

RAISING THE WORD FROM IMAGES OF FICTION: A MATTER OF PUBLIC SCIENCE OR PUBLIC ART?

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ABSTRACT

Based on a novel approach to interviewing that was recently applied in the context of an interdisciplinary research project combining sociology and cinema, this article proposes a discussion of the stakes involved in the use of video-elicitation, i.e. the conducting of interviews prompted by the viewing of images, and in this case realistic fiction images. One can first see video-elicitation as an opportunity for social science research when it seeks to overcome a well-known difficulty associated with the risk of having the researcher imposing issues on the respondents in the context of an interview survey. On a broader level, one can also see it as an opportunity for a public, citizen-based science that is attentive to the involvement of social actors in their questioning and analysis, and that respects their practical expertise and integrates the latter into a form of co-construction of knowledge. Finally, it can be seen as an artistic opportunity, with the opening up of a new repertoire of public expression combining artistic productions from the past (fictional audio-visual archives), the renewed use of these productions in multimedia works that stimulate emotions and reactions, and the proposal, through new technological media, of an aesthetic appropriation that is closer to sensory experience, and that takes the form of public art. Under these conditions of use, audio-visual fiction archives could find a renewed value that one could associate with the heritage movement and the search for roots that characterize our globalized and ever-changing societies.

KEYWORDS

interview, public sociology, archive, video-elicitation, fiction

SUSCITAR A PALAVRA A PARTIR DE IMAGENS DE FICÇÃO: UMA QUESTÃO DE CIÊNCIA PÚBLICA OU DE ARTE PÚBLICA?

RESUMO

Partindo de um dispositivo de entrevistas particular, recentemente testado como parte de um projeto de pesquisa interdisciplinar que associa Sociologia e Cinema, este artigo propõe uma reflexão sobre os problemas envolvidos no uso da vídeo-elicitação, isto é, da condução de entrevistas suscitadas pela visualização de imagens, neste caso imagens de ficção realistas. Primeiro, podemos ver aí um desafio para a pesquisa em Ciências Sociais, quando a vídeo-elicitação tenta superar uma dificuldade conhecida, que está associada ao risco de imposição da problemática aos entrevistados pelo investigador no contexto da pesquisa por entrevista. Segundo, neste caso é possível extrair, de maneira mais ampla, uma questão para a ciência pública, cidadã, que esteja atenta à implicação dos atores sociais nas perguntas e nas suas análises, com respeito pela sua experiência prática para entrar numa forma de co-construção de conhecimento. Finalmente,

podemos detetar aí um desafio artístico com a abertura de um novo repertório de expressão pública, combinando, numa forma de arte pública: a produção artística de um tempo passado (o arquivo audiovisual de ficção); a remobilização em escritos multimédia evocando emoção e reação; e o comprometimento por meio de novas mediações tecnológicas numa apropriação estética da fricção da experiência sensível. Nestas condições de reutilização, os arquivos audiovisuais de ficção poderiam encontrar um novo valor que possa ser associado ao movimento de patrimonialização e à busca de raízes que caracterizem as nossas sociedades globalizadas e em mutações permanentes.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

entrevista; sociologia pública; arquivo; vídeo-elicitación; ficção

When shot and edited with an ambition of realism, the fictional images produced by cinema and television with the intention of being shared to a broad audience¹ constitute a possible source of memories for places that have since been transformed, for professional practices that have changed or for lifestyles that have since disappeared. The fact that these images were broadcasted in the past also confirms that audio-visual professionals considered that they met the expectations of the time in terms of entertainment. This confers on them a second quality as a historical source: one of cultural history. The digital revolution facilitates the indexing of these fictional images and their location. It simplifies the use of editing tools for their hybridisation in multimedia productions. It makes dialogue with professionals more fluid so that these realistic images can be reused for new public purposes. Could they thereby find new value in the heritage movement and in the search for roots that characterise our globalised and ever-changing societies? Could this new value lie within the frame of scientific knowledge? Or of artistic creation? And besides, for these scientific or artistic endeavours, what are the specific features of the intellectual works that were designed for entertainment purposes and that are based on realistic forms of narration?

