# The new research techniques in visual communication: a methodological proposal of videography

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## Abstract

The aim of this paper is to show the application of videography in communication research. Having overcomed the debates on the epistemic weakness of audiovisual anthropology, we can adopt these tools characterized by the diversity of formats and supports for social research. For the study of non-fiction audiovisual production, interdisciplinarity allows flexible work based on the interrelation of elements of the various disciplines involved. We propose a methodological model composed of visual analysis, interview and videography for the study of audiovisual documentary. We have applied the method to a sample of documentaries and to three case studies of documentary productions in different formats. The expanded or immersive nature of the documentaries we analyse have led us to create specific categories of analysis for these new formats. Complementary we have introduced the 360° video in one of our case studies to know its possibilities. Among the results obtained we highlight the creation of a visual, textual and audiovisual material that provides us with information for the study of the documentary. The article fournishes a comparison between video formats and a theoretical reflection around the researcher's gaze and the self-referential nature of research that shares the audiovisual simultaneously as an object and method.

## Keywords

communication; videography; documentary film; visual methods; methodology

# As novas técnicas de pesquisa em comunicação visual: uma proposta metodológica da videografia

## Resumo

O objetivo deste trabalho é mostrar a aplicação da videografia na pesquisa em comunicação e especificamente a proposta de um modelo metodológico para produções audiovisuais de não-ficção. Superados os debates sobre a fragilidade epistémica da antropologia audiovisual, podemos adotar essas ferramentas visuais caracterizadas pela diversidade de formatos e suportes à pesquisa social. Para o estudo do documentário, a interdisciplinaridade permite um trabalho flexível baseado na inter-relação de elementos das diversas disciplinas envolvidas. Propomos um modelo metodológico composto pela aplicação de análise visual, entrevista em profundidade e videografia para o estudo do documentário audiovisual. Aplicamos o plano metodológico a uma amostra de documentários em diferentes formatos. A natureza expandida ou imersiva dos documentários que analisamos levou-nos à criação de categorias de análise específicas para

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*The new research techniques in visual communication: a methodological proposal of videography · Alba Marín & Fernando Contreras*

esses novos formatos como o interativo, o transmedia ou o imersivo. Além disso, introduzimos o vídeo em 360° num de nossos estudos de caso para conhecer as suas possibilidades. O artigo fornece uma comparação entre os formatos de vídeo e uma reflexão teórica em torno do olhar do pesquisador e da natureza autorreferencial da pesquisa que compartilha o audiovisual simultaneamente como objeto e método.

## Introduction: an audiovisual prospective for the study of communication

The communication research is a field of study in which we must continuously adapt the methods to the emerging forms of new media. In a context where human actions and socio-cultural environment mix with the technology, we should consider the use of visual techniques and digital media that can complement other traditional Social Science research techniques (such as content analyses or interviews). This work shows the recording of reality with audiovisual technology as a useful tool for scientific research. For this purpose, we have studied nonfiction productions linked to alternative realities, expanded, participatory and mobile narratives.

We understand documentary as a contemporary audiovisual expression set halfway between artistic creation and media productions so that it can be framed in the context of visual studies (Bal, 2016; Brea, 2005; Canclini, 2010; Contreras, 2017). Visual studies offers an interdisciplinary structure that allows us to interrelate elements of the disciplines involved in audiovisual creation. Although these disciplines do not share the same methodologies, they have the same object in common. Communication theory is considered a "crossroads science" in which several sciences converge (Rodrigo-Alsina, 1989, p. 113). Documentary is at this intersection on several levels. We use the term interdisciplinary because different disciplines share the object of study. As Mattelart and Mattelart (1997) has underlined, "the objects of study are often imposed on research, due to the available methods, when what would have to be done is to adapt the methods to the object" (Mattelart & Mattelart, 1997, p. 57). Their perspective is similar to the one proposed by Brea when he stated the need for a "polyhedral" approach to the study of communication (Brea, 2005, p. 13). Both authors agree on their arguments about the choice of a methodology that combines several disciplines, referring specifically to the foundation of an epistemology of the visual in communication.

Regarding the research object, technological innovation has increasingly motivated documentary makers to develop experimental narratives in shared spaces for the inclusion of users: Nonny de la Peña, Brad Lichtesnstein and Jeff Fitzsimmons (*Across the Line*, 2015); Gabo Arora and Chris Mikl (*Clouds over Sidra*, 2015); Karim Bem-Khelifa (*The Enemy*, 2017); Marcello Hopkins (*On the brink of famine. Urgence au Sud Soudan*, 2017); Maria Court and Rosemarie Lerner (*Proyecto Quipu*, 2013-2019). The current thinking about the

creative process of a post-documentary differs from the traditional conception of the linear cinematographic documentary, since the inclusion of other techniques, such as virtual reality, makes the dynamics of production necessarily change. The notion of the documentary turned to the image of *pathos* (Bal, 2016), concerning its role in the human experience, as well as the possibilities associated with the narrative function of the image through technological innovation.

