Reflections on academic video

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Abstract

As academics we study, research and teach audiovisual media, yet rarely disseminate and mediate through it. Today, developments in production technologies have enabled academic researchers to create videos and mediate audiovisually. In academia it is taken for granted that everyone can write a text. Is it now time to assume that everyone can make a video essay? Using the online journal of academic videos Audiovisual Thinking *and the videos published in it as a case study, this article seeks to reflect on the emergence and legacy of academic audiovisual dissemination. Anchoring academic video and audiovisual dissemination of knowledge in two critical traditions, documentary theory and semiotics, we will argue that academic video is in fact already present in a variety of academic disciplines, and that academic audiovisual essays are bringing trends and developments that have long been part of academic discourse to their logical conclusion.*

Keywords: Audiovisual essays, online journal of academic video, convergence.

Introduction

Audiovisual Thinking (www.audiovisualthinking.org) is an online journal about audiovisuality, communication and media. It is the first journal in the world where *all* dissemination of research results and academic work – including papers, articles and editorials – occurs through audiovisual means, or as academic video. International in scope and multidisciplinary in approach, the journal works across national borders, institutions and disciplines. The journal's rationale is quite simple: academic researchers and teachers study and teach audiovisual media, yet rarely conceptualise or disseminate their research and work through it. Previously, creating audiovisual material was the realm only of media professionals, practitioners and the most media and technology-savvy individuals. Today, the development of cheap, efficient and easy to use production tools has enabled academic researchers to create audiovisual media and mediate audiovisually.

In academia it is taken for granted that everyone can write a text. Is it now time to assume that one should be able to make a video essay?

Using *Audiovisual Thinking* and the videos published therein as a case study, this article will explore the development, editorial background, launch and reception of this groundbreaking online journal and reflect on the legacy and challenges of creating and curating academic videos.

The concept of *Audiovisual Thinking* is radical, and the idea of academic video has proved controversial and has polarised the research community. Whilst comments and feedback from the research community on the activities of *Audiovisual Thinking* have been overwhelmingly supportive, enthusiastic and positive, others have dismissed academic video as, at best, ineffectual, impractical and fanciful. This article is an attempt to make the case for academic video and audiovisual essays. It will argue that audiovisual dissemination is already present in many academic disciplines, where it is an acknowledged part of established research methodologies and seen as an effective way of documenting and disseminating research and knowledge. Anchoring academic video in critical theory which deals with disseminating knowledge through audiovisual means, documentary theory and semiotics, we will make the case that academic video takes contemporary thinking about media literacy to its conclusion (Hartley, 2009; Jenkins, 2008b, 2011a; Wesch, 2007), and is a valid way of disseminating and publishing research results and academic work. Moreover, as academic video is an evolving method of dissemination, it is a discourse and form that academics can help shape and establish today.

The case: the academic journal *Audiovisual Thinking*

Audiovisual Thinking was launched at the MeCCSA conference in London in January 2010 and published the first of its biannual issues in July 2010. The title of *Audiovisual Thinking* should be taken literally (or, rather, visually): it is not concerned with writing about audiovisual culture and media, but with using audiovisual means to mediate, articulate and "write" critically in the same audiovisual expression or mode that is being studied.

The aim of the journal is twofold. Firstly, and as described in greater detail later on, the journal attempts to create a framework to encourage experiments with the form of academic video essays, so that this form can develop as a respected, accredited and acknowledged academic discourse and method of delivering and disseminating research results. The journal therefore aims to be a forum where academics can articulate, conceptualise and disseminate their research into audiovisuality and audiovisual culture through the medium of video in a variety of ways, and in this way facilitate discussions, dialogue and collaborations about academic video.[i] Secondly, *Audiovisual Thinking* is a site that curates and provides an exhibition space for academic videos, reviewed and edited by academics and peers. To ensure standards and quality, submissions go through blind peer review (as of October 2011). The editors of the journal are also advised by a board of leading academics and thinkers in the fields of audiovisuality, communication and media: Professor Ib Bondebjerg (Copenhagen University), Professor William Uricchio (MIT), Professor John T Caldwell (UCLA), Professor Lily Diaz (TAIK, Finland) and Senior Lecturer Paul Kerr (London Metropolitan University).

The Research Methodology

The journal was started by, amongst others, the authors of this article and the reflections on the context and challenges of creating and curating academic videos are based on the case study of launching, editing and publishing the

videos of the journal's first three issues. We refer to our research methodology as practice-based research, using an auto-ethnographic approach.