Of course, when it comes to knowledge, realistic fiction does not just transcribe reality: it *plays* with it. Producing the realistic images of a work of fiction means playing with the setting, it means choosing fractions of reality and excluding others. Viewing the resulting images then means seeking pleasure in pretending to believe in the reality of these images, without forgetting, of course, that one simply is in a black room or looking at a screen; and in the interplay between an author and the recipient of their work, the former acting with the latter like a cat with a mouse taking him on false leads that look real, before finally delivering the true story of the characters who are, in the end... only imaginary. This quickly summarizes the form of “shared playful pretence” (Schaeffer, 1999, p. 146) that characterises fiction in audio-visual media: agreeing to withhold one’s judgement of reality and rejoicing in the idea that one had all the keys to figure out the

¹ Anthropologically inspired films that exploit the power of fiction for their narrative, such as *Nanook of the North* by R. Flaherty (1922) or *Farrebique* by G. Rouquier (1946) and *Biquefarre* also by G. Rouquier (1983), are discarded here.

solution to the enigma or, at least, that one has all the keys to assess the realism of that solution. This test of realism does not only rely on the skills of the director and actors. The viewer's intertext comes into play as well. The viewer takes advantage of "mimetic primers" (Schaeffer, 2002, n. p.) to use their personal experiences of the world and put them into perspective with the experiences that the characters seem to have. The point being for them to evaluate the "truth", that is the truthfulness and verisimilitude of what they see, and to discuss its accuracy and moral pertinence.

Fictional images are therefore not necessarily a trace of reality, but rather a trace of the work of realism that professionals can produce in a particular environment of technical capabilities and with a certain definition of the audience's expectations in terms of realistic narration, for the benefit of entertainment. It is not excluded that audio-visual fiction borrows from reality but, *a priori*, it cites reality only for convenience: as it can be simpler to be realistic with reality itself, for instance with a scenographic element or an item that is used in a shot without being altered. And since this borrowing from reality is neither signalled nor certified, it is uncertain and dangerous to infer reality from works of fiction.

Any attempt to gain knowledge from fictional images should nonetheless not be ruled out. The pleasure that the viewer of a fiction takes from playing with reality can be the source of yet another form of knowledge when the context of screening is not dedicated to entertainment but rather to video-elicitation in response to the invitation of a researcher in social sciences. This is especially true when the person who is invited to speak after viewing these images maintains a close relationship with the fiction because they share the location, profession or lifestyle of the film's characters. The researcher aims to take advantage of this proximity between the fictional reality and that of the respondent. The idea is to ask the respondent to talk about their personal experience by suggesting that they comment on the actions of the fictional characters when they are in similar situations. It implies playing differently with the virtual aspect of audio-visual media and with the reality of experiences than in the manner of the shared playful pretence that prevails in an entertainment screening. For the researcher, it means attempting to gain access to the meaning that the respondents give to the reality with which their life trajectories are confronted. For viewers, it involves accepting to exchange on this subject and to talk about oneself regarding what is real, in echo with the virtual narrative presented in the film. And if they engage in this investigative relationship, the viewers' pleasure then consists in helping the researcher to answer some questions, in a participative, collaborative science that is particularly attentive to his own situation, which is both singular and part of a collective environment.

It is this technique of video-elicitation that we have recently experimented in the context of an interdisciplinary research project associating Sociology and Cinema, and which we propose to detail here as a way to assess the potential of a public science based on the use of audio-visual fiction archives.

A WAY OF OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGES THAT COME WITH THE IMPOSITION OF THE PROBLEMATIC

The re-use of fictional archive images (and in this case footage from a television series produced in the 1960s) was the driving force in the development of a sociological interview-based survey that used video-elicitation to shed light on what it is like to have the nuclear industry *in one's life*, to deal with the risks that this industry entails when one lives nearby, or even when one works in it (Cesaro &, Fournier, 2015). Here, the use of a technique that elicits speech from viewing images is intended to overcome a well-known difficulty in research. The issue is a fairly classic one in sociology: can all subjects of interest to sociologists be dealt with using interview-based surveys? Bourdieu, Chamboredon and Passeron have made the case that not everything can be investigated with closed questionnaires: especially because when formulating a question and its possible answers so that they are presented to the respondent, one runs the risk of the “imposition of the problematic” (1968, p. 65). They direct the respondent as to the meaning they should give to the question and force them to answer by accepting some of the assumptions made by the researcher. It has been suggested that, given the limitations of the quantitative survey, qualitative research by non-directive interviews offered a deeper understanding of the subject, but this is not necessarily the case for all subjects. The polarization of the public debate on some subjects makes the work of the sociologist all the more complex. They have to deal with statements that can be seen as prevented, interfered with, or corrupted by sharply defined positions that are expressed in an abstract register, and that are sometimes far from the individual's own experience. Examples include talking about French colonialism or the Algerian war, about AIDS or homosexuality, about the forms of criticism of industry in times of unemployment in the name of environmental protection, and so on... The respondent is yet again tempted to answer using terminology that is not their own. These are not specifically those of the researcher this time, but those of the public debate, that is those that public debate has established as legitimate positions, even when they are sharply polarized. The difficulty for the researcher is then to ask himself what insights he has gained from what was said. Is it the concrete references to which the respondent will refer when deciding on their action on the subject? Or only the perception that the actors have of what protects them from an unfair moral judgement that would be made about themselves by a stranger, or by the researcher? Should the sociologist interested in the individual's particular situation resign himself to collecting such abstract statements, formulated in broad categories of the public debate, and can he take them as determinants of the respondent's practical conduct? Or should the researcher instead collect elements of the respondent's actual practices which offer clearer insights into what is truly driving them?

