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Researchers and collective know-how: looking at knowledge production through a lens

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Abstract: This paper offers a multidisciplinary reflection on filmic practices of researchers in anthropology and cognitive ergonomics, within the framework of their understanding of rural knowledge confronted with the question of development. The video seems to be a support as well as a medium: it permits the object of “know-how” to be tackled as a complex construction, consisting of interactions between technical, relational and cognitive components. It also facilitates new interactions between the actors, whether they “hold” or “promote” some know-how, when they are involved, for example, in the same analytical and prospective step in the technical performance, or the cultural and political dimensions of this “know-how”. Using methods of self-confrontation or crossed confrontation, the image recorded allows the operator to reconsider his activity and clarify his gestures, strategies, the environmental indicators taken into account within the framework of certain decisions or adaptations etc. The image is, in this case, a tool for formalising know-how. The work represented, rebuilt by the image, is also rebuilt by editing, a strategic moment of reinterpretation and analysis. Last but not least, the video sequence, according to the researcher’s ethics (which should be analyzed), plays a clear role of mediations “catalyst” between the protagonists and as a particular medium, makes it possible to modify a context of negotiation or to build a consensus on united actions. Restitution becomes a mediating representation for professional worlds, sometimes distant from one another, which develop through it a consensus, the sharpening of a utopia or a project.

This paper, based on various texts and field experiments, will specify these dimensions of the video and the image. It will then identify certain limits to these tools/supports/mediators in our research practices and development support: from the cultural gaps between the observers and the observed, the obvious risks of over-interpretation, to the media abuses of the ‘film direction’, use of video necessitates vigilance at various stages of the research and collective action if one wants simultaneously to produce an interaction, to film the action and to scientifically validate the data converted into images.

Keywords: know-how, video, learning, formalisation, negotiation

« L’opérateur de la connaissance doit devenir en même temps l’objet de la connaissance » (Edgar Morin, 1992)

Introduction

The use of photographic or film images is well-established in anthropological procedures. Initiators, such as Spencer, Mead or Rouch, and their contemporary successors, such as C. de France (1989) or J.P. Olivier de Sardan (1994) have made it a discipline in its own right (visual anthropology). The cinematic language in anthropology has made it possible to explore fields which had long remained marginal, for example the relationship between time and space, emotions caused by knowledge, treatment of the body, staging speech... Film techniques are also commonly used in the field of ergonomics to study humans at work (Borzeix *et al*, 1996), relying on the verbalisation of actors in a self-confrontation in the course of action (Theureau, 1992). More generally speaking, the use of images in research has become one of the means of taking into account an essential reciprocity of expressions. Our aim, therefore, is to explore various problematic facets which arise from the use of film images in a particular situation of *research-action* conducted in processes of *territorial qualification of agri-food products*.

Here, video is used by the researcher to collate and index information collected daily in the field (in this case it becomes a “digital” ethnographic note book), while also acting as a support for interactions which are organised with a view to formalising knowledge (individual and collective) and which can subsequently be mobilised during mediation sessions with (or between) the actors in the field. Video is

therefore both a support and a privileged mediator: it enables us to approach local know-how as a complex construction consisting of interactions between technical, relational and cognitive components which are all too often “encapsulated” in a single “cultural aggregate”. Video, however, also facilitates new interactions between operators, “holders” or “promoters” of know-how, in particular when they are committed to a common, analytical and prospective approach vis-à-vis the technical performance or the cultural and political dimensions of their know-how.

Recalling some of our experiences in the field, this paper aims to specify these audio-visual dimensions in a situation of research-action and identifying certain limitations (technical, epistemological and cultural) to the use of these filmic objects in our research practices and development support. The use of the camera and film production generally rely on a necessary vigilance at different stages of the research and collective action if we wish simultaneously to film the action, provoke new interactions in a process and validate the knowledge produced by the image in a scientific manner.

Our paper therefore examines: i) the status of the data resulting from filmic or photographic practices; ii) the efficiency of these data in a procedure of accompaniment; iii) the efficiency of the tool as a specific mediator of interactions linked to performances (both social and iconographic). It forms the basis for a wide scope of reflection concerning the articulation between the construction of knowledge and recognition wherein images are, in our opinion, an essential vector.