Ethnography is the study of social interactions, practices and events. The study is carried out as fieldwork and the ethnographer observes and participates in the everyday practices of the group of people being studied. The observed social expressions – what people do and say – are described and to some extent interpreted and assigned meanings (Hughes, 1994, Geertz, 2000, Hammersley & Atkins, 1989). In ethnography, we turn ourselves as research instruments towards other groups of people, that are in some ways external, foreign, alien. As researchers we need to break into the practices of the group we study. Conversely, in self-ethnography, we turn our focus and ourselves towards a group of people to which we already belong. Then we need to break out of this group of people and break out of their practices. Thus in auto-ethnography, one turns oneself towards oneself, and observe oneself in a particular role. One of the key differences between ethnography and self/auto-ethnography is the metaphorical direction of movements – as Alvesson has pointed out (1999), ethnography can be seen as breaking into a group, while self/auto-ethnography can be seen as breaking out of a group.

Conceptually, auto-ethnography partly overlaps with the adjacent term practice-based research: the study of (one's own) work practice. The latter is often associated with artistic research, a discipline whose status as scientific research has been debated. Both self- and auto-ethnography have been described and in use for several decades. The term auto-ethnography was coined by Hayano, 1979, and when it comes to "studies of personal nature" (Wall, 2006) it is an established concept (Ellis, 2004; Ellis & Bochner, 2000). According to Reed-Danahay (2001) self- and auto-ethnography is the result of a general shift towards a focus on the personal narrative, influenced by trends towards social practice in social theory (Cohen, 1994; Giddens, 1991), towards social and cultural poetics (Fernandez & Herzfeld, 1998; Lavie et al., 1993), and towards a more reflexive ethnographic writing (Cole, 1992).

The Context: Convergence in theory and practise

Set up to curate and exhibit academic video essays, the online journal *Audiovisual Thinking* is an example of several types of convergence and their effects on theory and practice. Digital convergence has had a profound impact on how and where audiovisual content can be viewed, produced, distributed and accessed, as established by numerous critics and thinkers (Benkler, 2006; Bruns, 2007, 2008; Burgess & Green, 2009; Jenkins, 2006; 2007; 2008a, 2011b; Rheingold, 2000). It has also had an impact on academic disciplines and their *modus operandi*. Convergence takes place on many levels. Henry Jenkins points to five types of convergence: technological, economic, social, cultural and global (2001) and Arild Fetveit adds aesthetic convergence as a sixth dimension (2007). Klaus Bruhn Jensen distinguishes between technological and social aspects of convergence. He lists eight types, and attributes four of them – the convergence of technology, multimedia, networks of distribution and platforms – to digital technology. The other four – industrial practices, consumption of multimedia, aesthetic and cultural convergence – are enabled by digital convergence and are resulting in new social, divergent practices and patterns of consumption (Jensen, 2008).

One of the most exciting aspects of the social and the technological modes of convergence is that they afford new synergies between theory and practice, between genres, production and distribution methods and viewing (plat)forms. These enable and inspire new forms of expression and discourse while creating new opportunities for collaboration across borders, disciplines and methodologies. *Audiovisual Thinking* is at the focal point of an emerging convergence between two well-established, but until recently only loosely

connected practices: that of conducting research and that of producing audiovisual narrative. As the areas of academia and audiovisual production increasingly converge, can moving images disseminate research results and make conceptually complex academic arguments? Recent developments in academic publishing and mediation as well as critical theory suggest that they can.

Bringing the practices of academic and audiovisual production together is not altogether new. One of the founders of modern science, Leonardo da Vinci, moved effortlessly between the two practices. The visual model – be it of atomic nuclei or social hierarchies – is used throughout the sciences. Historically, the natural sciences have been more accustomed to using images than social sciences have, and scientific visualizations of processes, experiments and data have long been prevalent in the natural sciences. However, in these disciplines the visual material is often illustrational and acts as supporting material.

Academic audiovisual mediation and dissemination of research is increasingly accepted and employed in the humanities and social sciences as well. This can be seen in the popularity of recorded lectures on Public Broadcast Service TV channels and their online counterparts, for example, the Danish national broadcaster, DR's lecture series *Danskernes akademi (The Danes' Academy)* as well as on websites like TED.org. Video is also part of most universities' homepages and numerous universities, such as Berkeley, have started their own channels to stream lectures through YouTube. Similarly, recorded interviews with, for example, prominent academic thinkers and practitioners, and audiovisual abstracts of articles are gaining ground. This can be seen on the science series *Universitets-TV* (University TV) in Sweden and, increasingly, academic journals, such as seminar.net, uses videos and recorded abstracts to support written articles. In these examples, however, the word, rather than the visual, remains the primary carrier of meaning.

