, the producer or the photographer. They are generally very few. Here are a few examples:

- for one of the actors: "Hamidou must look extremely surprised";
- for the photographer: "Extremely close shot of Mohamadou's face to stress his fright";
- for the producer: "At least six extras are needed for this scene. Show different groups of them in the background of each shot, behind the principal actors, to give the impression of quite a large group of people".

III. HOW TO ORGANIZE A SCRIPT-WRITING WORKSHOP

One solution among many

There are several ways of getting a publishable script. Other than commissioning one from a good house writer, we have already mentioned the possibility of organizing a competition through the press. The problem there is that because the photo novel is not a very widespread genre and is often viewed as a very minor form, few writers produce scripts of their own volition and few know how to create them. For that reason, one interesting option is to hold a writing workshop, especially if the intention is over time to publish not one but several photo novels: it allows several writers to be trained simultaneously and allows several scripts of publishable quality to be obtained right from the first workshop.

A major advantage is that since one is present at the creation, one can, for instance, ask the writers to work on a particular theme, set limits on the number of actors involved, or influence the tone, the values or the standard of language. It is, of course, expensive, but the project may interest a development partner because the training provided is a lasting investment.

Here, fairly succinctly, is how to organize such a workshop.

The workshop members

The workshop members should be chosen in the same way as the writers we discussed earlier. The selection can be a little more generous because their writing work will be guided and the writers will not be left entirely to their own devices.

However, the participants should be restricted to about 10. Above that number it becomes difficult to work with everyone individually and, above all, the work-sharing sessions become too long and involved.

Remember to include women as well as men. Not only is this an ideal operation for promoting women's creativity, it is also a strong argument in your search for funding.

Facilitating the workshop

Not everyone can just step into the role of facilitating a writing workshop. There is more to it than simply handing the members paper and pens and showing them examples of photo novels. You have to:

- give them ideas for finding interesting heroes;
- help them to set up a well-designed plot;
- work with them on the credibility of characters and dialogues;
- teach them how to present the scripts in a genuinely publishable way.

You also have to know how to work with a group of writers, which is not at all easy as people who write are very sensitive to criticism and, to be frank, quite touchy. Yet to be productive and enriching, the workshop must allow everyone to receive well-meant and constructive feedback, which nonetheless does not spare the text on which they're working. For that to happen, everyone needs to be given enough confidence to accept criticism and listen to peer input: they must also adopt an open, cooperative attitude to enable them to give the other writers helpful thoughts and observations on their own texts. To put participants in such a frame of mind calls for know-how and tact.

The process

The set-up

A script-writing workshop takes at least five days. If the participants agree to work on Saturday as well, that is certainly not excessive!

The facilitator should start by establishing trust among the group, by setting out the project and the timetable and, above all, by stipulating that each writer is both the creator of a text and the first reader of everyone else's texts. Everyone must realize from the outset that criticism can be very useful if it is based on careful and rigorous thought and argument, if it suggests alternative ways forward and if it is put openly, constructively and courteously. The facilitator's role is to moderate over-peremptory judgements, if necessary to soothe wounded pride and especially to suggest solutions when only the faults have been highlighted. At the end of the day, the aim is to obtain good scripts: avoiding hurt feelings by saying that everything is fine when it is not will not lead to a publishable production – but neither will identifying faults without suggesting ways of improving on them.

No situation should remain frozen, and the writer who has just presented his/her work and listened to positive and/or negative criticism should be able to start writing again with precise suggestions and a degree of confidence in their ability to improve their text.

The choice of topic

If the photo novel you plan to publish has been commissioned, then the principal topic or at least the secondary topic, linked to the commissioner's field of activity, will have been decided for you. If the topic is linked to health, hygiene, customs that oppress part of the public, and so on, try to convince your partner that this should be an underlying theme but never the principal topic, or the work will quite

simply never be read. Who would want to read 24 pages on excision?! A doctor might, but probably not a young woman in a village. If the topic is decided for you, then the subject must be tackled through the story, but the story must be strong and predominant. It cannot be just a question of sugaring a bitter pill. What you are really trying to make is a sweet with health benefits! The workshop facilitator must get this message across from the start of the first session.

Next, whether the topic has been imposed or not, pre-prepared key tools can be put forward, such as a set of characters from which the writers can choose their heroes or rummage around at will (see the list on the next page). It could also be a set of photographs of characters in action, scenery, props, etc., put forward by the facilitator, among which the writers can choose the two or three which give them the inspiration to invent their story. You can also try the word pile-up technique to generate ideas: from two sets of cards that the facilitator has prepared in advance, the writers draw one card naming a character (a handsome but lame young man, a mature childless woman, etc.) and one card summarizing an action or event (meeting with a tramp, proposal of marriage, start of a journey, etc.).

When the writers have chosen the trigger elements, they are completely free to think about the story, and are even free to move away from those triggers if they have a better idea: they are tools not constraints, and their only purpose is to make it easier to begin writing.