In the case of the nuclear industry and in countries where there exists some contestation on the principle of such a sector (for environmental, economic or pacifist reasons), it is not rare for one who wants to question people in the vicinity of nuclear facilities about the relationship that they have with their area of residence to face hesitation in the answers that they give: are they allowed to speak freely about it or is it best that they

remain silent? Such silence may indeed be justified when they work in these facilities and when their employer has asked them not to talk about it with the public (because of military and industrial secrecy or security secrecy against malevolence...). However, it may also be that the respondent is never quite sure whom they are talking to, thinking that the person that they face is probably pro-nuclear or anti-nuclear and is going to judge them according to what they say. Such a setting forces people to take a stance themselves as either pro- or anti-nuclear because that is how they suspect that the world is split from the interviewer's point of view. Even though they would very much like to continue working in the nuclear industry provided it were organized differently. Even though they would like to see the end of nuclear power in their vicinity to be able to engage at a lower cost, that is without moving, in new activities which they like but which are incompatible with this industrial presence.

The polarization of the public debate on nuclear power thereby requires us to look for solutions based on ethnography. It is indeed necessary to immerse oneself in the situation of the actors to avoid statements whose basis is not clear: an analysis of the current life situation of the respondent, or an interpretation of the investigative relationship with the researcher? Nevertheless, *in situ* observation is not always possible on such a subject. It is, however, for work in the nuclear industry, especially for low-skilled work (as in maintenance, Fournier, 2012) and for highly skilled work². It is more or less the same for research on the residential location of workers near nuclear facilities (Girard, 2009). It is, however, much less straightforward, if not impossible, in the case of long-term ordinary family life, as it would require a tremendous effort to gain access to an only very partial knowledge.

A COLLABORATIVE EXPERIENCE WITH THE RESPONDENTS

The discovery of a soap opera for the public television in the archives of the French National Audiovisual Institute, named *Les Atomistes* (Keigel, 1968), provided an alternative idea. Shot in a French nuclear centre, it depicts the work of a team of researchers and technicians in the nuclear sector. Could showing images from this film to workers employed in this sector serve as a support for interviews on their life experiences in this technical and managerial framework and in the area where it was set? The accounts collected from this initiative prove to be surprisingly concrete and precise on some practices. They are far from the stereotypical statements or the silence behind which the respondents often fall on such a controversial subject. These results provide the opportunity to ask ourselves what video-elicitation, aside from the techniques of photo-elicitation that Collier and Collier introduced to anthropology using snapshots taken during surveys (1967), can bring to sociological investigation to escape the risk for researchers of imposing a problematic. It provides an opportunity to see what kind of changes the use of fictional

² Passivlter, Science and Technology programme studies underway on the organisation of a multidisciplinary team of researchers to address an environmental health issue that ought to be anticipated in the development of a large research facility.

images makes when inviting respondents to participate in research and to stimulate them to speak at a personal level, freed from the schematic discourse on the subject of nuclear energy. Fiction appears to have several advantages that make the questions of the sociologist understandable and relevant to the respondent and encourage the latter to work in collaboration with the sociologist.