In this context, the exploration of documentary practices to understand the contemporary visuality and to its instrumentalization adapted to the demands of a different spectator, are the paths that lead to new phenomena of communication mediated by technology.

## The communication research using visual methods

As Pauwels (2000) explains, visual methods study what we see and how we give meaning to the visual, the experience of observing visual objects and the attribution of meaning to visual representations. This author adds another critical consideration in the use of the visual methods: "We should also try to take it one step further and acquire the necessary skills and synthetical insights for producing visual material as a crucial part of the scientific discourse" (Pauwels, 2000, p. 9).

The *Revue Française des Méthodes Visuelles* proposes a definition of visual methods based on a tradition supported by image research. Here, visual methods are framed in a context of reflection and practice of the hermeneutical and heuristic approach, the incursion of the criticism of the theory (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2016) and a constant self-reflection. "We could simply define the visual methods as a set of research methods in Social and Human Sciences that are not limited to production and/or delivery of writings in their modes of scientific argument" (Bouldoires, Meyer & Reix, 2018, p. 11).

In the exercise of visual and digital ethnography, the aspects of critical thinking are meticulous. Audiovisual records have been used for years in ethnographic research. The use of software, photography and video devices, social platforms or mobile apps for qualitative analysis, is currently recognized in the academic field and more areas of knowledge than ever adopt these innovations (Alvarez Giraldo & Navarro, 2017). In addition to all these technological innovations in scientific research of the documentary, we must add the need for a committed and political conscience that guarantees critical conclusions needed after the visual record. If we consider the participatory role of the researcher, especially with the use of camera video as a research tool, the ethical dimension is particularly relevant, as well as the commitment to its research objectives.

> Videography is positioned within more significant ethnographic debates concerning about how objectivity and subjectivity are conceptualized, and the call for ethnographies to be formulated as multi-vocal texts and 'reflexive mirrors' rather than objective data (Ruby, 1982). Videography understands and uses the video as a tool to re-orientate the power of the researcher gaze and to give voice to research subjects/participants. (Jewitt, 2012, p. 3)

Image appeared in the early days of Anthropology, although this discipline was an academic field traditionally dominated by the word. Image was a tool to collect information and did not function as a testimony or as a mnemonic archive. Nowadays, the sensory acquisition of the main subjects of research becomes more important than the systematic collection of descriptive data.

Despite the growing recognition of the value of the visual, only in the seventies, the image was recognized academically (Dion, 2007). Even though this scientific cinema had a more distant past. For example, Malinowski (1884-1942) and Flaherty (1884-1951) promoted ethnographic exhibition cinema. In the field of descriptive visual anthropology, Regnault, Meda and Bateson (Febrer, 2013, p. 728) stood out. In the 1950s, Jean Rouch's (1917-2004) work inspired a new generation of anthropologists who would later promote contemporary visual anthropology. Currently, visual methods are fully recognized (Pink, 2006) and interdisciplinary works enrich each other. With the technological development of devices capture and the invention of other narrative forms in the interpretation of the images, social research/progresses by studying audiovisual practices that go beyond an artistic activity based on the photo and the video (Ibanez, 2006).

Visual methods are the heirs of Visual Anthropology, which means that the image is studied as an object and the visual is used as a research method. It would be a lack of vision to consider only the function of the image and not the observer experience about the research object. In Visual Anthropology, the image is an intrinsic element of the research method, which acts independently of the nature of the object it represents. Thus, a visual methodology is not based on stylistic analysis to generate knowledge related to aesthetic value. This is an investigation with images (Dion, 2007) that in our specific case is complicated because we apply it to the study of the documentary. The visual is method, object of study and process of creating images through the image.

## Visual Anthropology heritage

Part of the difficulty of a visual study is the continuous adaptation of the researcher to choose an appropriate research technology. Anthropological research moves into virtual communities. This has led to the observation of social behaviours on the network and the analysis of communicative activities mediated by digital devices. Virtual ethnography has been developed by the need to adapt conventional methods to the object of digital culture and virtual communication.

Digital media is a key element in our world. It is through them that we relate with others and even help us to understand ourselves.