A young woman servant from a village
A widower (or widow)
A young man encouraged by his family to emigrate
The leader of a rural association
A midwife
A village head man
A national languages radio broadcaster
A journalist
A taxi-driver
An itinerant restaurant owner
An itinerant bookseller
A primary schoolteacher
A long-distance lorry driver
A musician
A fisher
A potter
An albino
A one-legged person
A "commercial whizzkid"
A confirmed bachelor/spinster
A woman with a heart of gold, "mother" to a whole district
A man with five wives
A third wife

The synopsis

The workshop facilitator now asks the participants to sketch the outline of a story, without flourishes, descriptions or details – rather as one does when one reports an event in brief. In the process of writing a script, this very brief outline of the story is called the synopsis. When the writers have completed this task, the first full group discussion is held. Everyone in turn reads out or describes their synopsis to the others, who ask questions and make observations or suggestions, in the constructive and cordial spirit we spoke of earlier. The facilitator makes no judgement, not even a positive one, to avoid influencing the group. He or she only speaks at the end, and only if nothing of use has emerged from the group discussion or if an essential point is thought to have been overlooked. The facilitator's observations should always be explained and tactfully presented.

At the end of this activity, each writer should have enough guidance to develop his/her synopsis. Another writing session begins with the aim of completing a more or less definitive synopsis, in principle by the end of the first day of the workshop. This does not lead to a second group reading, but during the session the facilitator visits each writer in turn to discuss their work, answer questions and if necessary suggest ways of improving it.

The final synopsis is a short, factual text (not more than one page).

Here is an example written by Fanta Coulibaly during the workshop that UNESCO organized in Bamako:

Taba, a woman in her 40s, lives in a village with her husband Buba. She wants to set up a women's association but her husband is not very keen on the idea (who will take care of the house, the children, the fields?). Just the same she mentions it to her friend Sétou, who is immediately enthusiastic, and a neighbour, Kadya, who refuses to join in because she is too busy and because her husband, Chaka, an old reactionary (grumpy and comical) is against it. There are various discussions and dealings in the village until the mayor himself is told about it and, convinced that it is a good thing for the village, asks Buba to support his wife. Eventually Buba agrees. The mayor produces a dossier about the electrification of the village that Taba and Sétou are to defend in Bamako. Taba decides to take advantage of this trip to visit her friend Alima, who left to get married in the capital and broke off with her family a very long time ago in quite mysterious circumstances. Alima's mother and brother still live in the village and are baffled by her long silence.

In Bamako Taba wins the case for electrification. She visits Alima and discovers that her husband and children have died of AIDS and that she herself is HIV-positive. That's why she doesn't dare to contact her family in the village. Taba promises to do everything she can to restore relations. On the way home, she and Sétou also decide to have a midwife visit the village to talk about AIDS problems and try to prevent other experiences like Alima's.

Gradually the village comes round to the idea of the women's association. The midwife visits the village. Taba tries to persuade Alima's brother to go to see her in Bamako and bring her back to the village. The end of the story leaves the outcome in doubt.

The breakdown

Now the story must be told in all its details, using not words but the tools of the photo novel: i.e. the photographs (about 120 of them), dialogues and commentaries.

This part of the work will take at least three days. It may be introduced by an intermediate phase consisting of dividing the story into scenes: the scene changes, as in the theatre, when a new character joins the action or there is a change in location or juncture in the story. This phase is not essential but it has the advantage of providing better control over the number of photos needed for the whole story, since a scene very rarely requires more than 10 photos and usually involves no more than two to five. In 24 pages, therefore, there will be at most some 30 scenes.

The easiest way to write it is to use the table on page 18, writing in pencil to make corrections easy. If you decide to add more boxes or photos whilst you are working, you can always insert a page and number the additional boxes a, b, c, etc.

At each point in the story, the writers should start by asking "What can I say with the photos?", then "What can I say in the dialogues?" and lastly "What is still needed for the story to be understood and what must I add in the commentaries?"

They must also be concerned to "keep it short" and to ensure constantly that they are not using too many photos: if, for instance, they are a quarter of the way through the story and they have already used 30 photos, they need to go back to see whether they can tighten it, and they must try to be more economical with the rest of the story.

Writing the dialogues

The dialogues are written in several stages. The first is just a "first draft" to put down everything there is to be said. It is done box by box, or rather, photo by photo. The second is when the entire story has been broken up into boxes and all the dialogues can be read in one go to make sure that they sound right.

During the first stage, the writers' two overriding concerns are to put down everything there is to be said, and to do it concisely. During the second stage, the object is to refine the choice of vocabulary and tone appropriate for each character.

At this stage, or at any other intermediate point, the workshop facilitator may suggest cross-readings, in twos or small groups, of all or part of the scripts to ensure that they all benefit from a critical external eye. This is especially useful to avoid unintelligible passages, over-large ellipses, etc., in the story and to ensure that the dialogues are of good quality. Writers are too close to their texts to be able to do this critical work themselves.

If the facilitator sees that there is too little time, each writer can be allowed to continue writing whilst the facilitator personally visits each in turn to play the part of the first reader.

Selecting the script to be published

In theory, by the end of the workshop most of the scripts will have been finished or almost so. The publisher will in all events be able to make a selection both on the basis of the synopses and by reading

the scripts themselves. All that may remain is some additional work with the writer of the selected script, which can be done more quietly than in the very short timescale of a workshop.