Devices and knowledge

The research experiences to which we refer here concern the qualification of agri-food products performed by local groups. This may involve procedures for differentiating products with a strong identity-related reputation or procedures for accompanying groups with regard to professional recognition initiatives involving the qualification of their products. The sites where this research was carried out are located in Corsica, the Pyrenees and the Gers department in France; these are home to original dynamics of commercial, professional and territorial qualification concerning products as diversified as goat's or ewe's milk and cheese, rural breeds of chicken, cow or pig.

In the context of these experiences, the questions of formalisation and mediation concern the characterisation of products, lessons learned from the new collective management of an official quality sign and the status of the actors and know-how involved in the qualification process.

Collective action is central to this type of approach. We view it here as a specific situation of resource optimisation involving a wide range of actors scattered over a common reference territory and together capable of understanding the spaces, times and objects which constitute common goods.

The notion of resources refers here to the cognitive and physical dimensions of elements which we consider significant when they are attached to a territory and to a number of different actors who give them meaning in temporalities which are not necessarily common to all (memory encourages discrepancies in perceived temporalities).

An observer of a product or trade qualification process is initially struck by its multi-site character, despite the fact that we cite a reference “territory”, which exceeds the defined scope of the arena or the ritualised stage, notions often used in the field of anthropology. But how can we “transcribe” these collective approaches without “encapsulating” them in illusory localised and linear processes in order to respect the burgeoning complexity? In other words, how can we “re-transcribe” or rebuild local theories (of knowledge, the territory, the market or competencies, for example) and the positions of the actors (social, spatial, political) through images, and how can we convey their nature, both specific systemic and dynamic?

The search for techniques other than writing invites us to adopt cinematographic principles which, in principle, enable us to better respect the temporalities, the sites of action and interactions and the point of view of the actors involved in the same process.

The first device that we present is based on a desire to formalise know-how from which we endeavour to extract the technical and cognitive dimensions based on scenes of product preparation. Film, then, becomes a support for verbalisation (a method of self-confrontation and crossed confrontation) for actors or experts and a means of analysing non-verbal forms of communication (gestures, expressions, silence etc.) expressed during the filmed sequence. The other device uses film as a

support first for analysis then for mediation initiated by a group of researchers, teachers and students. In both cases, film relies on hypotheses resulting from research.

These two devices do not consider film as an “end in itself”, but as one stage in a process of communication or dialogue on numerous levels (Interpersonal, collective, multi-situated...) for the analysis and the accompaniment of the change. From the multitude of audio-visual “marks” that these devices produce emerges the need for a scenario and an editing process. The difficulty indeed being to produce a meaning for both the outside spectator and the actors filmed who have become spectators themselves. The aim is not to invite them to a clever combination of their reality and the magic of images producing an effect of knowledge (and possibly identification) but to offer them a new support referring to their own context: the film then plays its role to the full as “support and semantic, word and thing, a thing which is thought or a thing in its own right, shifting permanently from the signifier to the signified” (Chevanne, 1999, p. 64), capable of creating consensus insofar as, in this type of situation, “representation includes aesthetics and ideology as emanations of the culture” it is addressing (Chevanne, 1999, p. 64). Nor is the knowledge produced by the image and the scenario which structures it an “end in itself”, outside those who formulate or analyse it, instead representing an overlapping of points of view, hypotheses or statements implicating everyone involved in the film: image engineers, food commodity chain operators, research staff all intervene above and beyond the production of knowledge and images to validate it, instrumentalise it, re-interpret it and disseminate it.