The soap opera *Les Atomistes* (Keigel, 1968), directed by Leonard Keigel at the request of the public television and aired in 13-minute episodes between 7:45 and 8:00 p.m. in February and March 1968 presents the adventures of a group of scientists and technicians working on a research project using radioactivity for civilian purposes that aims at creating a material with new scientific properties. This short series which was co-produced by Office de Radiodiffusion Télévision Française (ORTF) and Paris-Cité Production lies at the crossroads between a very distinctive form of entertainment (the novelistic soap opera preceding the evening news), and a very serious subject (nuclear power at the peak of the Cold War). By using this soap opera as a research medium, the aim was to offer respondents a chance to work together with the researcher who seeks help in determining the relevance of the images in the film, their veracity as well as the flaws and gaps in the narrative. Through a partnership involving a sociologist and a film researcher, we developed a support film for video-elicitation based on the 26 episodes of the soap opera, representing in total five hours of fictional footage. It would have been impossible to show everything to the people interviewed in the survey. It was necessary to choose a few subjects according to the interests of the researcher. Many images were undoubtedly unrealistic. However, there were still very precise images of particular places and some work scenes and interactions at work. And even though the soap opera dates back to the 1960s, these seemed very accurate to the sociologist who conducted participating observational studies of this particular work universe in the 1980s and 1990s. Hence, we proceeded to adapt and re-edit excerpts from the series, bringing together several sequences from the various episodes to obtain a 20-minute film that keeps a coherent narrative, using the images and voices of the 1960s but in line with the pace of television in the 2000s, notably by using ellipses that liven up the narrative. In doing so, we tried as much as possible to set aside the images of the series that were the most unlikely or fanciful. These departures from the truth of the industry's labour were not a problem in a television soap opera for the general public. They were, however, likely to discredit our request for help from viewers who were chosen to judge the truth value of these supposedly realistic images, based on their personal experience. We then conducted interviews with people whom we asked to "come and help us" determine the realism of the film. We would first let them watch it before talking with us, then exchange with them and, at the end of the interview, we would watch it again together to dwell on one or more moments that they would not have thought of mentioning although it made them think of something useful for our investigation on the links between the nuclear sites and the areas in which they were located. And it worked.

First of all, the image-based video-elicitation scheme is a good pretext to overcome some of the respondents' concerns regarding an interaction that they fear would

be annoying, or even embarrassing, with someone they do not know and whom they find difficult to identify, whose intentions they find difficult to understand, and whose judgment they sometimes dread. As a matter of fact, by asking them for help in what we portray as a game involving deciphering images, we are playing on the curiosity of people who are wondering what we could be showing them (as no one has heard about the soap opera that has never been rebroadcasted), whether they work at the nuclear plant or not. What then appears to be expert work on the images is “risk-free” for them because they are totally “questionable”: the fictional narrative of a television soap opera is unrealistic by definition. No one would be surprised by it. No one would be hurt if it were to be proven. On the other hand, respondents may want to point out what is quite realistic about this or that point, a piece of information that is of primary importance to a researcher who is struggling to adapt to the sector.

Then, this device of video-elicitation based on fictional images allows one to have access to a specific type of speech including accounts of practices that echo the actions represented in the fiction without being reduced to a repertoire of anecdotes that the person is accustomed to phrasing as edifying narratives for particular occasions (such as the education of one’s children or the welcoming of a new colleague at work). These words regarding ordinary practices that are of interest to the researcher - these observations of common and everyday practices that the researcher delegates to the interviewee - naturally echo what the film depicts. But they also lead to evoke what is not present in the film: the researcher can in this way express his regret that such an element is not mentioned in the extracts, and the person responds by detailing their singular practice on this missing point without feeling embarrassed to deliver elements on their personal life that are not summarised by broad, abstract categories, but that rather remain close to sensory experience. The work of fiction thus works as a sort of filmed portrait of the respondent, which they are shown and asked to rectify, complete and comment on, making it clear to the researcher that they regularly carry out such action, and much more rarely such other action in their ordinary life. The soap opera thereby serves as a device for indirect self-confrontation³. In a way, it is an observation of oneself which gives the respondent the place of the observer, leading them to question the data and allowing them to interpret in their way the meaning that the images convey. The image provokes the elicitation of a discourse that will redefine the meaning of its representation by successive approximations between the filmmaker and the one being filmed.

Isn’t there a contradiction in hoping to attenuate the imposition effect using a video elicitation device that gives the spectator a lot of footage while the researcher chooses the images that he decides to show him, or at least selects them from a limited but larger pool? Didn’t we force people to talk about certain subjects by having them watch a 20-minute film? And didn’t we force them to leave others aside because they are not in the film? It seems to us that we avoided this risk with our interview guide, which listed both what could be brought up because it was in the film from the 1960s, and what could be brought up given the astonishment we showed at it being absent from the film.

³ On classic filmic self-confrontation, see Theureau (2010).