Selecting the script is not always easy. Obviously the prime criteria are the choice of theme, the quality of the story and the naturalness of the dialogues. Otherwise, the scripts still in contention can be separated with regard to economic or technical factors. See the section on feasibility on page 16.

When the script is fully ready it is sent for keying in, still in tabular format, so that the necessary copies can be made for the producer, the photographer, the props person, the actors and, later, the DTP designer. See on the next page an extract of a script made ready for the photo shoot. At this stage it has not yet been revised and corrected.

12	-Sétou -Taba -Kadi	"	Sétou: And we'll be able to work like other women's associations. Kadi: A women's association? I don't have time for that. See you – ha, women leaders!	
			Scene 4	
13	-Kadi -Her husband, Chaka, around 50	Chaka is making rope. He is sitting on an animal skin, under a lean-to	Kadi: Something strange is brewing in our village. Chaka: What are you talking about now?	
14	-Kadi -Chaka	"	Kadi: Buba's wife, Taba, wants to get all the village women together in an association. Chaka: I forbid you to join it! That would be the last straw!	
15	-Kadi -Chaka	"	Chaka: I'm going to tell Buba now what his wife's up to, before she winds up all the women in the village	

Here English is used for the dialogues and commentaries, for ease of understanding. Of course, they are normally written in the language of the photo novel. This text still has typos or spelling mistakes: it will be revised and corrected later.

IV. THE PHOTO SHOOT

Organizing the shoot

By this we mean the purely physical organization of the shoot, or in other words, the housekeeping. For 120 photos the shoot will last eight to 10 days, during which people and equipment will have to be ferried to the various locations, sometimes from one location to the next, any equipment remaining with the crew will have to be stored, drinking water supplied and food provided for the lunchbreak – if there is to be one.

That cannot be improvised: everything has to be organized in advance, especially with regard to identifying, choosing and finding the locations for each scene. Ways of providing food will vary according to the location, number of actors and so on. They can range from a meal prepared by a few women in the village where you are on location to an order for X meals in a small restaurant. There is no need to discuss this at length. To limit the transport requirement, it is of course preferable to choose locations that are as close together and as easy to reach as possible. If private vehicles are adequate,

that is perfect. Otherwise, hiring a minibus has the big advantage of avoiding people turning up late and preventing everyone else from working. If you hire a driver with the minibus, people can be picked up in the morning and taken back at night. Meantime, the driver will stay with the crew and can if necessary drive from location to location during the day. All these decisions are above all to be made in the light of the budget.

Preparing the basic design

Whilst the project manager and perhaps the props person are working on the physical organization, the producer will be making preparations with the publisher and/or the publication secretary and the designer. The number of photos will now be known: the next task is to allocate them over 24 pages bearing in mind that:

● the absolute maximum per page is six photos, otherwise they will be too small to show anything clearly and, especially, it will be very difficult to insert text balloons;
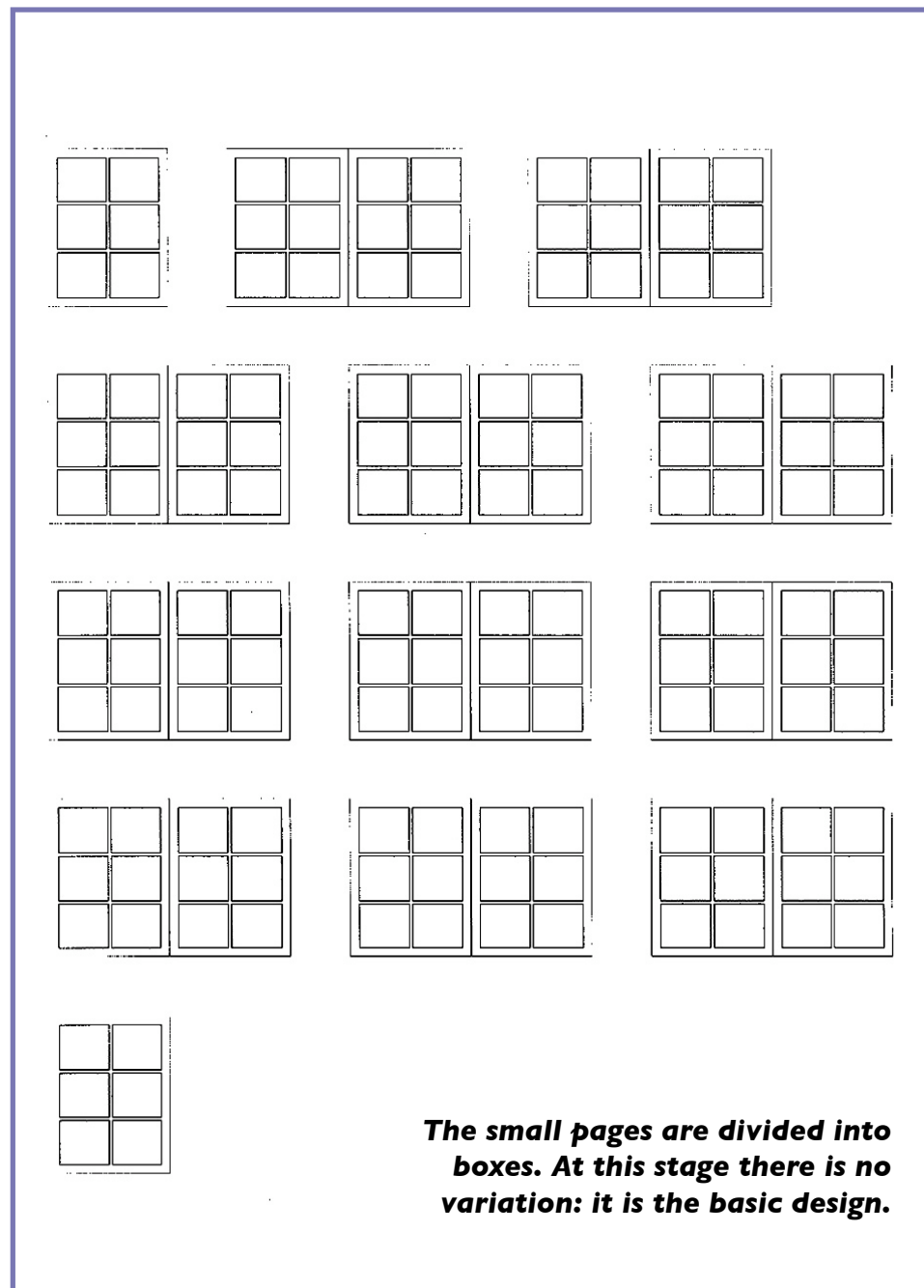
• the layout should be varied from time to time to avoid monotony and to make best use of all the cinematographical devices (wide-angle, close-ups, very close shot of a face, etc.);