Recently, examples of academic videos that use the visual as their primary carrier of meaning have appeared online. These are, at least according to *Audiovisual Thinking's* conceptual framework, academic videos. The most famous examples are perhaps Michael Wesche's *Web 2.0 ... The Machine is Us/ing Us,* a video that reflects on the potential and possibilities of digital text (2007); the British documentary-maker Adam Curtis' satirical mini-documentary *The Rise of 'Oh Dear'-ism in Television News* (2009); and the videos on Henry Jenkins' *Confessions of a Aca-fan* that reflect on issues facing current academic thinking, for example *The New Media Literacies: An Introduction* (2008b).[ii]

Academic video essays and documentary theory

What these academic videos have in common is that in intention, form and expression they resemble documentary film, a type of non-fiction film that has been disseminating knowledge since the very creation of film as a medium. Documentary film theory offers interesting insights into the ways in which academic video disseminates and conceptualises knowledge and research findings. Since Grierson's description of documentary as 'the creative treatment of actuality', critics have described and explained what constitutes documentary films and the privileged position reality occupies in these films in a variety of ways, but most agree that documentary films are characterised by their intention - successful or not and (ideologically) biased or not - to inform or increase knowledge about topics, issues and phenomena in the real world (Bondebjerg, 2008; Bruzzi, 2006; Corner, 1996; Nichols, 1991, 1994, 2009; Plantinga, 1997, 2005). This is also the case for academic videos. Intentionality is especially important for Carl Plantinga's theories about what constitutes documentary film. Drawing on speech act theory, he attributes

documentary and its adherence to reality to the intent of the film-maker and a contractual understanding of this between him/her and the film's recipient or audience (Plantinga, 1997, 2005). On the basis of this and inspired by Bill Nichols' documentary genre typography (Op.cit), Plantinga describes three documentary types. Ib Bondebjerg, building on both Plantinga's and Nichols' documentary genres and adding to this a cognitive dimension, operates with four documentary genres: the authoritative documentary, the observational documentary, the poetic-reflexive documentary and the dramatized documentary. Expanding on theories about documentary genre, Bondebjerg attributes specific characteristics to each documentary genre. In addition to its structure; its style and aesthetics; its use of evidence and source material; its narration and intent (Plantinga's "voice"); and its effect on its audience, each documentary has a specific type of theme world as well as a different reference to reality (Op.cit pp. 110-120).

The authoritative documentary and academic video

The authoritative documentary has a particularly long-established tradition of disseminating knowledge to its audience. According to Bondebjerg, the authoritative documentary with its reliance on evidence and documentation (interviews, statistics, and recorded documentation) and typical journalistic authoritative narration speaks with "epistemic authority" and seeks to explain and/or analyse problems or issues of common interest to the community within which it exists (Ibid. pp110-112). This documentary genre is often associated with the television documentary about history, science, current affairs and economics, culture etc. We can relate video essays submitted to the journal *Audiovisual Thinking* with this genre. Philip Schlesinger and Charlotte Waelde's video essay *Performers on the Edge* (2011) is about the findings of a two-year research project on the precarious work situation of dancers and musicians in the UK, presenting the current economic reality of the creative industries very effectively. Focusing on dance and music, this academic video explores whether the present copyright regime adequately addresses the production of experiential works in which performance plays a major role. On the same subject, but from a different perspective and drawing on the sociology of subcultures, Simon Lindgren's video essay *Geek Revenue* (2011) explores the relationship between the cultural industries and the increasingly active and tech-savvy audiences of the 21st century and asks, "Is there always a clear-cut division between capitalist media institutions on the one side and a pirating audience on the other? What space is there for remix culture and other potentially copyright infringing activities in the discourse of digital content monetization?"

