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## SOME NEW TRENDS IN VISUAL ANTHROPOLOGY

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The Commission on Visual Anthropology has been in existence for about five years and in this relatively short time we succeeded in establishing the only existing world-wide network linking anthropologists, filmmakers and communication specialists. Our publication record is also reasonably good. The Commission has also contributed to a variety of meetings, festivals and symposia in many countries. The Commission however is a service association and its activities can only reflect professional endeavours taking place in a large number of institutions in many countries. And recently professional activities and contributions have been many and of high quality. In this context I would like to attempt a summary presentation of recent developments in our subdiscipline taking as a baseline the Resolution on Visual Anthropology drawn by Jean Rouch and Paul Hockings at the IX<sup>th</sup> ICAES. Briefly, the issues raised relate to what has happened in the field of visual anthropology since 1973. What progress if any has been accomplished for each of the six recommendations contained in the 1973 Resolution? What differences can we observe in accomplishments in the West and in non-western countries including the Fourth World? What has been the impact of modern technologies on our field of activity?

The first point of the 1973 Resolution concerned the initiation of a world-wide filming program to provide a systematic sample of "traditional" cultures. To the best of our knowledge no such program has been successfully established and funded on a continuous basis. In 1976 Alan Lomax sponsored by the Wennergren Foundation did formulate the DECADE project which included a world-wide sample of cultures selected on the basis of anthropological criteria. DECADE however was never funded and had to be shelved. In the mid-seventies the National Anthropological Film Center was established at the Smithsonian with the aim of assembling visual ethnographies in several culture areas world-wide. In practice, location filming was not necessarily related anthropological field work, and site selection was done on an ad hoc basis with no reference to a wider sampling strategy. The recording activities of the NAFC were short lived and the institution soon acquired narrowly archival functions. Similarly most of the other ethnographic film making agencies in the West (Institut für den Wissenschaftli-

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chen Film, CNRS-Audiovisuel, etc) seem to have followed a flexible ad hoc policy of site selection excluding a programmatic, systematic sampling strategy on a planetary scale. In sum, the first item of the 1973 resolution has not find application.

The second item of the 1973 resolution concerns the location, collection, preservation and indexing of existing ethnographic film records. Available information indicates that such archival endeavours are under way in many institutions in both western and non-western countries. No doubt much material of ethnographic value is still in need of retrieval. Responsibility here is institutional and national. Access to archived material however is still fraught with difficulties. Very few film collections have been transferred on video tape, a highly necessary process that will enormously facilitate both access and diffusion. This we consider a relatively inexpensive, urgent and highly necessary task. Further, catalogues of institutional holdings, when available, often lack in descriptive detail this making data identification very difficult. Two urgent tasks lay ahead: first the establishment of an international ethnographic coding system for ethnographic film possibly following Murdoch's "Outline of Cultural Materials" numeric order, second the publication of an international catalogue of institutional ethnographic film catalogues. This will certainly facilitate access to data.

The third item of the 1973 resolution concerns international distribution. In only three regions distribution seems well organized, that is the UK, the Nordic countries and particularly North America which has several efficient distribution networks with vast holdings. In most other western countries distribution suffers from a variety of limitations. However it is between the First and Third Worlds that circulation of ethnographic films seems most restricted. Films made by western producers are rarely seen in the countries where they were made and there are no attempts o deposit video copies of the original footage in local institutions. Further, at a time when people in the urban Third World with access to local television are increasingly curious about different life styles, they are offered very little of ethnographic value that may counterbalance Hollywood. Numerous requests from Third World universities and television networks have been expressed concerning loans and programming of ethnographic films. As far as I know there is no institution with broad international responsibilities to promote the distribution and use of ethnographic films in the Third World. Conversely ethnographic films ad essentially video productions produced in the Third World find no easy outlets in the First World. Clearly something should be done to improve this sad situation.

The fourth item of the 1973 refers to the need to provide training to both professioenal field workers and the local people being filmed. There, considerable progress has been accomplished. Training centers have been established in Paris, Los Angeles, New York and Manchester. All four schools are concerned with anthropological field methods and their application to the filming context. Admittedly moset of the students are nationals. This again raises the questi-

on of training potential Third World candidates. An interesting alternative is offered by VARAN, a Paris based institutions specializing in the training of mostly non-French students. Further, VARAN organizes training seminars in foreign countries, particularly in the Third World. To my knowledge VARAN is a unique institution, unfortunately instruction is purely technical and seems to exclude a broader anthropological input. Another institution interested to promote video training of indigenous video producers is the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs based in Copenhagen. IWGIA is collaborating with ACACIA productions in Britain in setting video training centers in various indigenous communities. In sum, although considerable progress has been achieved in the West since 1973, no comparable developments have taken place in the Third World.