• the format and size of a photo depend on its content: whether a scene contains many characters or a few, whether or not the scenery must be shown, etc.

You can start with a "blank" basic grid and pencil in particular decisions. See the basic grid opposite and on page 31 the same grid once decisions have been made.

Of course, the boxes and photos must use the same numbering as the script to avoid confusion and oversights.

You might decide to change the script slightly by replacing one picture with two, for instance, or by cutting out an episode without changing the basic story. For example, you could decide to replace a picture of two people conversing with two pictures taken from opposite angles, the first showing one person and speech balloon, and the second showing the second person and balloon. You might also use a picture with no speech, in which the facial expression speaks for itself (suspicion, surprise, satisfaction…).

If a major change in the script has to be considered, it is appropriate to speak to the writer about it and ask him or her to help to find a solution that does not distort the story.

The small pages are divided into boxes. At this stage there is no variation: it is the basic design.

The pages and photo boxes have been numbered. The number and shape of the boxes has been changed. The instructions on the first little page are for the DTP designer and relate to the size of the margins and gutters between photos.

Selecting the order of shooting

The basic design as it stands at the end of this process will be used by the producer and the photographer when they come to position the actors and to frame the photos. It will also be used by the DTP designer when setting up the pages on the computer before integrating the photographs.

The producer continues preparing the necessary tools, next listing the scenes, numbering them and establishing the following table for each of them:

Scene number	
Location	
Number of photos	
Order number of photos	
Characters present	
Costume number	
Props	

Then the scenes are allocated to the days of the shoot so as to minimize changes of location or of actors. For example, on day 1 only scenes that take place in the street are planned; for day 2 only scenes that take place in the street with just the same two actors. Those scenes might well be numbers 2, 6, 19 and 22.

In the story, scenes 19 and 22 might take place on the same day but a month later than scenes 2 and 6. The characters may not wear the same costumes, hence the need to number the costumes as well.

In planning the scenes, account must also be taken of the number of photos in a scene: it is hard to take more than 20 photos per day, and it is best to restrict them to about 15.

A last important point: things do not always go exactly to plan. For instance, an actor may be ill, the weather may cause a problem, equipment may break down … For that reason, a spare day should be scheduled, to give the crew a break, to fit in a scene that could not be shot on the day planned, or again to retake shots that turned out badly when viewed on screen the evening after they were taken. When the order of shooting has been planned, the producer and project manager plan a schedule of actors needed to be given to each of them.
This is what that document might look like:

Name	Role	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Frid	Sat
Fanta Coulibaly	Taba	X	X	X	X	X	X
Salim Sylla	Bouba	X	X			X	X
Salimata Sidibe	Setou	X	X	X	X		X
Lalla Drabo	Khadi	X		X		X	X
Teneman Sanogo	Chaka	X		X	X	X	X
Lamine Sissoko	Bourama	X	X				X
Oumou Diarra	Djatou	X					X
Balkissa Maïga	Alima			X	X	X	X
Khadija Sidibe	Rokia	X	X			X	X

This table gives a quick and graphic overview of who should be present on each day of shooting. It can be modified by the producer and/or the project manager, for instance, by replacing the crosses by the appropriate scene numbers.
The list includes the actors as well as the extras and other crew members (photographer, props person, etc.), so that you know how many people have to be transported or fed each day, for example.