> The video camera places the viewer in the image, as the photographic had already done. However, unlike this one, it invites you to communicate with others through this medium or to observe yourself in it. This practice is already carried out as typical in films when couples express their feelings through live recordings or projecting each other. This medium of presence is established in private hands that are no longer restricted to the old status

of a medium o memory, and which is also not subject to the temporal leap
that previously separated all the images of its viewer. (Belting, 2007 p. 103)

In the first studies on technology mediated communication, it was necessary to transport traditional methods to the new technical context (Hine, 2005). Due to the continuous technological evolution, this adaptation is still required, as well as rethinking the role of the researcher and the setting in which their research takes place. The field-work moves into the digital context and the researcher enters this virtual space to look for social relations and individual behaviours (Turkle, 1997).

Media Anthropology studies communication using visual or digital tools. In the case of nonfiction film analysis, the Anthropology of the Media uses in the investigation the same procedures that intervene in the production of the investigated object: the observer is observed. We analyse the nonfiction film producing another film.

Dickey (1997) and Spiltunikn (1993) have advocated anthropological research in media studies and, specifically, in the processes of representation and construction of imaginary. From new media questions in the 1990s, Visual Anthropology was legitimately integrated into communication research to explain the public reaction to the media (Dickey, 1997, p. 4).

The Anthropology of the Media focuses on the relations between journalists and sources, human relationships that surround the information work and study contexts and forms of reception. Virtual ethnography, which develops its work on the internet, causes the total relocation of the field of work, the dissolution of the space for study and the relocation of the researcher. In short, his work is developed in the new scenarios created by digital technologies. According to Lemos (2008), this is not a confrontation between the "virtual" and "real", but the migration of the social production towards a space created by the networks, in which the experiences of physical places, objects and real people intervene.

For the communication study, Goodwin (1993, 2000) highlights the observation of visual phenomena and the processes of creating meanings. Gesturality and its recording in visual documents help to understand social realities. In his work, the analysis does not focus on visual events in isolation, but on the systematic practices used by the participants in the interaction. With its way of analysis, it is possible to go beyond the interpersonal relations of audiovisual practices in the knowledge of a community.

The computer-mediated communication and the academic recognition of cyberculture have helped to introduce a methodological versatility into ethnography (Hine, 2005). Examples include the work of Flores-Márquez on digital activism (2015); the union of physical and virtual territories (Lemos, 2008), Edgar Gómez Cruz's work on self-representation (Gómez Cruz, 2012) or the project "Selfie-stories and personal data: hybrid methodologies for the analysis of visual narratives in digital culture"[1].

From the postmodern anthropology model (Dion, 2007; Geertz, 1992), the notion of objectivity changes concerning the investigation and use of the image. The use and

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[1] Project information available at http://selfiestories.net

Revista Lusófona de Estudos Culturais / Lusophone Journal of Cultural Studies, vol. 7, n. 1, 2020

*The new research techniques in visual communication: a methodological proposal of videography* · Alba Marín & Fernando Contreras

production of images were then considered a constructive negotiation between the subjects and the researcher. Jean Rouch (1995) assumes the transformation of the role traditionally played by the researcher, the camera and the image presented, the interpretation and the participation of the researcher as part of the research itself. Sarah Pink (2001) analysed the various possible uses of video in anthropology. Not all researchers employ it in the same way as some who intend to produce edited videos. Pink defends the subjective dimension of the image that reflects sensory experiences. This is possible from the filming since the image can evoke bodily sensations differently from the word. Video is not only a way for the collection of data, but an applied science that participates in the negotiation of social relations, a means that generates knowledge for the ethnography (Pink, 2001, p. 138).

In Rouch's original approaches (1995), the camera ceases to be a distant object and becomes integrated as a participant in documentary action. The extraction of knowledge emerges from this immersion of the camera and the observer in what is observed. Previously, it was only contemplated, and the observer took notes to explain the group's actions. This is how he validated the data. Nowadays, the observer immerses himself with the camera as a participant in the social phenomenon to obtain information from collaboration and interaction. A collaboration provoked on some occasions when the process of creating images is offered to the subjects to represent themselves, or also to interact with images that are shown to them if these have already been recorded previously.

For this reflection we used the field of Visual Anthropology in a technological environment such as Bancks and Morphy (1997); Banks and Ruby (2011); Collier and Collier (1986); Hine (2005, 2015); Hockings (1995); Ibanez, Chabert, Lamboux-Durand and Wanono (2017); Pink (2001, 2006); Rouch (2003); Ruby (2000). These authors advanced in the documentary narrative with the combined use of photography and video in early works, and then with hypermedia and the use of different technological devices. Also, they have accomplished the integration of visual and digital technologies in an ethnographic study, among which we can highlight hypermedia (Ibanez, 2006).