In this regard, we asked the respondent whether this absence was due, in his view, to the inattention of the director of the series to a loaded question, or if it reflected the fact that the question was not as crucial for the “real” social actors as well. And the responses of the respondents on these two types of questions were equally common. Under these conditions, one can consider that the repertoire of films that can be used for research through video-elicitation is vast, limited only by the presence of overly fanciful images that would ruin the legitimacy of asking for the respondent’s discernment to “tell the truth” from the film archive.

A GAME WITH IDENTIFICATION IN FICTION

Naturally, audio-visual fiction inherits from works of drama the ability to foster identification. Yet the researcher’s participation in the interview process produces a kind of rupture, that is, the *Verfremdungseffekt* that Brecht (2000) describes, a distancing effect that helps avoid a simple catharsis and encourages the viewer to reflect on themselves. It maintains the viewer’s critical awareness of the reality that the film shows. It questions the viewer. Furthermore, as animated and dialogued images are undeniably polysemic, it reflects each viewer’s singularity as a spectator. It guides each viewer to the legitimate expression of an intertext, that is to say, of a context of existence that gives meaning to their reception of the film. And it is precisely this expression that the ethnographic sociologist is looking for. The very nature of filmic writing, with the use of ellipses, stimulates this personal expression by regularly bringing back the viewer-respondent’s experience to their mind. Ellipsis is indeed useful in cinema both because it saves the exposure time that a novel can afford and because it maintains the viewer’s attention. It boosts the spectator’s cognitive activity, as it prompts him to envision what has happened, that is what can have happened between the two juxtaposed scenes. Viewers are made alert to look for confirmations of what they think happened in the interval of the ellipse and, in case of clues contradicting their prediction, they gather elements to reconstitute their understanding. To build these hypotheses, they naturally use their knowledge of the grammar of fiction, literary or audio-visual works, acquired in their experience as a reader and viewer. This knowledge is used to rule out some hypotheses as either too complicated for a film or, on the contrary, too obvious to solve the conundrum at such an early stage of the film. But above all, the viewer uses what they believe they know about the world presented in the series to discard certain hypotheses and retain others as plausible. This is especially true when this world is close to their own, whether socially or professionally. And it is precisely the recollection of this practical awareness (Giddens, 1987), of this experiential knowledge that the researcher wants to collect and hear being discussed in the interview, through the questions that the situation presented in the film raises for the actor-viewer-respondent.

With video-elicitation based on fictional images, the interviewer associates the social actors with the research in a different way. The researcher abandons his dominant position of expert. He first asks the respondent for help in qualifying the selected images,

of which he claims to know little about their degree of realism. He acknowledges that the respondent can judge and has thorough expertise in the domain, which comes from their direct experience of this world. It is not the respondent who is questioned but the image. And when faced with it, the respondent is both free in his perception and assured that the researcher is paying attention to him. Consequently, during the interview, when talking about his experience as a draftsman in a design office involved in projects on military matters, a retired respondent who appeared to be very reserved in his relationship with the researcher exclaimed about the series: “It’s all cinema, isn’t it!”. This outburst, which seems to discredit the research device fits in perfectly with the repertoires that the respondent is allowed to use when confronted with the images that the researcher shows him. The distinctive features of these images are that they include both truth and falsehood, with scenes shot in places that the respondent recognises, with staff who have become background actors for the occasion, which gives the viewer an even stronger feeling of continuity between fiction and reality. He can set aside some images as toned down. This is what he is doing here. As a matter of fact, he went on to mention a relational situation that he has experienced and which is nevertheless very close to the one presented in the series, by talking about the harsh nature of his work colleagues, which is on a par with that of the film characters. For him, distancing himself from the film is indeed a way of solemnly asserting the very tense nature of the work situations he has experienced himself: ones with renowned chief engineers, very determined and authoritarian and caught up in endless rivalries just like in the series, from which he eventually ended up paying the price by finding himself “side-lined”, “pushed aside” at some point in his career! The reference to the soap opera thus makes it possible, whilst diverging from it, for the respondent to ask to be taken seriously when underlining and emphasizing aspects of the experience that would otherwise undoubtedly have been hushed up, in order to rectify an image judged not only as inaccurate but also as unfair.