Scenery and costumes

Meanwhile the props person is not idle: he or she is getting together all the costumes and props called for in the script. Even the configuration of the locations may have to be changed in the light of the scenery that the story requires.

When the producer has allocated the scenes, the props person numbers the costumes and makes notes in a notebook or photographs the costumes and numbers them. The term "costume" includes jewellery, footwear, hats, etc. as well as clothing. A mistake here can ruin a whole day's shooting – for instance, if an actor wears different shirts on photos taken on two different days, but in the story the scenes happen on the same occasion.

Similarly, the props person must note carefully what props are used in each scene, and where, so as to ensure that a bench, a tool or perhaps a vase does not dematerialize from one picture to the next!

Lighting

The photographer is responsible for the lighting and for finding ways of making up for bad light, dazzling light which might over-expose or flatten the photos, or simply lighting that is unevenly distributed among the characters.

Professional photographers generally have spotlights and floodlights that allow light to be reflected onto faces or towards a particular part of the scene.

Taking the photos

The actors do not need to learn their roles by heart as in the theatre or cinema. They read through the synopsis at the beginning to learn the general story, then before each shot they read their lines from the script box by box so as to adapt their poses to the words they are supposed to be saying. They are wearing the right costumes, as checked by the props person, and have been made up to avoid shiny foreheads or noses. The scenery has been set up and checked by the producer and the props person. Everything is ready.

As would a film director, the producer organizes each scene, positions the actors, and checks the intended picture layout against the design or the script if he or she has placed the formats on it. The photographer takes up an appropriate position.

Theoretically, if the story is in a language that is written from left to right, for ease of reading the first character to speak is positioned on the left of the picture. But that should not lead to a monotonous alternation of pictures with the characters always positioned in the same order.

For instance, the following sequence might be chosen:
Photo 1, A left, B right, two speech balloons. Photo 2, close-up of A, one speech balloon. Photo 3, B left, A right, two speech balloons. Photo 4, B left, turning away with the back of his head towards the camera, A right seen frontally, two balloons.

Varying the positioning of the characters should not make the story harder to follow. If, for example, it is decided to show fully just one of the characters in a dialogue, to have more room in the picture, in the foreground part of a shoulder and/or the head of the other character can be shown in rear view or in three-quarter rear view. This presentation has two advantages: firstly, the reader can see that the second character is still there and a speech balloon might even be positioned in loose relationship with the shoulder; and secondly, the picture gains in depth and this gives it a third dimension and makes it more lifelike.

As the photographer takes the picture, the actors speak their lines and repeat them whilst also repeating the gestures and/or movements that go with them, as naturally as possible. They should speak at the same time, not one after the other, because the speech balloons will be shown at the same time and their mouths have to move with the speech. One risk to be managed at this stage is that of the actors "over-acting", exaggerating their gestures sometimes to the point of the grotesque.

Usually about 10 shots are taken for each picture to be published, so as to have a sufficient choice. Sometimes eyes may be closed, a face may be hidden by a hand, a pose may be ridiculous or the lighting wrong. That makes some shots unusable and the best of the series must be selected.

Selecting the photos

The photos are generally selected in three phases. Digital cameras now make it possible to make a first selection on the spot, immediately after each photo has been taken, which makes it possible to start again if none of the shots seems good enough, or to make do with a shorter series if you are quite confident that several of the shots are satisfactory.

The second selection is made after shooting has ended each evening, when the photographer downloads the photos from the camera to the computer. As everyone is usually quite tired, if the computer has enough memory this selection may also be left to the last day. At this point the photographer, producer and project manager select three to five shots for each picture to be published, so as to leave some flexibility for the DTP designer, who makes the third and last choice when placing the pictures on the model and especially when positioning the speech balloons. The pictures are carefully filed as work progresses, in separate folders, one per scene, to ensure that the DTP designer can find them easily.

V. THE DESIGN AND THE PRODUCTION

Picture format and digital processing

In theory, when the shots reach the DTP designer's computer, they have been sorted not just by quality but also in line with the preliminary design made up before the shoot. If changes have been made during the shoot, they are normally noted on the design or on the script.

Another important point is that these shots are very big files (three to six megapixels or several MB). This means that the computer must have a lot of storage, but also that the composition file must be partitioned to prevent the computer continually "crashing" and destroying part of the work each time.

Moreover the DTP designer will have to crop and re-size the photos in Photoshop to avoid having to compress them too much when importing them into the model (more than 80% reduction in XPress will cause a loss of quality). Lastly, they have to be converted into

CMYK if the file is to be printed in four-colour printing or into greyscale if it is to be done in black and white. All this takes a lot of time: there are about 120 pictures to be processed one by one. Of course, this work is only done with the final selection of pictures for each box.

In theory, no colour touch-ups should be needed if the photographer has used the same camera for all the pictures. In any case, unless the DTP designer is a specialist Photoshop user, touch-ups of that kind are to be avoided because bad touch-ups are the worst possible. Starting the page composition

Whilst the publication secretary is revising the dialogue, together with the writer if changes have been made during the shoot, the DTP designer starts creating his or her file on the basis of the preliminary design, keeping the size of the boxes (picture blocks) quite close to that design.