The role of the observer and his connection with the camera determines the relationship that is built with reality and, in this case, with the object of study. Lallier (2009) considers more relevant the relation between the filmed and who films in research and the use of movement and space in the filmed and those who film: "the sequence filmed comes from the social relation between the observer and the people filmed" (Lallier, 2011, p. 107). According to Lallier (2011), the ethnography filmed is different from that which is written, since the reciprocity with the studied situation is very close. The ethnofilmmaker gets involved, takes part in the action, does not remain as a strange element that does not intervene; there is a personal involvement of the researcher with the event or situation observed. Lallier calls this practice filmed-observation. With this, he defines a different type of practice for the field of social research, as does the participant observation.

**PROPOSAL OF AN INTERACTIVE AUDIOVISUAL METHODOLOGICAL MODEL FOR RESEARCH ON THE AUDIOVISUAL DOCUMENTARY**

Our proposed visual methodological model is based on a triangulation of the following complementary techniques: visual analysis, participant filming and interviews. In the ethnographic approach, triangulation is typical: observation, interviews, document analysis and other forms of combined data collection (Flick, 2015). According to the author, case studies are often carried out in ethnographic investigations in which various methods and devices are used for data collection. We designed this methodological model for the study of the documentary and applied it to three case studies that were in the production phase. In all three cases, the video was used as a research tool to directly record different creative stages during the production of documentaries, as well as the final result between what was filmed and the interpretation obtained from the representation. To complete the triangulation, we conducted interviews with the directors of the three documentaries. The last technique aimed to access information that we could only obtain through direct relations with the creators. They provided subjective information without contamination by other external factors about their way of understanding the creative process, their opinion about the contributions of the technologies according to their professional experience and a reflection about the communicative success about the representation and the represented. For this, we rely mainly on the work of Bruhn (2002), Flick (2011, 2015) and Mann (2016), about the interview as a method of research in communication.

> Ethnography is an approach to study groups and processes in their natural environment, which requires the flexible use of methods and much patience in the field. The data may be less systematic than in other methods, but it can be more holistic in the descriptions that make it possible. Therefore, the generalization here is generally more internal – in the context – than outside the study sites and fields. (Flick, 2015, p. 130)

In the outline of Figure 1, it is possible to see how we applied the combination of these methods, with which we were able to approach our object of study from three different perspectives: the final work, the construction of the representation and the author's point of view.
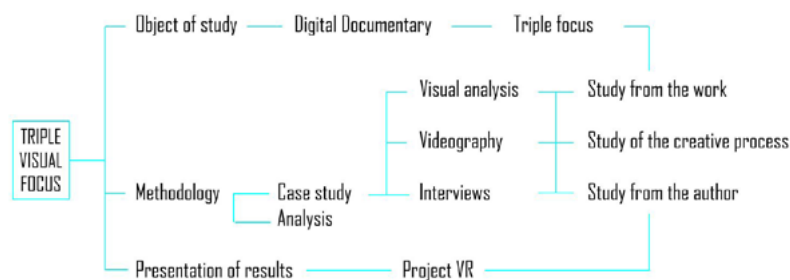


Figure 1: Methodological triangulation scheme and the approaches of each method to the object of study

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The case studies were selected according to their formal characteristics and their ability to adapt to the time requirements of our research. Among the three cases, they should cover the main digital formats, the inclusion of the user, serials to allow to know the quality of a piece already published and be in the production phase of another chapter or documentary of the series.

The documentary *La Primavera Rosa* (Mario de la Torre, 2016-2018) is conceived as a media project with several chapters, of which four had already been published and a fifth was in progress. These four chapters had a differentiating element that made them ideal for the study: a different format in each chapter, complementarily to the linear audiovisual.

The documentary *Las Sinsombrero* (Tania Balló, Manuel Jiménez and Serrana Torres, 2015-2019) is one of the reference documentaries of Spanish production in recent years, due to its expanded nature and innovation in its format, especially the *webdoc* and the use of social networks. Moreover, its *webdoc* includes three levels of interactivity that we consider especially interesting to analyse, as it is not common to find them in the same work.

*Hors-Cadre* (Martín Charrière, 2017-2019) is a nonfiction virtual reality series that currently has four short films and that we use as a reference example for the immersive documentary, a subgenre still emerging.

### The format of the visual analysis model

The perspectives of the history of images and media are only justified when they are not mutually discarded. The visual perspective of Anthropology focuses on the *praxis* of the image, which requires a different treatment from image techniques and their history (Belting, 2007). The analysis uses case studies which, in our research, consisted of a sample of documentaries. We tried to analyse the elements that come into play in the creation of the audiovisual documentary.