The observational documentary and academic video

The observational documentary's relationship to reality is epistemologically open, in that its purpose is to observe and document social realities and ethnographical constellations in order to uncover how these work and play out. Academic disciplines like anthropology and ethnology have therefore traditionally used observational documentary as part of their scientific projects and this tradition carries on today, as evidenced in the discipline Visual Anthropology. But other academic videos using the observational form very often differ from the traditional observational documentary, which has the lived reality of people, communities, organisations and institutions as its subjects and subject matter. The observational academic videos of *Audiovisual Thinking* have media practices and processes as their subject. In this way, however, they are in line with aspects of the traditional observational documentary, such as French cinema verité, which stated that the observed reality had to be dealt with in a reflexive way, including the way the film was made and how the participants reacted to the film. These academic essays are also in line with the more subjective observational documentary which became

dominant in the 1990s (Bondebjerg, 2002; Dovey, 2000; Jerslev, 2004; Renov, 2009). In Max Schleser's video essay *Max with Kaitai* (2009) the film-maker documents his own efforts to make a documentary about a Japanese metropolis using early 3G mobile phone video technology and contemporary video aesthetics. Martha-Cecilia Dietrich's video *Take me to a place outside* (2010) presents the findings of her fieldwork interviewing the inmates of a female prison. Using anthropological theories of storytelling, perception and reception, as well as methods inspired by visual anthropology and applied theatre, Dietrich invited women to express themselves creatively through sound, photography and video. The result was eight intensely personal and moving recollections or dreams about the relationship between the "real" and the "unreal", the physical and the imagined, and the inside and outside. Through these very subjective accounts, Dietrich argues against an often objectified and homogenised experience of imprisonment forged by public as well as academic discourses.

The poetic-reflexive documentary and academic video

According to Bondebjerg, the poetic-reflexive documentary's epistemology is aesthetic. The aesthetic's framing of the real is often used to reflect on a meta-level and through this offer a critique of society and media. Albert Figurt's video essay *Notre Cam de Paris* (2010) depicts digital representation and meta-mediation to explore how multiple screens and digital recordings and media impact on our lives and minds today. Another example is Tal Udi's *Loop* (2010) which deals with the infinite narratives made possible by digitization and the possibilities to retell and reinvent sequences, narratives and lives. In the poetic and evocative *Dreamscape – a Video Sketchbook* (2011), Trevor Hearing takes his inspiration from two quotations: Federico Fellini's "Film is a dream for the waking mind" and Mikhail Bakhtin's "The psyche does not always speak in complete sentences". Starting from his own performative practice as an academic film-maker and using "creative academic research tools", Hearing seeks to explore and document connections between our sleeping and our waking minds and consider how these illuminate the different discourses of consciousness in his own life as an academic and a program-maker, in order to explore whether this can contribute to an understanding of the process of creativity in the production of the moving image. Even the dramatized documentary is represented in academic videos.

In Bergen University Library's *A Plagiarism Adventure* (2008), a contemporary and creative remake of Charles Dicken's *A Christmas Carol,* Stian Hafstad and Jade Haerem Aksnes raise the Ghost of Christmas Past to warn students against getting so involved in the Christmas festivities that they have to resort to plagiarism in order to meet deadlines.

Documentary theory and its reflections on the privileged relationship to reality in non-fiction films can thus be used to explain the relationship between dissemination and conceptualisation of academic research and knowledge in an audiovisual form.

Theoretical perspectives on text and visuals and their capabilities in relation to academic dissemination

From a different theoretical perspective, addressing the tension between the requirements and traditions of the audiovisual and the academic is central to academic video and, on a different level, semiotics develops these points further. Considering that audio, visuals and texts are modalities with different conditions, how successfully can academic videos disseminate research, in practice and theory? Can we manage without text? And is it possible to be academic without words? In many ways, these were the questions that inspired the journal.