Then the pictures are gradually integrated, "roughing it out" at this stage because nothing has yet been finalized and the job is simply to put all the elements in position.

The balloons

Their shape

Speech is placed in rectangular or oval inserts (balloons) linked to their speaker by a line or an arrow. Thought balloons are usually linked to their character by a line of little circles which get smaller as they come closer to the character. Thought as distinct from spoken words may also be indicated by replacing the continuous line used in speech balloons with a broken line. The key point is for it to be legible and intelligible. See opposite various ways of presenting balloons.

1

2

*1, 2 & 3: speech balloons. 4 & 5: thought balloons.*

3

4

5
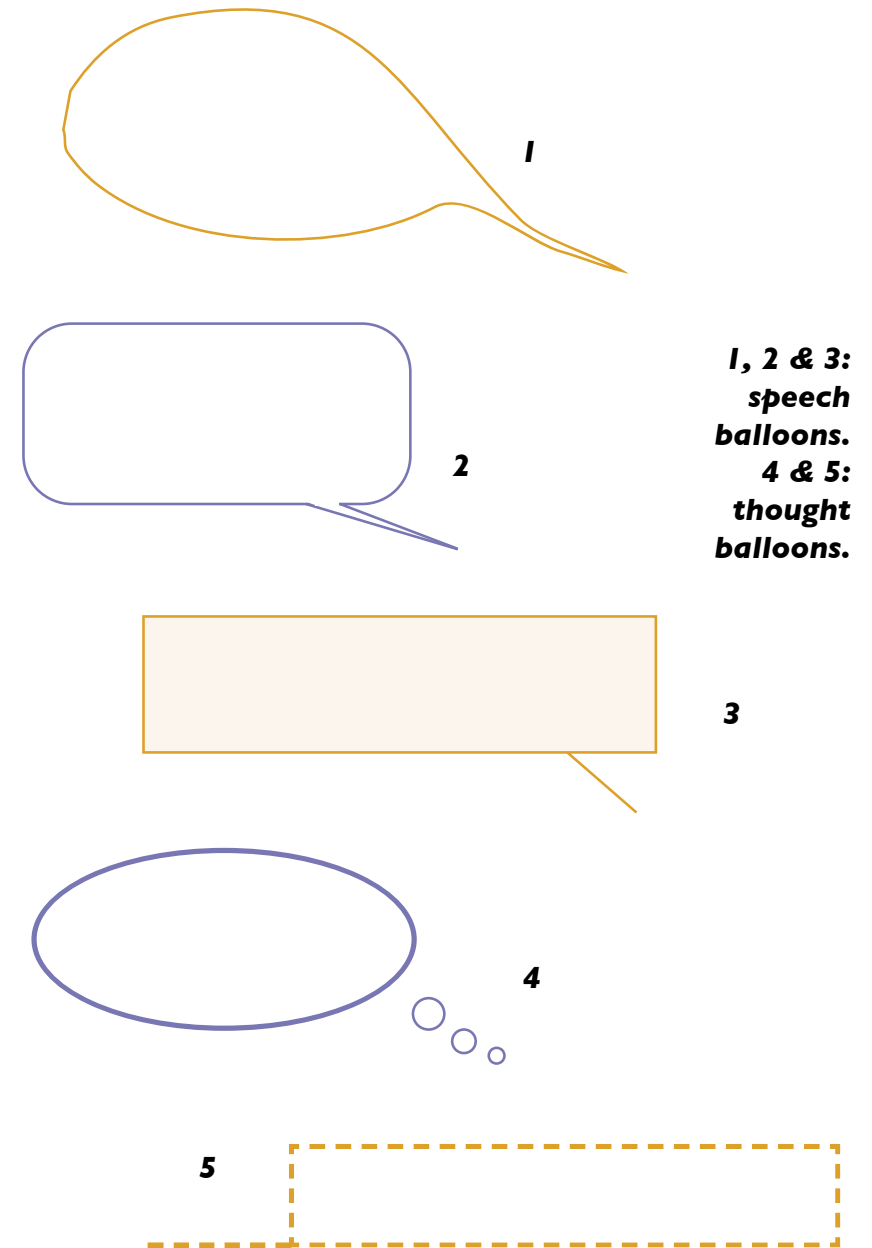
There are two other kinds of balloon: voices-off, which may be used for words from a loud-speaker or a telephone, for instance, and commentary balloons. As a rule, a voices-off balloon is neither rectangular nor oval, but surrounded by a jagged line. A commentary balloon is always rectangular, even if the speech balloons are oval, and is squeezed against the top edge (very rarely the bottom edge) of the box.