Formalising know-how: staging technique and culture

The first audio-visual device which we describe is aimed at extracting and formalising individual and collective know-how relating to localised agri-food production in its technical and cognitive dimensions. The aim of this formalisation is to characterise the know-how as resources, which can be activated in different contexts (Bouche and Moity-Maïzy, 2008): for example, the construction of food heritage through the valorisation and recognition of this know-how, the valorisation of a territorial identity of which certain characteristics necessitate the commercial qualification of some of its resources. Often used to analyse activity, the use of video in ergonomics provides, according to Falzon (1997), an improved understanding of the procedures implemented by comparing different methods of working, resulting in the development of new practices while facilitating a temporal and physical distance in relation to a task, favourable to reflexive activity. Observation of technical sequences would appear here to be “hanging on the lips of the informers because its meaning cannot be observed in its entirety” (Copans, 1998): the filmed sequences are commented either in the course of the action or during the viewing session by means of self-confrontation. This method, borrowed from the course-of-action theory (Theureau, 1992), involves reviewing the activity with an operator, after the technical act has been filmed, by mobilising different registers. The recorded sequences are also presented to other spectators, “experts” in the professional field or technicians with formal knowledge of the objects concerned. It is in the “off” comments of the filmed operator or these experts that the full import of a silence, a gesture, the movement of the body in space or an object suddenly materialises. Moreover, the aim of such a device is also, to a certain extent, to pursue the investigation: the shared observation of the images enables the actors to explain certain moments while suggesting or highlighting unknown facts, producing unexpected knowledge. Finally these discursive practices, which as much describe processes as they do the actors’ intentions, enable the multiple facets of the technical facts (efficiency, irreversibility, specificity ...) to be characterised through the comparative analysis of invariance or variants between the operators filmed.

In this context, our observations and filmed interviews refer to the entire productive chain, from breeding to commercialisation via dairy processing, cutting a carcass or extracting honey, favouring the recursiveness of know-how to convey to a large number of “everyday activities”: sessions of learning by imitation and demonstrations performed daily (or, on the contrary, performed in festive environments).

This first filmic device requires a thought process around the sequence shots being created and a short editing session in order to dispose of exhaustive raw material. The latter enable us to review a scene filmed in wide angle format, for example and, as a result, all the processes and interactions making the system. This device combines the raw material with edited sequences or even modified shots to diminish the undesirable effects of an image in collective presentations: for example, we were forced to “blur” an operator because his notoriety with the public led to his being associated with a discredited category.

These different audio-visual materials are processed with the help of an IT platform, SAPEVISTA¹, in order to facilitate the archiving, deciphering, formalisation and synchronisation of observations of all technical, communicational and cognitive activities. We include the possibility of materialising and indicating the coordination, positions and movements of actors, as well as the phenomena of non-verbal communication (face-pulling, smile of approval etc.).

Pedagogical and mediatory device: staging and interactions

The second device is designed in the context of an annual sequence of training through research intended for student engineers. Daily surveys are organised in small groups in partnership with local organisations concerning an issue and field common to researchers and students. The aim is to familiarise students, the future actors in the field of accompaniment, with the use of audio-visual techniques presented within this pedagogical framework as an alternative writing technique and as a means of producing specific interactions with local actors during filming and, in particular, after the short film has been shown. Filming takes place with the agreement of all the persons interviewed and results in the audio-visual recording of interview sequences by a cameraman, as the meetings go by ; there is therefore no desire to achieve exhaustivity, similar to note-taking; it is more a question of recording facts (practices and dialogues) which appear to be immediately related to the issue and the major questions developed at the start of the course².

This film device can be divided into two stages: unlike the first device, no prior thought-process is required concerning the shots or sequences which will guide the filming. The first strategic stage is in fact the editing: this relies on a scenario developed at the end of the surveys; in this, it is similar to a traditional plan for a written report, designed as it is with the desire to produce an analysis of the qualification procedure which is the subject of our investigation. The second stage of this audio-visual device is the local showing of the short film. The final aim is to produce knowledge of the situation which is “as faithful as possible”, while being confronted by the mass of audio-visual data recorded; by the difficulty of selecting those which appear the most relevant for an “objective scientific” analysis; and finally by the prospect of “reporting” our understanding of the situation observed to the local actors through the promise to share with them the short film which is produced.

The aim of the film (like the first filmic device above) clearly points to the “realistic pact” put forward by J.P. Olivier de Sardan (1994). Both devices lead us to question the status and ethics of the researcher in the interactions produced during and after filming, focussing on this object of memory and meaning which constitutes a film. Restitution, interpretation, giving meaning, making a vision or specific understanding public – these are the main lines of thought surrounding this “pact”; we will reconsider this later.