The use of fictional images as a support for the interview also frees the respondent from the image of utmost seriousness that is usually associated with science. As a matter of fact, the beginning of the projection with a respondent, a retired nurse from the nuclear site, demonstrated the kind of discomfort that is often induced by the investigative relationship with the sociologist. The request made by the sociologist is not always clearly related to a social setting already experienced by the respondent. In this case, the respondent’s curiosity overturned her habits of self-reserve and discretion. One can see it by how the fear of misunderstanding was first revealed and then dissipated in the interview. In the first few minutes of the screening, the respondent asked: “Are those actors?” (Fournier, personal interview, July 13, 2015). The researcher answered positively, at which point the respondent went on to say: “because I thought [that for real engineers and technicians] they’re playing well” (Fournier, personal interview, July 13, 2015). She was finding it hard to believe that the interviewer was showing her a simple fictional novel with actors. And she needed to have this confirmed as if to confirm that it is indeed about her own experience, however futile it may seem to her, that they wanted to talk to her about, and not only about the experience of her leaders and their technical achievements.

As they are focused on the respondent's working world, the images of the soap opera serve to confirm what is initially surprising: that is, the researcher's interest in ordinary practices that the respondent may consider insignificant. From then on, the interviewee can laugh, make fun of some of the images, whereas she would probably not want to laugh at the researcher, especially if the latter belongs to a social world superior to her own. When the interviewer pointed out to the respondent that a specific shot in the film depicts beautiful accommodation built chiefly for nuclear workers, she did not hesitate to comment: "yes. But then again, these are not bad. Because there are some that...", belying the belief that these homes are a privilege that she perceives in the words of the researcher (Fournier, personal interview, July 13, 2015).

The image itself has no power to reduce the social distance between the researcher and the respondent that classically makes their relationship complex. However, the meaning of the image depends on the context in which one watches it and, in this case, its use in a sociological investigation device provides the respondent with sufficient information to give a different meaning to the relationship of dominance that is usually established with the researcher. It makes it shift towards a relationship of assistance and co-production of understanding in complex situations beyond the simple delivery of information in response to a request.

PUBLIC SCIENCE AND PUBLIC ART

This last part deals with what we propose to call public science after what M. Burawoy calls *public sociology* (2005). That is to say, a science that is public in its stakes, public in its appropriation, but also public in its modes of collaborative production which are intended to involve its participants with great care, as well as public in its modes of expression, whose use of language does not set apart natural language and aims at sharing gains in understanding. Furthermore, one can see in video-elicitation from fictional images an investigative device that is likely to be of genuine interest to other fields than social science research. For instance, the members of a Works Council may use it as a way to write out the social history of their company on the occasion of an anniversary, a restructuring plan or even a closure, in the same vein that led the Works Council of the Sanofi site of Romainville to turn to a writer, Sylvain Rossignol, to write the book *Notre usine est un roman* when the factory closed its doors (2009). Likewise, communities could find new ways to question their elected representatives' long-term development efforts if they had access to fictional images shot in their area and if these were shown to them. This endeavour to promote the value of fiction archives, which can be shared more intuitively than paper archives, could be the source of a new heritage movement concerning the urban landscape, in the same way that today information panels for tourists can be found near places of cultural importance and often display an old photograph of the place to show what remains and what has changed over time through human activity as well as practices that are no longer in use. Only this time, it is not only the place and landscape that become subjects of discussion. It is not only the subject of the ordinary

practice, preserved and put into context by an ecomuseum. It is human action in society as captured by a director for an entertainment project, passing through the exploration of the human soul and seeking echoes in the viewer's curiosity and experience, all the way to the making of a singular reality... in film and pixels.

These archives that are augmented in a way by being put into perspective with the comments of ordinary experts such as the social actors who are familiar with the place, whose testimonies are incidentally stimulated by these video images and then delivered by the eliciting-researcher, could be watched on smartphones by entering QR-codes, via virtual alerts when passing by kiosks, or even through alerts on social media. This could elevate these materials from a public science status to a public art status based on the status of film or television images. Such initiatives would push further a movement already initiated by places like the Château d'If with regard to the novel by Alexandre Dumas, the Musée de la Gendarmerie in Saint-Tropez with regard to films directed by Jean Girault, or the Villa Malaparte in Capri with regard to Jean-Luc Godard. Conversely, the contemplative practice that is associated with "private" art would be joined by forms of civic engagement, ranging from raising awareness about its contents to the expression of personal commentary on fiction about its realistic dimension when one approaches the Other from an artist's vantage point, here amplified and shared with ordinary-expert actors.

Under these conditions, the public science of video-elicitation seems to mediate a new form of public art, alongside institutions for the conservation and availability of fiction archives, in order to provide the means for new forms of artistic expression that find favour with a public that is familiar with new technologies and committed to the quest for – or production of - improbable authenticity.

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