Opposite,
a commentary
balloon squeezed
against the top
of the box and
entirely
in small-caps
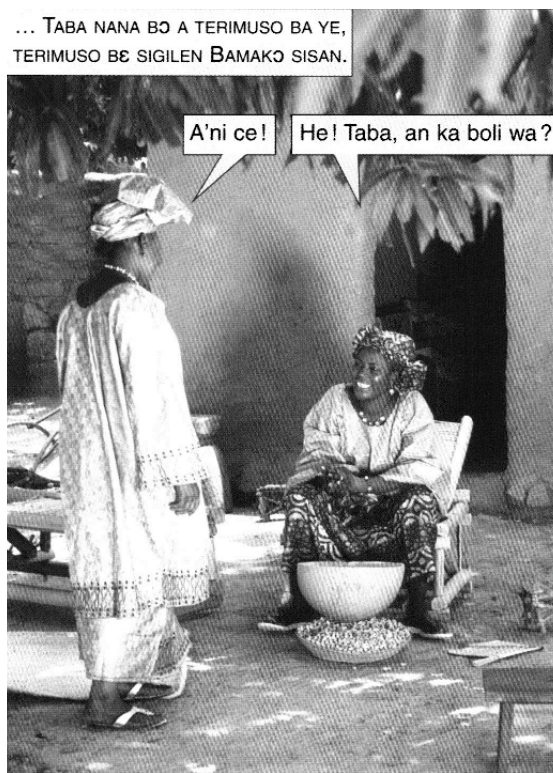
Below, a voices-off
balloon (telephone,
loud-speaker)
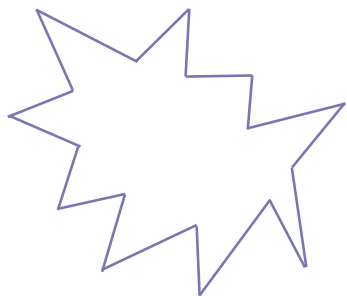
Their text

Typographical options are very important. Fonts are selected on aesthetic grounds, as well as because of their particular characteristics in small spaces: the size and spacing of the characters. In other words, for preference fonts are chosen that take up little space whilst remaining very legible even in a small font size. See below the extent to which the space and legibility of a text can be varied by changing font, even without changing font size.

This is an example of font size 10 text — in Verdana

This is an example of font size 10 text — in Helvetica

This is an example of font size 10 text — in Times

If you are working in languages that are not much written, you may not have a wide choice of fonts and the matter resolves itself. However, if a choice is available it is really useful to run trials and to print them off. In all cases the line spacing must be worked on to obtain the perfect balance between the space taken up by the text and its legibility.

One last point: the print-face of commentary balloons is generally different from that of speech or thought balloons, with small-caps being generally used for commentary. This is not at all

compulsory, but it has the benefit of clearly differentiating among the different types of text and so helping understanding.

Tricks of composition

The real difficulties in page design begin when the balloons are to be fitted into the boxes, even if the writer has taken care to keep them as few and short as possible. Firstly, the balloons are not aesthetic and they tend to spoil the photos: the smaller they can be whilst still being clearly legible, the more attractive the page will look. Secondly, there are many constraints on their positioning: they must be close to the speaker; the first words spoken must be positioned in front of the response to them, where "in front of" means higher and further to the left; and finally, the balloons must not hide anything of importance and especially not a face.

The DTP designer therefore has to resort to all kinds of tricks to help position the balloons well: enlarging the box, resizing pictures to make them larger or smaller, positioning the balloons above or below the picture as required, reducing a box that has little text in it to compensate for enlarging one with more to say, etc. The last trick, to be used only if all else fails, is to ask the writer to shorten the text. When we say it should only be used if all else fails, that is quite simply to avoid toing and froing that would waste everyone's time and delay the production accordingly.

The speech balloon may be placed above, below or in the middle, superimposed on the photo, especially if the text is short.

Rather than linking to a person fully in shot, a balloon can be linked to a corner of a head or shoulder, recognizable by the clothes.

It can also be placed outside the picture and across its full width, which ensures that nothing important is hidden even when a fairly long text is used.

Ne ba, ka n'o fɔ sa.

Bamakɔ ni yan cɛ, a tɛ sɛbɛn ci a tɛ sama ci. I n'a fɔ a ka mɔgɔ tɛ yan.

Different types of positioning may be used as required. But no more than two or three systems should be used per work or the structure will appear untidy.

The final file

The proofs must be read particularly carefully, especially if the DTP designer does not speak and/or read fluently the language in which they are working, which is frequently the case.
Checking must cover:
- that none of the speech balloons is the wrong way round or omitted;
- that the words are attributed to the correct speaker, i.e. that the arrows link the balloons with the right people;
- that no commentary balloon is missing;
- that none of the photos themselves is wrong way round;
- that no face is hidden;
- that there are no errors left in the text.

The proofs must be read by both the publication secretary and the writer.
Once the proofs have been corrected and the publisher has given the sign-off, the DTP designer must check that all the photo files have been converted into CMYK before transmitting the file to the printer for photoengraving together with all the photos and fonts. If Acrobat Distiller is available, it is strongly recommended that the XPress file be converted into high definition PDF format, which will ensure that nothing slips when switching machines. If that is not possible, a reference print-out on a good-quality printer will be sufficient.

Printing and binding

Photoengraving does not normally give rise to problems since the photo files are already in digital format: the problems that occur when scanning paper documents cannot arise. However, close supervision of the printing and binding is essential. Note that it is very important to be present at the setting, if possible, especially if the contents are in colour.