Observing, describing and showing: setting the stage and creating images

Comparing these two devices highlights several points in common, if we wish to specify the roles of the camera and images in a situation of action research and, more broadly speaking, if we place ourselves in a perspective of reflection concerning both the status of the data produced through filmic practices and the status of the tool itself as a specific mediator.

- the filmed observation is both technical and analytical memorisation; it is developed and selected even more than human expression (Copans, 1998); rather than reality, it produces what the observers and actors have selected to be seen and heard. For example, when filming herds of “mirandaise” cattle in the Gers, a breeder takes the initiative of bringing out one of his oldest bulls which he feels is “significant” to the film: this staging, which orients our observations, reflects his own pride as a breeder, the notoriety which he intends to give to this living product and to his know-how; some off-camera comments discreetly accompany this action shown in images;

¹ Sape (“know”) Vista (“see”) in Corsican while also providing the acronym for Video Station for Annotation.

² On average, two hours (out of four) of interviews are recorded, one interview in two is filmed (distribution of interviews to sub-groups with one single cameraman); from five days of interviews, a total of between ten and fifteen hours of rushes must be turned into 20 minutes of final film (short film format). This choice is the result of cost constraints, time (editing) and a pedagogical desire not to make an exhaustive recording: this ensures daily consideration of the construction of a filmed interview and of the additional particularities of the written notes and video recordings.

- observation through the camera offers several perspectives: silent panoramic shots suggesting an environment, an atmosphere, a trajectory; distracted glimpses of objects and outlines of faces emphasising an emotion, a position of statement; steady shots of a concentrated observation which restrict the field of understanding of the situation if they are too long. Observation by the camera, reflected in an image, creates a style, a “trademark”, that of the cameraman and of the assembling team (students, teachers and researchers), publicly revealing the subjectivity of this viewpoint in observing a situation. By noting the critiques and comments concerning the film upon its restitution to the actors who were filmed, we understand that, before underlining the possible strength of evoking a local technical style, it is glaringly obvious that the observer saw things “differently”. By projecting a film on local cheese production in the Pyrenees, for example, several remarks highlight the attention the observers seem to give to a forgotten old caldron, used in the old days; they note its potential relevance to show that know-how is most definitely old, while criticising the importance accorded it by the images;
- creating images requires a staging (even minimal) of the actors in the places where they speak or act, revealing the importance of the camera to each person, despite its discretion and the precautions for use laid down. Action and words are publicised through the act of recording; staging would appear to be the first phase of the implicit consensus between actors and investigators with regard to the aim of formalising know-how and judgements, involving a considered organisation of the bodies, acts and words necessary to express or show oneself; it is never action as it really happens in daily life which is revealed; rather a consensual “pro-filmic”³ reconstruction which develops meaning in an advanced projection of its potential visual and sensory effects;
- editing, as another form of film-making, relies on reviewing and reorganising the scenes filmed; it reveals the implacable interaction between observations and speech, between what is shown and what is said about spatial and cultural complexities: it is impossible to freely juxtapose scenes without taking their discursive continuities and breaks into account; scenes cannot be presented further without being explained, either by means of a bridge⁴ or a commentary (off camera comment by a third party or the operator). In fact, the fundamental aims of our two devices guide most editing and establish a framework of minimum rules to be respected. It is a question of giving the film back to the actors thereby setting editing limits, less free or creative than is possible in the context of a fictional film; these limits nevertheless deserve to be well thought-out as they are not set in advance, relying essentially on the involvement of the director (and that of the interviewer and the cameraman) vis-à-vis the operators and actions that he is filming.

Editing as a specific form of writing therefore reveals the relativity of a surveyed “reality”: everyone understands that this stage involves producing “reliable” rather than “true” knowledge and that this reliability relies in part on the content of the audio-visual recordings in our possession and on our anticipation of the local expectations (concerning the topic of the film). Once the editing is complete, it is clear that the understanding of reality is not portrayed in its entirety in the image (Jullier, 2002). Comments are often necessary in addition to the words of the actors: explanatory sub-titles, the insertion of texts in an image and “off-camera” comments are necessary to give meaning (historic amplitude, for example) to the images and statements filmed. Self-confrontation is a genuine means, both technical and cognitive, of improving this understanding of reality and recording its complexity: a possible variation of an observed-filmed operation, the relativity of a highly significant or determinant gesture (filmed in close-up, for example); accounts of parallel actions (not shown) prior or subsequent to those shown in images.

