Representation vs. Expression:
Reality, the sublime and the
politics of academic videography

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Criticism of yore

What used to be:

“Videography can’t be serious academic work, it is in the realm of art and entertainment!”

“You can surely manipulate your audience as much as you want in video representation!”

“There is no way to find rigorous methods for representing academic studies on video media!”
| **Table 1** Extending videographic research paradigm in consumer research. |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| **Representational videography** | **Expressive videography**                     |
| **Relation to reality** | Social constructivist (i.e. reality is socially constructed); departure from scientific realism | Non-representational (i.e. reality is a flux of emergent relations); eschewing representation as the focus of inquiry |
| **Relation to video as a medium in producing knowledge** | Video is representational; a means to “capture authentic experiences” and to represent them; video contextualizes discourse, space, and time; analyzed as “visual text”; a “window” to the world | Video is relational; video is a “media practice” embedded in and producing social relations; research expresses the potentiality of change, not representation |
| **Video ethnography as a research method** | Not as a data collection tool but a creative process of “representing knowledge” (about individuals, society); a tool for “documenting” | Video as an expression capable of producing new social relations and meanings |
| **Strengths of videography as a research method** | Achieving “authentic” interpretations; allows “window to the world of studied participants”; “captures” visual cultural and symbolic world; enables new ways of understanding | Creating powerful encounters that force the viewers to think in new ways; seeks to bring about “revolutionary consciousness” |
| **Weaknesses of videography as a research method** | Is merely descriptive; too open to multiple readings; not generalizable; not rigorous enough from a scientific perspective | May overemphasize a singular perspective as it expresses an openly political viewpoint on social orders |
| **Potential of videography in advancing research insights** | “Authentic” interpretations and representations of culture and society | A critique of discourse of cultural representation: a powerful transformative tool in the production and shaping of social relations |
| **Role of the researcher** | “Reflective”; ensuring videography’s “loyal” representation of studied phenomena and multiple subjectivities | Expression of arguments about the social, cultural, material world; participation to production of new social relations |
| **Role of the researched** | Collaboration with researcher required to “draw out, reconstruct and represent” relevant and meaningful experiences | Involved in constituting new relations through the course of research activities |
| **Role of the viewer** | “Passive receiver” of knowledge | “Active producer” of social relations |
Representation – a ‘useless world’
Monstrous Organizing (on video)

• 2009-2013
• Moving from realism (representation) to expression
• Moving from common-sense to time-image
• How do we think it – how do we ‘do’ it
• S-V-O --- O-V-S
From (for example) the affection-image to the time-image

How to lose your agency and disappear in the powers of the false?

The ‘crystalline regime’, indiscernability of the real, overcodedness and unbearableility
Denaturalizing representation necessitates the politization of expression.

‘The honest ethnographer takes sides’ (Denzin, 2001)

‘Revolutionary consciousness’ (Bogue, 2003) or ‘action-thought’ (Deleuze, 1989)
Organization – Expressive videography

1. Video is affective and expressive – it is always purposefully and necessarily crafted and presented according to the vision of its creators, which becomes an attempt to construct impossible worlds. The purpose is to create affections that force us to think with our whole bodies; forcing thought to think itself.

2. Video is movement – it has an embodied agency of its own kind, which should be embraced rather than downplayed with text and voiceover.

3. Video is fiction – since authentic representation is impossible, videography should embrace the power of fiction more fully. Actualized in agentic movement it can potentially bring about relations that have ‘real’ effects.

4. Video is political – the videographer should therefore take sides in a reflexive creation of worlds

5. Video is monstrous – in creating new affordances and relations. These come into being through fieldwork encounters, the presence of the fetishistic camera-eye, the nonlinearity of editing and the effects it has on its audiences.