The analysis model initially requires the classic categories of films and the audiovisual narrative analyses proposed by Barthes (2002, 2017); Belting (2007); Bordwell Casetti e di Chio (1991); Derrida and Stiegler (1998); Gaufreault and Jost (1995); Gifreu Castells (2013); Köster (2005); Nichols (2010) or Plantinga (2014). To conclude the analysis proposal, we add specific categories of transmedia or immersive works. At this point, we emphasize that this analysis has to be made from a deep involvement of the researcher, since many of the works are immersive, personalized or participatory, and the analysis is made from the complete experience.

Revista Lusófona de Estudos Culturais / Lusophone Journal of Cultural Studies, vol. 7, n. 1, 2020

*The new research techniques in visual communication: a methodological proposal of videography · Alba Marín & Fernando Contreras*

| CATEGORY | DESCRIPTION LEVEL 1 | DESCRIPTION LEVEL 2 |
|---|---|---|
| Context | Description of the work<br>Synopsis<br>Technical data | |
| Formal categories | Visual codes<br><br>Graphic codes<br>Sound codes | Movement<br>Composition<br>Textual elements<br>Nature and use of sound |
| Categories of representation | Edition<br>Space composition<br>Temporality composition | |
| Dimensions of the narration | Enunciation marks<br>Structure of the report<br>Point of view/ocularization | |
| Spectator inclusion | Interactivity<br>Participation<br>Customization<br>Immersion | |
| Expansion of story | Levels and nature | |
| Medium/image/use relation | Formals specifications<br>Function of the image | |
| Final description of the personal experimentation of the work | | |

Table 1: Analysis model for post-documentary

## HOW TO APPLY VIDEOGRAPHY IN A PRACTICAL RESEARCH CASE

During the days of recording documentary films, we introduced the camera interactively. This interaction was designed to take advantage of those results that can only be provided by participant observation. The camera and the filming process were integrated into the same production of the documentary we studied (Rouch, 2009). We also sought to incorporate Lallier's visual anthropological approach (2011) and his filmed observation:

> the filmed observation does not merely consist of watching it with a camera, as if the use of a device alone would determine a field practice. (...) Filmed observation does not belong to writing itself or a simple recording technique, but to a social practice: a unique way of dealing face to face with the object of our representation. (Lallier, 2011, p. 105)

Jewitt (2012) establishes a differentiation in the application of video to research, distinguishing between participatory video and videography. Participatory video is an intervention process in which participants have access to recording and/or editing tools to create their own vision of the subject of study. In the application of videography, we find collaborative forms of research very close to collaborative documentaries and individual forms closer to the filmed journal.

Videography is generally used to deepen cultural and social issues through audiovisual creation: either since Visual Anthropology (Collier, 1995; Collier & Collier, 1986)

Revista Lusófona de Estudos Culturais / Lusophone Journal of Cultural Studies, vol. 7, n. 1, 2020

*The new research techniques in visual communication: a methodological proposal of videography · Alba Marín & Fernando Contreras*

or documentarism (Cyrulnik, 2018). Stollbrock's recent research (2017) on memory and representation in documentary filmmaking is an example of the most widespread application of visual techniques. The documentary *La Siberia* (Sierra & Stollbrock, 2015) served its author to develop *a posteriori* research on temporary representation from his documentary made in a cement factory in Colombia. The ethnographic project, in this case about the memory and body representation of the Afro-Venezuelan woman, from Vila Guevara (2017) is another similar example of a research process culminating in the creation of the documentary *Belém* (Vila Guevara, 2017). Both cases show us the current application of audiovisual documentary or videography in social research.

Our proposal focused on the continuity of the study of communicative processes by applying visual methodologies. The figure of the director-researcher is prevalent in Visual Anthropology as we have argued, as well as in the field of *research-creation,* mainly associated with artistic research.

Through the filming, in the fieldwork, a series of actions were recorded which were later interpreted thanks to communicative analysis and also to the creation of the derivative work which was produced as a result of the research. We agree with Cordido (2010) on the contribution of the postulates of Visual Anthropology on the audiovisual recording to capture symbols, forms and relationships in the cultural field. This contribution is based on the integration of the method from the beginning of the fieldwork until the exposure of the results, after the analysis of the material obtained. The process involved the passage of the recorded data for its interpretation through the union between the theoretical explanation and the construction of an audiovisual discourse.