The fifth point in the 1973 Resolution is crucially important. It concerns the ask of establishing world-wide regional data centers where archiving, research, production, distribution and training would be carried out, with special attention to the needs of the developing nations. This recommendation has important political-ideological implications. Consistently in the past it is western anthropologists who have pointed their cameras at the native peoples. In this process quite often it is the anthropologists who speaks on behalf of the native community. In a sense this is almost inevitable since the anthropological documentary is produced for distribution in the West. However there are indications pointing to a desire to reverse this trend. Several agencies and interest groups in Third World nations have expressed recently serious interest in establishing national Visual Anthropology centers or nationally significant production and archival projects. It is possible here to mention China, India, Brazil, several West African nations, Madagascar, Vanuatu, etc. The advantages seen by the local institutions are obvious. They reside in the substitution of a national or more narrowly local perspective to the ideological biases inherent in western productions. The new productions will be in the national interest. Yet although many good intentions are expressed publicly and privately, few tangible results have been achieved to date. It is as if local institutions are in constant need of foreign encouragement. Who is going to take the initiative for this?

The last recommendation concerns the establishment of an international commission to coordinate the above mentioned tasks. This commission has been established within the IUAES. The commission has requested funding from several Canadian and international bodies. Practically all our grant applications have been rejected. Government bureaucrats express difficulties in understanding what visual anthropology is about. There are always some other priorities. Obviously visual anthropology is still perceived as a marginal discipline.

In sum, it is establishment of the new training centers in the West and the increasing interest in our subdiscipline expressed by many Third World countries that constitute the most striking new

trends. Of course that is not all. In Europe during the last few years Visual Anthropology activities have multiplied with astonishing success: film festivals, seminars and workshops and training sessions follow each other in rapid succession. It may be difficult or impossible to analyse where, when exactly and how the new interest emerged although the old centers in Paris, Göttingen and Florence may have played initially an important role. The contagion spread quickly to other countries and cities. Audiences still seem small and there is a tendency for the same practitioners to meet in different places. Our discipline however has acquired substantial visibility in Europe and presently enjoys some institutional support. East European countries seem to follow the trend, the Estonian festival is going to become an annual event and in November 1988 a new seminar has taken place in Poland. In North America there are no similar developments, public manifestations seem limited to the Margaret Mead Film Festival and the annual meetings of the AAA.

I would like now to briefly indicate two relatively new areas of activity where visual anthropologists could possibly employ their knowledge and skills. The first is development communication, an ill defined sector comprising many disparate elements in reference to Third World nations and Fourth World Groups, the second concerns the storage and transfer of cultural materials with electronic technology in First World institutions.

Development communication arises from the need to accelerate the circulation of information related to a variety of issues and objectives among individuals in a given community, among local communities and at the level of the newly formed nation states. This need is rooted in the basic fact that efficient communications are at the foundation of modernity and the key to rapid change in technology, socio-political organization and education. Development communication is not about building roads and the laying of railway tracks, it concerns the dissemination of knowledge with the help of advanced technologies, mostly electronic, and the establishment of strategies, systems and structures for the massive diffusion of information. The thrust is in the direction of sectorial and planned social change, quite often at the community level but by no means consistently so. Development communication is an effort to brake the intellectual isolation of the community or the nation, almost always it involves the active participation of the people or government agents and institutions.

The objective of different development communication projects can be extremely varied. For instance, the Canadian International Development Agency has sponsored close to 20 such projects in Africa, South and Southeast Asia and Latin America. Funding is substantial, it ranges from a low of \$ 200,000 to over \$ 18 million per individual project. The areas covered are numerous:

- communication support activities in water supply and sanitation (Ghana)

- communications support activities in agriculture, community projects and non-formal education (Francophone Africa)
- media training: TV, radio (Algeria, Zaire, Brazil, South Asia, India, Pakistan, Thailand)
- distance education (Argentina, Brazil, Indonesia)
- social awareness (South Asia)
- communication support activities in health (Pakistan)
- communication support in primary education (Pakistan)
- communication support in community development (Third World)

Most projects emphasize the active participation of women in both media training and development activities. Several projects find application at the grassroots level. Here are a few examples:

- A project in Nepal is taking place in the Surkhet market area and aims to improve communication between the District Women Development Service and the Centre in Kathmandu, focusing on community participation. Local women are being trained in the use of video as a means to express their own needs in order to promote discussion in the village and communicate with decision-makers in Kathmandu. This constitutes a local adaptation of the famous "Fogo process" developed by the National Film Board of Canada in Newfoundland as part of the "Challenge for Change" program.
- In several South Asian countries special development broadcasting units are being established to enable media to sensitize populations to some of the most important development issues in the region: women in development, urbanization and environmental considerations in economic growth, etc.
- In Pakistan a local communications support program intends to promote an awareness of the importance of primary education and to minimize the risk of having traditional parental and community attitudes prevent girls in rural areas from attending school. This motivational campaign promoting primary education through mass media will involve the training of nearly 18,000 community activists.