These two devices both finally result in the same type of filmic object, the final form of which is generally similar to that of a short film. Once it is intended for local actors and not an anonymous audience, developed with a view to restitution or official sequences of self-confrontation with them, this type of short film constitutes a polyphonic text, the fruit of a structured negotiation, which is intended to be constructive, between “politically significant conscious subjects” (Clifford, 1996): researchers,

³ A concept enabling Caroline de France (1989, p-194) to designate “all direct or indirect activities of the persons filmed the self-staging of which is consciously or otherwise created by the process of cinematographic observation.”

⁴ The “Bunuel bridge” (an Andalusian dog, Luis Bunuel, 1928) marked our audio-visual culture by the way in which it went beyond the rules of spatio-temporal and editorial continuity as a procedure of constructing meaning around the filmed or understood realities. This type of bridge denies any possible relation between two facts or phenomena and uses breaks to underline the priority that it is possible to accord the director’s subjectivity.

students, local actors and cameramen are all involved around the same medium ...it is not a question of live reporting or documentary punctuated by commentaries and outside points of view; our object is more like an ethnographic film, above all leaving the actors to speak for themselves. However, as it is not simply a memory aid but also a pedagogical tool and a possible object of mediation, it would seem difficult to pigeon-hole it in one of the standard film categories.

The film after the film: mediation arena and staging the media

Irrespective of our scientific and technical device focusing on images, the aim of the film is not only to be given to the actors but also to confront them. Insofar as it is used in different situations of formalisation or mediation, in particular in qualification processes, it is possible to present these in brief, considering them as obligatory stages after filming and editing, characteristic of our investigations and creating effects which attract our attention.

The confrontation of practices tree

The formalisation of practices using techniques of self-confrontation is of obvious interest, providing the opportunity for the operator to verbalise his activity. This interest increases when an expert comments on the practices and words of an operator to detect what is essential, what is specific or what is generic. For example, with this method, it is possible to understand the specific know-how of an operator for cutting up operations of bovine meat according to the culinary destination of the meat (Fig. 1) (Trift et al., 2004)

| Objects of the cut | know-how | | Techniques | |
|---|---------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|--|
| Generic muscles | Knowledge of reference | Shared | Parisian cut | The personal "Style" of the butcher crosses all the levels |
| Qualified fragments of meat | adjusted knowledge of reference | Situated | Parisian cut in the local meat | |
| Fragments got ready for a culinary practice | Singular knowledge | Local | Local cut | |

Figure 1. Formalization of the know-how attached to the cutting techniques and to the objects

A real value again lies in the juxtaposition of sequences, organised in the form of a graphic arborescence where each branch represents a stage in the technical process (for example cutting a carcass or the production of cheese from milking to maturing) and each leaf is a specific sequence performed by a producer and captured on film. The richness comes from the possibility of presenting this arborescence for "a qualifying debate" held by a group of operators responsible for examining in detail what should be designated as essential technical invariance, noting this in a list of specifications and then discussing the specificities of the practices with the producers in relation to a specific know-how. A craftsman's signature, an adaptation to the environment and conditions of production, are thus the subject of debate with regard to the images. It is in this context that image formatting must be subtle, ethical, removing any symbol which may discredit a category of actor or practice in favour of a technical act purged of its cultural attributes: this is a difficult challenge as culture enjoys appearing in its structural interaction with technical fact. Nevertheless, as soon as it is "protected" (by oratorical precautions and warnings of the researcher during viewing) from the resentment and mocking of the locals or from possible pirating of tricks, this pooling of practices through images and synthetic graphic design demonstrates its advantages: potential corporatist cliques agree to play the game of discussing the pros and cons of ancestral practices or innovations⁵. These sessions are often instants of pedagogical confrontations concerning specific tricks which either enable a task to be simplified (a particular slipknot for hanging sausages when it comes out of the pusher, for example) or to document a process in the form of rules of action ("to see whether the curds are ready, dip your finger...").