But a counter-question is, of course, *why* should you not be able to disseminate and discuss academic issues audiovisually? The semiotician Umberto Eco claims that while verbal language might be our most powerful language, there are other languages at our disposal, and it may even be that these other languages are capable of expressing ideas which verbal language cannot express (Eco, 1976, p. 176). Generally, we are accustomed to using the spoken and written word to discuss academic issues. When we think of academic videos, we tend to think either of recorded interviews or lectures (which are *not* primarily audiovisual, they are primarily reliant on the spoken word), as opposed to fictional movies dealing with emotional issues such as love, hate, revenge. Anglo-Saxon "Hollywood" movie-making excels in its own catchphrase "show, don't tell". Apparently simple concepts such as jealousy, envy, fear and so on are easily signified without words. But, is that all that the audiovisual is good for? What is it in academic issues that would not lend itself to the wordlessness of audiovisuality? After all, many academic issues can be expressed in another non-verbal language: the language of mathematics. There are actually many utterances – statements – in, for example, physics or economics that can only be expressed mathematically. Is it the high level of abstraction? Is it the complexity? Is it that it is theoretical, as opposed to practical? Let's consider the following text: "*Annie has a relationship with John, who is quite snobbish and doesn't really care much about Annie. Annie is working together with Jim, who is much more easygoing and kind towards Annie. John knows that Annie is attracted to Jim, and therefore he refuses to help him while pretending to be polite.*" This could easily be expressed solely by audiovisual means, allowing editing, camera angles, blocking and mise-en-scène to tell the story by conveying diegetic body language, character traits and character interaction. But isn't this content quite abstract, quite complex and concerned with theoretical concepts and relations? Could it be that the audiovisual can deal with complex and theoretical subjects, but maybe just on an emotional level? It is possible to construct examples contradicting this claim as well, let's say a purely audiovisual description of a bank robbery; also quite a complex situation, but not necessarily focused on emotions, but rather focused on, for example, temporal and spatial relationships (who is where, when and doing what to whom and why?).

Could the potential to be specific be a characteristic of verbal language? Is the audiovisual then deemed to be mostly implicit? Our experience of reviewing numerous submissions to the journal supports this. A substantial proportion of the submissions leaned towards a more artistic approach and typically for these was that we, as editors, were able to have a strong emotional feeling that *I understand exactly* what the submitter intended to convey. At the same time self-reflection warned us that we could not rationally be certain that other viewers would arrive at the same interpretation. We often felt it necessary to check how our fellow editors interpreted it*?* This combination of preferred reading with a broad range of possible interpretations, and the combination of emotional certainty and rational ambiguity are typical of artistic forms of expression such as visual art, music and poetry. Traditionally, explicitness is favoured and sub-texts and implicitness frowned upon in academia. However, we claim that the situation is more complex than it might seem. First, audiovisuality can be highly explicit. It depends heavily on the content. Conveying, for example, the body language of an interviewee or the architectural description of the façade of a building can be highly explicit in visuals, while being hopelessly vague in a written text. Second, even some academic *written* text can be open to multiple interpretations, most notably philosophical texts by continental thinkers such as Baudrillard, Gadamer and Merleau-Ponty. And finally, sub-texts and openness in interpretation is not disregarded in all academic endeavors - in, for example, self- and auto-ethnography it is common practice to use evocative writing (Crapanzano, 1984; Duncan, 2004; Ellis, 1997; Wall, 2006).

According to semiotic theory, all signs have a double set-up of relationship (Eco, Op.cit. p126). There is the syntagmatic relationship to other signs, for example, the code governing how words can be combined with each other to form sentences. There are combinatory rules in visual language as well, such as the convention that grainy imagery combined with shaky viewpoint means that the image is supposed to be captured by a handheld video camera. Then there is the paradigmatic relationship to other signs, governing which signs can replace each other. In verbal language this is basically referred to as synonyms. In visual language, an example might be that the graininess signifying [video footage] might be replaced – or supplemented – with the presence of horizontal scan lines across the image. Considering these examples makes it clear that the code for verbal language is much more specific than it is for visual language. In verbal language it is quite clear that the combination "red rose" has a correct syntagmatic relationship, while the combination "petal rose" doesn't make sense. In visual language the relationships between the visual signs [grain], [scan lines] and [shaky] is quite fluid and indistinct. Eco's conclusion is that "the effability power of verbal language is undoubtedly due to its great articulatory and combinational flexibility" (op.cit. p172). But, does this make verbal language always more powerful in academic texts?

Furthermore, Eco also claims that words "can be codified and listed, whereas the thousand different ways of drawing a horse are not foreseeable" (op.cit p214). In verbal language there are just a few ways to say, for example, dog (the words "dog" and "pooch"), while in visual language there are a multitude of ways to picture a dog. You could say that the number of ways to picture a dog is infinite, since every drawing and every photograph is unique. But, on the other hand, you could say that there is a quite formalized and limited repertoire of visual signs as well. If you are about to picture a dog, the picture needs to resemble a dog in order to be interpreted as a sign for a dog. If we once again look at the example of imagery signifying a video recording, we actually have quite a limited repertoire of visual signs: [grainy], [scan lines], [shaky], [desaturated], [REC icon] and a few more. One pertinent example from the journal's collection of video essays is *Do you live forever today?* (Søndergaard et al, 2011) in which cyberspace is signified by standardized signs such as [abstract objects] [floating] in a [grey void] and [green tinted] colors. At the same time the film-makers add another visual sign to the vocabulary of the video essay: the [cut-out silhouette] representing the human in digital form. This is not an invention of a new sign, but a re-purposing of an existing visual sign. In combination with the other signs it forms a comprehensible text.