### Previous considerations for the introduction and use of 360° video in research

To improve the methodology, we proposed in a complementary and emerging way the use of 360 degree video as a recording device in our recorded participant observation. For its introduction, we follow the steps presented in Table 2.

| Steps for video introduction |
| --- |
| Previews and recording permits |
| Survey of the day to record and the observation ground |
| Defining times, places and technical material: recording plan |
| Places and technical material: recording plan |
| Recording journey |
| **Steps after the recording** |
| Registration forms |
| Visualization, analysis and categorization of information |
| Final report writing |
| Edition of the material and creation of derivative works |

Table 2: Phases for the introduction and application of videography

## Technical considerations: the team at the service of investigation

We believe that the technical and human team should adapt to the specific needs of each research: mobility, adaptability and discretion. Even if we use the camera interactively, it is not about accumulating attention. Therefore, tools that are both discreet and functional have been the right ones in our case. We insist on the importance of the tools, as they directly affect the work of the researcher and the information obtained.

The selection of recording devices should be adapted to the situation of each case study, the objectives of the research and the technical capabilities of the researcher/producer. If we continue with the idea of the camera as an extension of the body, as a device that increases the capacities of observation of the phenomenon, it is crucial to accept that the equipment should in no case be a problem. In other words, the best tool will be the one that does not distract the researcher so that he can concentrate on the object of study and not on the proper functioning of the devices. To achieve this goal, we have proposed a series of requirements associated with technical equipment to be taken into account for the good development of fieldwork (Figure 2).

The camera records personally, like a prosthesis that adapts to the researcher to extend his gaze. To do this, we decided to dispense the stabilization or support instruments of the camera. We do not consider it necessary to use a fixed camera for a complete recording, as the use of video does not correspond to the observational method. On the other hand, the figure of the researcher with a camera in his hand brings more freedom of movement, monitoring of the characters and sensitive use of the equipment as a record of the participant observation and the researcher's gaze. We think of a more organic integration, both for the researcher since he can "look through the lens", as well as for the observed subjects, which have become accustomed to that person looking through the camera as a natural attitude. Furthermore, in one of the documentary production cases, we included 360 degree video which, as we explain below, can offer the complementarity of recording from a broader angle.
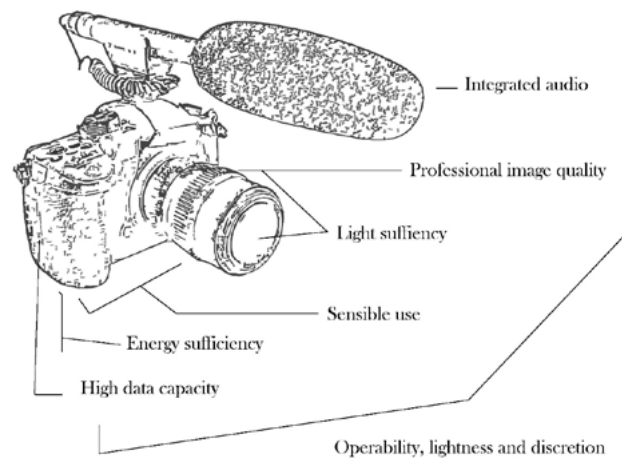


Figure 2: Basic characteristics of technical equipment

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Revista Lusófona de Estudos Culturais / Lusophone Journal of Cultural Studies, vol. 7, n. 1, 2020

*The new research techniques in visual communication: a methodological proposal of videography* · Alba Marín & Fernando Contreras

As for the audio, a built-in cannon microphone independent, long-lasting battery was chosen. This sound was completed with a second independent audio recording on the hand recorder to ensure recording. We selected these instruments following the same premises as the visual equipment selection.

Finally, when it comes to technical lighting equipment and other accessories, we do not value artificial lighting of any kind for two reasons: (a) it would imply another element of distraction that would harm the situation to be observed, and (b) we would be polluting the scene with artificial light and with all that this can imply in terms of invading the scene.

## Planning the filming

Although this is a prospective film, there are several questions we should ask before doing the fieldwork and applying the visual method. What goal is sought with the record? Where will the camera be or who will operate it? What is the researcher's role in the process? What role does the camera play concerning people in the case study and actions? What is the investigator's point of view for the recording? For what purpose will the recorded material be used and how does it meet the scientific requirements of the applied methodology?

We count on the added value of capturing space-time of the observed phenomenon, maintaining the chronological succession of events and the recording of gestures, words and sounds. These secondary elements, which may seem insignificant at first, could later become indispensable elements in the process we study and have been recorded for our benefit. Finally, with what has already been obtained, it is possible to proceed with the crossing of recorded data, unrecorded observations, exploratory interviews, notes and interviews.



Figure 3: Frame of the recording during the fieldwork in our case
study of the documentary *La Primavera rosa*

Credits: Alba Marín

As a whole, the use of video allows the researcher to play a participatory role. During our study of the documentary at the recording stage, *La Primavera rosa* (de la Torre, 2016-2018), we carried out fieldwork that allowed us to integrate as part of the production team. In this scenario, we used the camera as a natural element included in the scene that was produced in the documentary and not as a tool for collecting external data.