⁵ In the most accomplished forms of this sequence, a 3D avatar was created, modelled using film sequences, i.e. a completely virtual representation of the filmed sequences.

Born from the pride of “someone who does” and therefore “someone who knows”, these staged gestures are sometimes surprisingly and pragmatically opaque; no one is really capable of providing any explanation other than: “that’s how they did it in the past and it works”. In this case, the presentation should always be accompanied by another means of collection (film or sound) allowing the new contributions produced by the group to be codified. Finally, animation would appear essential to avoid the excessive empathy of the group vis-à-vis a leader recognised for his experience or notoriety, strengthened in his status by the new social representation facilitated by the public image of his knowledge in action.

Restitution: an arena for a public reconsideration of appearances

“Restitution” of the film to the actors makes it a catalyst for mediations. It is guided by the desire to provoke reactions, new reflexive and critical interactions, together with researchers and among local actors. Our two devices result in a form of cooperation which can in turn result in an instrumentalisation of short films in various fields or at different levels at a later date.

In this process and this meeting between the captured image, the “captives” in the images and their “captors”⁶, many voices make themselves heard:

- those of the informers interviewed and filmed: they often demand the right of political or media use of the film; they complete or highlight pieces of information that they feel have been insufficiently or incorrectly presented by the image; they question certain choices made during editing; and finally they judge the quality of the analysis, its “faithfulness” to the realities experienced, thereby providing the group of researchers with confirmation of the reliability of the data;
- those of the political organisations of which these producers-actors are part: they express their perspective of exercising their power of censorship or exclusion vis-à-vis the film or even the actors concerned; they also appraise the reliability of the data produced and presented in editing; they evaluate the possibility of using the films, which they refer to globally as a “tool”, in future meetings and negotiations; they also suggest new sessions concerning an object of particular controversy, revealed or highlighted in the film;
- finally those of the researchers and their “allies” (engineers, technicians, students) who justify and discuss editing choices, note new information which surfaces in the debates concerning the viewing and, in particular, measure their degree of involvement, sometimes despite themselves, in the numerous interviews of which they are the object: contrary to the written report which can be read without the presence of its authors, a film viewing necessarily involves them. The audio-visual restitution invites them to mobilise their entire range of justifications to defend a style, a point of view or even a manner of staging the situations presented to the actors. Until then captives in the images, the actors become judges or advocates of shots in their various objective dimensions (film techniques, sequence-length shots, for example) and subjective dimensions (points of view and positions revealed by the image).

An audio-visual restitution sequence is therefore both a phase during which the production of knowledge continues and a mediation phase:

- knowledge-production: it appears to be a continuous process which starts with interviews and continues during the restitution process. It also occurs on several levels, in several arenas and temporalities: there is knowledge which is built or stated during the interview, consisting of observations and words, attentive to local theories and multi-site networks which form the framework of collective action around the qualification of local production and a territory to be defined; there is also knowledge which develops during the restitution process, consisting of claimed positions, effects of authority and negotiations which this time form the framework of new emerging debates. Knowledge produced formally by the survey and knowledge produced in the new interactions between local actors and researchers/students subsequently represent collective resources which are quickly adopted for other scientific and political arenas;
- mediation characterises this meeting between actors in the film and the short film object: by provoking comments, questions to the authors, it provides an opportunity to discuss the

⁶ We deliberately borrow these terms or categories with a strong social and political connotation from J.B. Ouedraogo (1996).

knowledge produced. For example, the restitution of the film concerning the valorisation of the Gascony hen in the Gers (Moity-Maïzi, Paquin, 2003) highlighted the difficulty of developing a breed standard which would satisfy all the actors involved in this process. The questions and divergences of interest, presented in images, were debated during the viewing, transforming the restitution sequence into an arena for negotiation, taking the researchers and students to task to define a minimum compromise concerning the criteria for a future breed standard. Although impossible to conclude during the official restitution, this debate continued elsewhere; for us, it is one of the possible or expected translations of the local approval of the knowledge produced by the surveys and the film; however, it also indicates the outlines of a new “life” of the film after the film.

