Videography in Communication Research:
Reflections on Implementation and Practical Aspects

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This chapter compiles, with a descriptive approach, the methodological videographic practices that are part of research with visual methods and the contemporary context of research in the social and human sciences. What are these practices? What are the implications of introducing audiovisual recording into the methodological apparatus? How should the devices be chosen and used? What is the relationship between device, researcher, and research subject? These questions are addressed and answered in order to unite and clarify these practices to favour the understanding of young researchers who are just starting out, or of academics who want to enter videographic methodological practices for the first time. Finally, a research case in communication is presented with the use of videography as part of the method.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to collect the relevant aspects extracted from the experience when applying visual methods in communication research and to show what these methods can contribute, provided that their use and integration in the scientific process is appropriate. After an exhaustive work of research into both the bibliography and the related research activities that was carried out by the author, a reflection on the application of video as part of the research method is proposed, focusing on the most practical questions; and reflecting on certain ethical and aesthetic aspects which the researcher found when the method is applied in field work.

Visual methods, heirs of anthropology and visual sociology, are currently a methodological field that adapts to the progressive evolution of visual and digital technologies, generally in parallel with the experiences of audiovisual creation. The visual methods make up a theoretical-practical framework with a hermeneutic and heuristic approach in constant self-reflection (Bouldoires, et al., 2018). Other authors focused on media studies about the anthropology of the media and the contributions of anthropology in the processes of representation and construction of imaginaries (Dikey, 1997; Spiltunik, 1993). Inter-disciplinary academic relationships have been fruitful: ethnographies in media industries, cultural and media studies, or anthropologies about processes of collective creation or media consumption.

Currently, the term visual methods encompasses other senses as well as vision, encompassing the sensory and bodily involvement of the researcher. Sarah Pink explains this in the fourth edition of her book Doing Visual Ethnography (2001):

The fourth edition engages more with the digital materiality of photographic and video practice and introduces a future-focused visual ethnography practice. It also discusses how visual practice can help us contest, for instance, technologically determinist narratives about futures. Visual practice in visual ethnography can branch into a whole range of different domains, and the methods it involves inevitably will not be exclusively visual. (Ibanez & Marín, 2021)

The use of video in research is specifically addressed, delving into the different ways of integrating it into the method and the particularities of the scientific process. Some of the practices addressed are: filmed observation, filmed interview, videography, participatory video, documentary, and video in research-creation.

Filmed observation is a practice from visual anthropology that goes beyond descriptive filming as a simple recording technique. So, it is a social practice to approach the object of our representation (Lallier; 2009, 2011). And it is precisely the idea that leads to one of the reflections that guide this work: how do we represent our object of representation turned into an object of study?

If we are interested in working on representation, the practice of participatory video may be a good option. A process in which participants have access to recording tools allowing them to show their vision of the object of study or allowing researchers to know that vision, which may be our object of study. We are talking about collaborative or participatory forms of research close to collaborative documentary, a practice which also raises the reorientation of the power of representation and the researcher's gaze (Jewitt, 2012).

With respect to the epistemological aspects, the limits and the advantages of their incorporation, in the first place the researcher must be aware of the specific problems that may appear from the moment of the conception of the research. The scientific process must be consistent with the introduction of visual methodologies, and the object of study must be capable of being studied with these methods. One of the complications found is that practice can quickly become meta-visual research. The meta-visual circle can be entered if our object is visual and we consider it optimal to study it using visual objects. In this case, it is essential to pay especial attention to the difference between the object and the study method. This difference must be precise from a research point of view. Otherwise, the write-up of the research itself will be confusing and cause problems in both practice and results.

We also consider that an audiovisual training is necessary that will allow the researcher to control the technical means used. The technical quality of the visual creation has not been a characteristic to consider since it is always subordinate to the interests of the research. This is one of the debates that arise

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