### Description of the cases studied with the proposed videographic approach

The production phases of the documentaries on which we made the fieldwork did not obey a random choice. They were selected according to the imperatives of the production of each documentary. In each documentary, we filmed a different phase of the process which, together, allowed us to have an overview of the production of the representation.

During the filming stage, we observed and recorded the production process that includes the selection of images in production, the complete interview and the work of documentaries before, during and after the process. Here we observed that it is then that an essential part of the construction of the representation takes place as, from that moment, a selection of what is being recorded is being made. Moreover, when we were able to record the last interview, the documentarists had a preview of what they wanted to get and an approximation to the rest of the audiovisual material they had already recorded.

From the analysis of our recorded observation, we made a comparison between the treatment of reality during filming and the final representation of that reality that appears in the final work. Besides the recordings, small exploratory interviews were carried out with the participants during the fieldwork, to know particular aspects of the documentary production. Exploratory interviews during the production phase are crucial to know why the camera is positioned, the sequence, the interest the director has in each protagonist, etc. By interacting with the production team to obtain more information, we can contrast the responses with what is observed and generate more content from which to obtain information for our conclusions. Regarding the post-production phase, exploratory interviews were also crucial to obtain detailed information about the transmedia structure or the objective they pursue with each decision.

| Case | Implementation phase | Image team | Sound team |
|---|---|---|---|
| *La Primavera Rosa (2016-2018)* | Production. Recording of the last interview of the chapter *La Primavera rosa* en España | *Mirrorless* video camera with a 50 mm fixed focal length lens, operated by the investigator | Independent audio team |
| *Las sinsombrero (2015-2019)* | Post-production. Second Documentary Editing Journey *Hidden and Impeccable* | *Mirrorless* video camera with a 50 mm fixed focal length lens, operated by the investigator | Independent audio team |
| *Hors-Cadre (2017-2019)* | Post-production of the *Intimités* chapter and design stage of the *Holder* chapter | *Mirrorless* video camera with a 50 mm fixed focal length lens, operated by the researcher and Samsung 360° camera, fixed on a tripod | Independent audio team |

Table 3: Application of videography to the three case studies

Revista Lusófona de Estudos Culturais / Lusophone Journal of Cultural Studies, vol. 7, n. 1, 2020

*The new research techniques in visual communication: a methodological proposal of videography* · Alba Marín & Fernando Contreras

With the fieldwork, we obtained not only images but also the data from experience itself and recorded the impressions that would later be crossed with the recorded material. The three lines of methodological work that we developed were inseparable from each other in practice. The recording, the interviews and the direct observation took place at the same time, overlapping each other coherently. It should be added that we did not come across a fully structured method. The exploratory interviews of the fieldwork were not premeditated, nor was the location of the camera at each moment, because there is no roadmap on the actions of documentarists at all stages. It is the researcher who, since establishing the objectives of the methodology, puts the process into practice according to the way the events develop during the fieldwork. In this ever-changing scenario, the videographic ethnography researcher participates, interacts and decides what to record and with whom to talk.

## 360 DEGREE VIDEO AS A RESEARCH TOOL

The introduction of the immersive audiovisual format responds mainly to the interest in experiencing the possibilities offered by this visual tool. The 360 degree video makes it possible to analyse the experience of interaction with space through other sensations of the body and its movements in an immersive experience. An example that shows us the possible applications of immersive works in communication research is the research project of "Réalités impossibles" (Chabert & Groupierre, 2018), where the capacities of these devices with spaces are experienced and analysed.

The 360 degree video alters the conventional dynamics of the audiovisual narrative, as it forces the creation of a story subject to the sensations that the user will later perceive from the image. In this format, a subjective shot is filmed that must be thought out so that it is later visualized and analysed by the researcher, not for an external user to whom a story is told. If we use this video camera 360 degree in a space where a given action occurs, we can film the action from all angles, if we place the camera in a central point. The researcher using the video must choose its frame, the point of focus and finally where to fix his gaze. During this process, he will inevitably stop filming another situation that may be interesting. This problem can disappear or at least diminish with the incorporation of 360 degree video. Below is a brief account of the technical characteristics of two recording formats and the comparison between these two instruments applied to the research.

| | Vídeo < 180° | Vídeo 360° |
|---|---|---|
| Record | Sensitive / hand-recording<br>Fixed plans and moving plans<br>Maximum angle of 180° variable<br>Selection of plans and variety | Independent recording<br>Fixed plan<br>360° angle<br>Limits on the variety of plans<br>Limiting the selection to the scene |