Within the dichotomy between the audiovisual versus the spoken/written word, there is the deeply established prejudice that images and sound are something you experience, while text is something you read. Thus, the argument goes that you do not interpret or critically reflect on the audiovisual, while you interpret and critically reflect on spoken/written text. However, semioticians and media theorists such as Eco (Eco, 1976) and Barthes (Barthes, 1977, 1981) have demonstrated that images and video are also texts that you "read". All reading processes are acts of interpretation and can be done reflectively and critically, and since you *read* audiovisuality, it can be subjected to critical interpretation.

However, other media theorists (Gunning, 2007; Wuss, 2004) support the contention that audiovisuality holds a special distinction from other means of representation because it creates an actual experience. Written words such as "camera shake" or "fast editing" work on a completely representational level; there is nothing in the words themselves that evoke the signified experience. But when camera shake and fast editing are utilized in a movie, the viewer *actually* experiences the image shaking and the editing as fast-paced. This means that even if semiotics describes how a movie can be viewed as a text composed of signs, a movie is also to some extent an actual experience. From

the viewpoint of academic dissemination this is an important distinction. The content in a written academic text is always an indirectly mediated experience – the researcher might describe that she had good rapport with an interviewee or that a sign changes when the context changes. But a recorded interview might allow the viewer to partially experience the meeting that took place, and a video essay might for example let the viewer experience firsthand the changes in context around a sign. The latter was demonstrated in our own editorial column video essay *Signs, texts and contexts* (Eriksson, 2010b).

So, audiovisual and verbal languages share traits, are both powerful and have the capacity to express ideas that the other cannot. If the audiovisual means of expression is effective and comparable to verbal and written language in conveying academics' arguments and research, does that mean that both are suitable for academic discourse? Is it the case that what you need to say in academic texts falls into the blind spot where verbal and written languages excel, but audiovisual mediation fails? We suggest that *some* academic endeavors are better suited to investigation through verbal language and the written word, but *others* certainly lend themselves more to audiovisual mediation. For example, both Thommy Eriksson's reflection on the dichotomy between picture and sound, content and context, *Endless Semiosis* (2010a), and Albert Figurt's reflections on digital recording and the mediatization of culture in *Notre Cam de Paris* (2010), succinctly convey points in pictures that would be hard to express in words.

The previous argument has highlighted the dichotomy between written text and audiovisuality. In practice, the written word and audiovisuality support each other. One example of how the two modalities can support each other in a sustained, thoughtful and abstract text is Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics* which is a self-reflective comic book about comics (1994), and many of the video essays accepted for the journal show examples of texts where written text and audiovisuality intertwine and support each other. For example, Alan MacLaughlin's *The Object* (2010) explores how context changes the meaning of visual images. It uses voice-over to guide the viewer to a series of images that the narration can name but never quite describe the full nature and essence of. Similarly, *Do You Live Forever Today?* by Mette Søndergaard, Astrid Sofie Jelstrup, Niklas Frost Iversen and Tobias Roed Jensen (2011) uses a voice-over narration to tell the story of how social media shapes the life of a fictitious girl, Mette, and the digital footprints that she leaves online and in cyberspace. Mette's life (and afterlife) is represented as greenscreen silhouette footage of Mette's activities and endeavours on a changing background of stock footage, graphic representation and animated sections, intertwined with Facebook wallposts, social media threads and tweets illustrating Mette's moods and social life. Equating and visually mixing the silhouette of Mette and the social media with which she surrounds herself creates an image of Mette, her self-mediation and the digital world she inhabits as inseparable entities, which becomes especially poignant as Mette's social media profile survives her own death.