Briefly, development communication projects seem to follow two formats. In the case programs are generated by the community and then diffused to other communities or up to higher echelons, in the second a regional or national program is projected from above down to the community where it finds application. Remarkably enough most projects concern vitally important issues that may strike at the roots of local culture, or they may be related to important aspects of individual or collective well being. Now the suggestion I would like to make is that a good number of development communication projects should benefit from a visual anthropology input. First any program of social change has to take into consideration the local cultural context. The proposed innovation has to be adapted to or articulated around existing cultural constraints. A good analytic knowledge of the culture is necessary prior

to experiments. And who better than the anthropologist commands such a knowledge? Further, during the active innovation phase, precisely when the new program is presented and introduced in the target community, continuous observations have to be made on audience reactions. These observations have to be carried in a holistic perspective with the aim to reach an assessment of project impact on the dynamic of the local culture as a globality. Again, it seems that the anthropologist is the only professional able to integrate such data. And since many development communication projects concern audio-visual programs, visual anthropologists seem ideally prepared to participate at several levels of project conceptualization, production, implementation and impact assessment. Visual anthropologists don't need to remain in the position of observers, they should become active agents in development communication projects. This is the basic recommendation made by Dr. Binod Agrawal (Indian Space Research Organization — Ahmedabad) in several recent publications, a recommendation I entirely support.

A second new trend of interest to our discipline concerns the establishment of high tech facilities for the collection, storage, retrieval and multiple use of cultural materials of all formats and very definitely including audio-visuals. The intention is to create computerized data banks containing cultural materials concerning particular regions or whole nations. Of course the Domesday project in Britain immediately comes to mind. I would like here to mention a different project entitled SIULLEQ, presently developed mainly by Denmark's Radio. SIULLEQ is a multimedia database, the aim of which is to describe Greenland, the country, its people, history and culture. The system is designed to cater for users in schools, libraries and museums in Denmark and Greenland. The intention is to include in the databank a very large quantity of cultural data for possible use in curriculum development. Now it is our assumption that such a database, no matter how efficient the delivery system, cannot be used easily for pedagogical purposes. The reason is simple, in pedagogy not only data as such but the relationships between different classes of data have to be grasped by the learner. And here the computer is of limited help. For curriculum purposes the cultural data have to be organized around central themes comprising different classes of materials in integrated arrangements. And this is where the visual anthropologist has a role to play. His task is to select the themes, integrate audio-visuals with other data and prepare the programs for delivery. It is probable that other countries will follow the example set by Denmark. It has been recently suggested that similar databanks should be established throughout Europe, facilitating access to the common European cultural heritage and enhancing the feeling of European citizenship. Again visual anthropologists should be able to make important contributions to these exciting projects.

What concluding remarks can one present on the state of visual anthropology today? The wider public still considers the production of anthropological documentaries as the exclusive aim of our sub-discipline. This is easy to understand since many documentaries

produced with the collaboration of anthropologists are aired on television and receive good ratings. Indeed there are encouraging signs for this particular format. It seems that in Europe the lean years are over; in France Jean Paul Colley has diffused recently a group of films on channel 7 and there are many new films planned in Britain by Granada, BBC and Channel Four. Again the British lead the way. We know of no comparable prospects in North America where the documentary, anthropological or not is still out of favor.