Revista Lusófona de Estudos Culturais / Lusophone Journal of Cultural Studies, vol. 7, n. 1, 2020

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| Visualization and analysis | Non-Immersive Display<br>Register = view<br>Possibility of collective viewing<br>Variable frame selected by the investigator Invariant in the display | Immersive visualization<br>Different record from the view<br>Individual viewing<br>Variable frame in the display |
|---|---|---|
| Role of the camera | Observation<br>Interaction | Observation<br>Descriptive record |
| Camera-researcher relation | Direct relation<br>Camera as an extension of the documentary maker's gaze<br>*Organic* recording<br>Documentarist out of the field | Complementary relation<br>Independent use<br>Documentarist in the framework |
| Mobility | Volunteer | Fixed. Not-mobility |
| Interaction with the protagonists | Linked to the filming<br>From out of the field | Independent<br>Inside the scene |

Table 5: Comparison of the characteristics of both records as a search tool

In our case studies, 360 degree video had a complementary use to handheld video camera recording. This caused the investigator-videographer to appear as an element of the scene in the 360 degree recorded image.



Figure 2: 360° video frame made during the *Hors-Cadre* case study (Charrière, 2017-2019)

Credits: Alba Marín



Figure 3: Frame of the video made during the *Hors-Cadre* case study (Charrière, 2017-2019)

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Revista Lusófona de Estudos Culturais / Lusophone Journal of Cultural Studies, vol. 7, n. 1, 2020

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From our methodological guidelines, the researcher inevitably assumes an active role and, therefore, we see no inconvenience in his presence in the image. However, we are aware that it is a practice that must be considered in each case study if it plays a role in the research. The presence of the device itself alters what is filmed and, aesthetically, we should not forget that the main objective responds to the research criteria.

## Conclusion

We proposed an ethnographic approach based on the use of videography. This model addresses the complexity of audiovisual productions in gathering information and documenting social research. Specifically, our methodology was designed to investigate the creative process of documentaries. To elaborate this proposal, we had to recognize different factors to other methodologies such as the inclusion of the researcher in the making of ethnographic audiovisual material, the new narrative modes of audiovisual scientific narrative or the movement of the viewer in immersive contexts.

The use of an ethnographic approach in communication, the knowledge of the audiovisual media and the work articulated with data of a different nature (image, audio, video, text) increase the wealth of information obtained in the study of the documentary. To this methodology, we integrate the case studies and the interaction with the research subjects. At the same time that we obtained and recorded the data for the study of the documentary using an anthropological approach, we obtained material to create an audiovisual work as part of the same production process. The result is an investigation characterized by the "goal" element since it is the researcher's gaze through the image ascending an audiovisual work. The production carried out as part of the research includes a prototype of audiovisual creation.

The incorporation of the complexities associated with visual polysemy poses a challenge for communication researchers who must have the ideal training to take advantage of the possibilities of these tools. We faced the difficulty of systematizing audiovisual methods, derived from the customization associated with their use and the lack of audiovisual training as a tool for social research. We, therefore, believe that, although we are not in an unexplored line, further development of these aspects is needed for communication research.

We tried incorporating 360 degree video into the research. Its right role in future research on communication has yet to be defined. The technical characteristics of the device suggest its complementary use to the video camera of a maximum of 180 degrees. The data obtained from both registers are not repeated because the respective mode of use and visualization have different characteristics that make them complementary. After the first experience with this device, we consider it interesting to continue the path of exploration and experience in different situations to find the right context for its use.

The analysis of a filmed material opens scientific research to immersive environments. This implies developing other working methodologies that focus not only on the time of data collection and interaction with the subjects involved but on the subsequent

analysis of the image. An analysis of the data collected on video includes particular procedures. In our study, the main quality of 360 degree video in ethnographic fieldwork does not reside in the time of filming, but its visualization and analysis. With the correct editing process, the researcher can return to the filmed space and study different elements and moments in parallel. The revision phase takes on a new dimension, since the researcher does not return to his own gaze in the audiovisual record, but his gaze returns to the stage. Although we have indeed faced the limitations of exploration and video movements, we must value in this type of scientific work: the relation between the technological device and the researcher, the temporality of reality and the time of the machine, the space of work and the space of analysis, the role of the camera and the role of the researcher.

Translation: Alba Marín

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Revista Lusófona de Estudos Culturais / Lusophone Journal of Cultural Studies, vol. 7, n. 1, 2020

*The new research techniques in visual communication: a methodological proposal of videography* · Alba Marín & Fernando Contreras

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Revista Lusófona de Estudos Culturais / Lusophone Journal of Cultural Studies, vol. 7, n. 1, 2020

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