Creating framework and experimental space – practices and manifesto

As stated earlier, the aim of *Audiovisual Thinking* is to be a pioneering forum for experiments with the form of academic video. Therefore it is important to create a flexible framework within which academic video can evolve and establish itself as an academic discourse. In order to facilitate this, the journal provides guidelines as well as an intellectual framework within which to think about and create academic videos. *Audiovisual Thinking* is based on a manifesto loosely inspired by the Dogma 95 manifesto (Christensen, 2000). Dogma 95 is a set of rules devised to challenge conventional film-making and encourage experiments with film-making forms. The rules put strict

regulations on the films that adhered to the manifesto, such as requiring only on-location shooting with hand-held camera and rejecting sound effects, non-diegetic music, optical effects and additional lighting.[iii] Dogme 95 rejuvenated the Danish movie industry, brought it international acclaim and became the trademark of successful art house films. Lars von Trier devised the rules of Dogma 95 because he wanted to put film-makers in a situation where the rules forced a change in how films were made. Dogma 95 was thus a laboratory. By changing the rules of the game, something new was expected to come out of the experiment. We, too, want to create such an "experimental space". We would like to invite scholars into this space and in adhering to the rules, they will have to invent new audiovisual ways to disseminate the results of their research.[iv]

Our manifesto is supported by two seemingly opposing rules that open up our creative experimental space. The first rule requires the video essays to be primarily audiovisual. The other ensures that the videos are academic. This reflects the attempt to merge the two diverging theoretical and methodological traditions of academic publishing and audiovisual production.

Ensuring audiovisuality

The first rule – used to ensure audiovisuality of submissions – requires simply that "submissions should be audiovisual".[v] This forces the author to use primarily visual and/or audio means to convey the content, instead of relying on the written or spoken word. Written or spoken language or text are not ruled out, but must be secondary, so that it, in effect, is possible to understand the general content of the video essay without understanding a single word.

That content should be primarily audiovisual is fundamental. Of course it is also the most problematic and contentious requirement, and as a consequence, it is an issue that is much debated among both the editors and the submitters. It should also be noted that much documentary visual storytelling doesn't meet this requirement. A typical news report is primarily spoken text illustrated with images and, as described earlier, the authoritative documentary is often defined partly by its narration (Bondebjerg, 2002, 2008; Nichols, 1991, 1994).

Ensuring academic standards

In the same way as the previous rule about audiovisuality force the submissions to use audiovisual texts, these four points ensure the academic merits of the submissions. In order to ensure academic standards an academic video should:
- disseminate new observations, knowledge, insights or theories, thereby adding to the existing body of knowledge.
- acknowledge previous knowledge, insights or theories, and build upon the existing body of knowledge.
- credit all sources and references, be they visual, written or oral.
- be self-critical and self-reflective.

What is it that makes our research academic? In writing these four requirements we had to define what we – or rather what society – mean by "research" and "academic". Looking at the practice of academic research, the process of building on what others have already done is central to what researchers do, and so we included the first three requirements to cover this practice. This was derived both from an intent to comply with existing research practices, and our own belief that there is a clear connection between good research quality and acknowledging previous knowledge. In addition,

although academic video is a relatively new phenomenon, the practice and methodology needs to write itself into an academic tradition. Therefore, the *content* of a video should be of an academic nature and place itself within academic disciplines and critical traditions. Furthermore, the *context* of the video might be a determining factor, much in the same way as museums curate and thereby dictate what art is, papers given at conferences and articles published in academic journals are by definition academic. In establishing *Audiovisual Thinking* we hoped to set up an audiovisual counterpart to the written tradition of academic journals. Also, the process of self-criticism is essential. Self-reflection and criticism are the common denominators in virtually every scientific methodology and field, the natural science as well as the humanities.