The list of points that the publisher should check is as follows:
- Paper quality: the paper must be thick enough to avoid any risk of seeing through to the other side. It must also be a superior quality to the offset paper used in normal publications. The ideal is a coated paper, matt, satin or gloss, in which the fine coat of kaolin prevents the ink from swimming and blurring all the pictures.
- Proper colour control at the point of setting, if the contents are in four-colour printing. This must also be checked regularly at intermediate stages in the printing, as well as at the "switchover" point when the reverse side is to be printed. Otherwise the colours of clothes, buildings etc. may appear to change as the pages are turned.
- Correct setting of the stapler to ensure that the staples are properly located on the fold: otherwise the brochure will be hard to open.
- Correct setting of the guillotine to avoid the pages being cut on a slant.

As the publisher is not present at this stage of production, these last two points can only be verified after the event by checking finished publications.

The same holds true for checking the drying: if the pages have not been dried in good conditions and for long enough, they will be stained with blots.

If the work is really not up to prevailing standards, there should be no hesitation in renegotiating with the printer or in demanding a re-print, if necessary. It is not acceptable to ruin the work of an entire team, at the end of the project, through lack of care or through technical problems. Neither is it acceptable to bring to market or place in readers' hands a work whose legibility is ruined by poor printing.

BY WAY OF CONCLUSION

The conditions for success

This book shows that to a greater extent than any other publishing venture, the photo novel is the result of complex collaboration. A very varied set of specialists work together or pass the work on to each other in the course of its production, and are brought to pool their skills to achieve the best possible results.

Consequently, the organization must enable each of them to commit fully and to give of their best: technical or material problems must be minimized; operations must be planned sufficiently far ahead for each stage to take place without surprises; all members must know clearly what their responsibilities and share in the work are and what quality of result is expected; the budget must be managed prudently and rigorously; nothing should be left to chance or overlooked. These are essential conditions for success. But it is not enough to publish a lovely book. None of that is of use unless the distribution of the work is well organized.

Ideas for distribution

We discuss this in the context of West Africa, where we work regularly: that does not mean that the distribution methods we shall mention are valueless elsewhere, but it does mean that they may possibly (or probably!) have to be adapted if you are working in a different context. That is because distribution is so dependent on the context that ideas that can be applied in one part of the world may not be applicable in another.

We have emphasized two key points that must be considered when thinking about the distribution of a photo novel: its high production cost and its value as a tool for teaching the pleasure of reading. The cost implies either that it must be very widely distributed or that the sale price will be exorbitant. In an African context, where the population that can read national languages has a very limited purchasing power, the direct sales method is virtually inapplicable.

However, the literacy NGOs may be both highly effective part-ners and very interested in distributing this kind of document, especially as a post-literacy training tool. Not only may they be prepared to purchase relatively large stocks, but they already have the structure in place to handle the distribution themselves, usually through their networks of trainers who are in direct contact with the public. Further, the NGOs should be encouraged not to distribute the brochures free but to sell them at a symbolic price commensurate with the public's purchasing power, other-wise the book will be devalued and the impression created that it should always be free.

In the case of novels likely to interest children, adolescents or young adults another possible track is to use school libraries, whether financed by State budgets or their own funds and whether managed by the district or by the schools themselves.

A secondary outlet may also be sought through national-language newspapers, which may buy the serialization rights (publishing a page per day or per week), as a way of retaining their readership. Lastly, why not reach a publicity partnership deal under which the outside back cover is reserved for one or more advertisers keen to see their products promoted through a publication that will remain in households? In exchange, you get a proportion of the costs funded or logistical help with distribution.
You definitely have to be resourceful to publish photo novels!

ANNEXES : CONTRACTS, ETC.

Contracts and remuneration

We have seen that in some circumstances it may be possible to agree with the writer that publication will not attract a fee. This may be so, for instance, where attendance of a writing workshop can be considered as training and hence as a payment in kind.

It is also the case where publication is the first prize in a literary competition. This does not alter the fact that a contract must be agreed with the writer.

The contract will inter alia stipulate:

- the features of the work that is the subject of the contract;

- the duration and terms of the grant of rights, and in particular whether the publisher is entitled to translate the work or to sell it in other countries or to grant rights to other publishers, etc., and on what terms;

- whether a fee is or is not to be paid, either as a lump sum or in proportion to sales and, in the latter case, what percentage and when payable. International copyright law stipulates that writers' fees should be royalty-based, but for works in national languages this would be so unfavourable that a lump sum is customarily preferred;

- the competent jurisdiction in case of litigation.

The photographer's contract will be similar to that of the writer, but the remuneration will be higher and will almost certainly be a lump sum. The photographer's contract must stipulate that the publisher is entitled to reproduce photographs without further remuneration for purposes of publicizing the work.

Letters of engagement

The other crew members cannot lay claim to royalties, but before the photo shoot a letter of engagement stipulating the terms and the detail of the work to be done, the remuneration and the schedule should be signed with each of them.

Consent to publication

A document should be drawn up for signature by each actor and possibly the extras or at least their agents stipulating that they agree to the photographs in which they appear being published in the photo novel and in related publicity.

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