Strangely enough visual anthropology is basically an academic discipline yet there are very few purely research projects in the confines of our discipline. It seems that the initial efforts of Margaret Mead in Bali and later those of Sol Worth have very few followers among us. Ethnographic films are highly ideological productions and it was to be expected that Bill Nichols' recent analyses would have inspired further analytic speculation. Apparently this has not been the case with the possible exception of a new film project, "Nanook and his brothers" which aims at the decoding of the various ideologies behind the innumerable films (ethnographic, documentaries and fiction) related to the Eskimos. And very few anthropologists have followed Bateson's lead in film analyses. To the best of my knowledge the vast film archives at the Smithsonian and in Göttingen are only very rarely used for research purposes. Further, some of the native communities we have studied in the past have been deeply affected by the media. In practically all northern Canadian households today the Eskimos watch one of several TV channels, listen to community radio, remain in contact with trappers on the two-way radios, enjoy scarie movies on the VCR or simply listen to cassette tapes. To what degree this new media environment has affected the style of interpersonal relations and the forms of symbolic integration? No anthropologists has dared investigate these issues. Let us hope that at least a few among us will be interested to study, as anthropologists, the profound effects of the modern media at the community level.

## NOVE USMERITVE V VIZUALNI ANTROPOLOGIJI

Komisija za Vizualno antropologijo je bila ustanovljena pred 5 leti pri Mednarodni uniji antropoloških in etnoloških znanosti (IUAES). Do danes ji je uspelo vzpostaviti svetovno mrežo antropologov, etnologov, filmskih delavcev in komunikologov. Na spisku Komisije je več kot 1000 članov v 75 deželah. Predsednik komisije A. Balikci v svojem članku okvirno predstavlja razvoj vizualne antropologije glede na resolucijo o vizualni antropologiji, ki so jo sprejeli leta 1973 v Chicagu na IX. Mednarodnem kongresu IUAES.

Prva točka resolucije je predlagala začetek svetovnega programa filmskega snemanja, ki bi sistematično beležil »tradicionalne« kulture. Ta točka ni bila realizirana. Prihajalo je le do ad hoc snemanj v manjšem obsegu in trajanju.

Druga točka resolucije je predlagala evidentiranje, zbiranje, čuvanje in katalogiziranje obstoječih filmskih zapisov. Te naloge se izvajajo po vsem svetu na nacionalni in institucionalni ravni. Vendar je še vedno otežkočen dostop do arhiviranih materialov. Kažeta se dve glavni nalogi: ureditev mednarodnega kodnega sistema za popis etnografskih filmov in objave mednarodnega kataloga institucionalnih katalogov.

Tretja točka resolucije zadeva mednarodno distribucijo. Le-ta je dobro organizirana le v treh večjih regijah: v Združenem kraljestvu, v Skandinaviji in v Severni Ameriki. Ovirano je kroženje filmske dokumentacije med zahodnimi deželami in tretjim svetom. Filmi zahodnih producentov so redko predvajani v deželah, kjer so bili posneti. Tudi video produkcija tretjega sveta redko zaide v zahodne dežele.

Četrta točka resolucije se nanaša na usposabljanje profesionalnih terenskih delavcev. Na tem področju je bil dosežen znaten napredek. Ustanovljeni so bili učni centri v Parizu, Los Angelesu, New Yorku in Manchesteru. Vse štiri omenjene šole skrbijo za prenašanje antropoloških raziskovalnih metod v filmsko proizvodnjo. Na žalost v tretjem svetu ne beležimo podobnega napredka.

Peta točka resolucije 1973 je bistvenega pomena. Zadeva ustanovitev svetovnih regionalnih centrov za arhiviranje, raziskovanje, proizvodnjo in usposabljanje, ki bi bili posebno dejavni v deželah v razvoju. To priporočilo ima pomembno politično-ideološko vsebino. V preteklosti so bili zahodni antropologi tisti, ki so govorili v imenu kultur tretjega sveta. Zdaj pa bi se ta usmeritev obrnila. V zvezi s to pobudo je zlasti potrebno omeniti Kitajsko, Indijo, Brazilijo in države zahodne Afrike.

Zadnja točka resolucije zadeva ustanovitev mednarodne komisije za koordinacijo, kar je bilo uresničeno z ustanovitvijo že omenjene komisije pri IUAES.

Na splošno je v svetu močno poraslo zanimanje za vizualno antropologijo. Prednjači Evropa s številnimi festivali, seminarji, tečaji, itd. Izoblikovali sta se dve novi področji dejavnosti. Prvo so razvojne komunikacije. Moderna družba rabi pomoč vrhunske tehnologije za razširjanje informacij. Pri tem igrajo avdiovizualni programi pomembno vlogo. Drugo novo področje je uvažanje vrhunske tehnologije za zbiranje, shranjevanje in vsestransko uporabo avdiovizualnih materialov. Glavni namen tega je ustanavljanje regionalnih ali nacionalnih bank podatkov. Na evropski ravni bi npr. tak regionalni center omogočal dostop do informacij o skupni evropski kulturni dediščini in s tem pospeševal občutek državljanstva Evrope.