Academic video – making references, adhering to copyright issues

One problem that has been emphasized by some submissions and particularly when the editors have worked on our own videos for example for the Editorial Column has been making citations within the video essay. There have been frequent citations to both text references and other audiovisual media. The only reasonable solution seems to be to include a title card – often at the end of the video essay, but sometimes within the narrative – with text-based references. This mimics the referencing done in written texts and is the only method which seems explicit enough. An alternative is to find methods to make audiovisual references. Intertextuality and homage are established practices in conventional visual storytelling, such as feature film and commercials. It is usually done by imitating creative features (camera movements, production design, dialogue, colour grading and so on, and endless combinations of these features) so closely that the reference to another movie becomes obvious. One example is how the satirical cartoon *South Park* (Matt Stone, Trey Parker 1997) brings in characters and events from other movies, or how the horror franchise *Scream* (Wes Craven 1996-) re-enacts and plays with events from other horror movies. Intertextual references were incorporated in one of the Editorial Column video essays *Re^x : Re^n* (issue 2010:2). It is obvious that this kind of citation requires the viewer to recognise the intertextuality, which makes it more or less impossible to reference something that the viewers haven't *seen.* Other experiments with citing within an audiovisual text can be seen in *The Video as Infovis to Portrait Analysis on a TV Advertisement,* Eva Casado de Amezua Fernández-Luanco's on-screen analysis of TV adverts (2010). Development in video distribution softwares and codexes will hopefully make it easier to annotate credit and create references to audiovisual material in the near future. Similarly, current legislation on copyright does not lend itself to academic videos about intertextuality, remix culture or close readings of specific works and texts. In some countries – such as Sweden – it is permissable within copyright law to include excerpts from the media artefact you are analyzing, which makes it possible to include footage or imagery in a video essay as long as you have a deeper academic discussion relevant to the excerpt. But this is not the case in all countries, and prejudices and misunderstanding are common, leading to a-better-safe-than-sorry approach among media scholars. Although Creative Commons licences go some towards solving this, copyright legislation and disinformation from large media distributors (such as the copyright notice included on most commercial DVD's claiming that all usage of the material is forbidden) continues to make academic freedom within the field of academic video problematic.

Conclusion

In a world where audiovisual media abounds and is becoming increasingly prevalent – online, on mobile phones and tablets and on digital billboards in the urban landscape – teaching and communicating through moving images is increasingly important for educators and academics in all areas. In the same way as recorded lectures and instructional videos are being used more and more frequently in higher education, this paper argues that researchers should play their part and work towards integrating, incorporating and disseminating through video and moving images in academia. As this paper shows, academic video and the academic audiovisual essay are already present within academic disciplines and have the potential to be equally valid discourses in conceptualising and disseminating research alongside the written word. It is possible to convey certain kind of research results audiovisually as well as or even better than in written texts. Looking into the ways in which documentary film and television has been used for both scientific and popular dissemination of knowledge would be of great value to science in a modern media society. Investigating *what* kind of content lends itself to audiovisuality, and methodological consideration of *how* academic video as dissemination and conceptualisation should and could work, are fields of inquiry that are just opening up. In time, developing practice and theory will provide answers. *Audiovisual Thinking* hopes to help shape these developments and this process and would like to invite the readers of this paper to take part.

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[i] Accordingly, and in order to build a video sharing academic community, the first issue and call for videos was on the theme: 'What is Academic Video?'

[ii] It can also be argued that contemporary art video is moving towards subject matters and topics that are the realm of academia, in that some work is incorporating critique and reflections on video as a medium and the physical and temporal aspects of moving images as part of their subject matter, for example Douglas Gordon's installation *24 hour Psycho* (1993), or the various twelve frames film experiments online, inspired by one of the obstructions in Lars von Trier and Jørgen Leth's *The Five Obstructions* (2003).

[iii] The Dogme 95 rules are:
- Filming must be done on location. Props and sets must not be brought in. If a particular prop is necessary for the story, a location must be chosen where this prop is to be found.
- The sound must never be produced apart from the images or vice versa. Music must not be used unless it occurs within the scene being filmed, i.e., diegetic.
- The camera must be a hand-held camera. Any movement or immobility attainable in the hand is permitted. The film must not take place where the camera is standing; filming must take place where the action takes place.
- The film must be in colour. Special lighting is not acceptable (if there is too little light for exposure the scene must be cut or a single lamp be attached to the camera).
- Optical work and filters are forbidden.
- The film must not contain superficial action (murders, weapons, etc. must not occur.)
- Temporal and geographical alienation are forbidden (that is to say that the film takes place here and now).
- Genre movies are not acceptable.

- The film format must be Academy 35 mm.
- The director must not be credited.

[iv] One note about our manifesto rules is that they are quite soft and general compared to the highly specific Dogma 95 rules. It might be that we failed to design rules that were specific and rigid enough, but we might also argue that the rules we devised were the rules we needed. Even though we have been inspired by the Dogma 95's idea of creating an experimental space, our intent has been quite different. It is a manifesto in the making – on one hand we hope to make it more specific and, on the other, to keep it open so that it can evolve.

[v] There is also an additional rule concerning the more technical aspects of the media that states that submissions must 'form a coherent piece of media, which can be stored as one digital file that can be easily shared. This ensures that a work is one unified piece, as opposed to being a serial, game or interactive website. However, this rule is not relevant to the argument made here.