The film after the film: the impact beyond the constructed arena

Indeed, it is important to imagine the film having an independent life after the diffusion envisaged by the creators of the film. However, it is impossible to foresee the potential content of this “second life”, or even to evaluate it after the fact. We can simply attempt to follow the paths taken by our films in certain networks or territories which welcome them in. It is in the maze of these itineraries that unforeseen uses and consequences of the film can be observed, returning to us as new resources either to defend these audio-visual devices in a scientific and pedagogical approach or to strengthen our own learning and vigilance as directors, or even to produce new research questions concerning the ethical objectives, both scientific and political, of a research-action procedure: what actually becomes of the data produced by researchers or their students? This recurrent question doubtless assumes greater importance here because film media gives them a material, public and in particular spectacular dimension that a written report simply does not possess. It may therefore not only be adopted by those who have access to it but may also be manipulated due to its very material formalisation: a short film is not only a medium of knowledge, it is also a good which circulates at the same time as a new tool to produce knowledge and recognition:

- in this way, for example, our film about the Mirandaise cow travelled through France to be “shown” on the stand at the Agricultural Exhibition, one year after its restitution to the local actors, to a public as diverse as it is unconcerned by the objectives of local mediations concerning the recovery and valorisation of this animal. A second short film about the Gascony pig (Moity-Maïzi, Paquin, 2002) received the same publicity. Here, the short film represents a public support for the valorisation of trades and products, a sort of material proof of an initial form of professional qualification;
- in other cases, a short film may go nowhere. On the contrary, it remains in the hands of a local leader who denounces its content and the actors involved. This refusal to publicise the film is just as significant. Through the knowledge that they present, through the recognition effects that they can also produce to the detriment of some, through the discrepancies that they would seem to highlight between an “official” approach and the symbolic realism⁷ provided by the images, short films represent an object of sanctions against a possible form of recognition.
- Finally, short films can be viewed several times, in defence union meetings⁸, this time openly described as a medium, pertinent because it is accessible and public, for feeding debates, “unlocking” a blockage concerning an object of controversy and facilitating new compromises, suggested and thus made possible (at least in appearance) by the film.

If we care to examine them⁹, these examples of uses also reveal that the film, through its capacity for mediation, brings about a normative shift of knowledge towards recognition (Honneth, 2007). Showing the Mirandais bull in our film, for example, would seem to have contributed to strengthening the legitimacy of the local recovery of this breed and the notoriety of its owner as a promoter of this breed. Chance or consequence: this bull has now been immortalised by the camera of Y. Arthus Bertrand (2001).

⁷ We borrow this concept from J.P. Olivier de Sardan, 1996.

⁸ We refer here to the use made of the film about the Ossau Iraty. See Amilien V., Moity-Maïzi P., 2007; 2006 (co dir. with D. Paquin), change to better defend a common good,

⁹ By returning to the field, meeting the actors from our films...

Organisation of knowledge versus knowledge of organisations

Particularities linked to filmic media

Images or film as a vector of information, a medium of knowledge and recognition leads us to highlight some of its characteristics which differentiate it from other media, such as the written or spoken word:

- the image carries its own referent: “it belongs to these categories of objects which we flick through, unable to separate the two pages without destroying them: the window and the landscape... the desire and its object” (Barthes, 1980, p17).
- it establishes the fact, at least in the context of a realistic pact, that what is viewed existed without obliging the spectator’s mind to make an effort to translate the data, as would be the case with the presentation of a statistical series.

despite the trivialisation of its uses, the very presence of the camera inevitably places all actors in a pro-filmic register of demonstration. As a result, it requires the researcher to give thought to the ethics and validity of this very specific corpus which, through the image and its possible publicising, represents the trace of an “accentuated reality”, as would the line drawn by a graphic designer or a computer graphic designer/modeller. As we have seen, the film medium highlights facets of a situation the details of which (visual or audible) are pressed upon the onlooker/speaker. These accentuated elements are sometimes unknown to this spectator (technical gestures captured at the back of a dark workshop, for example); the film is also, then, a documentary for its own actors.

- this brutal visualisation of an activity or a point of view by means of framing and its possible subsequent movement in time-space materialised by film (and achieved through editing) introduces essential comparative dimensions in debating a viewing or self-confrontation in a highly efficient manner.
- the ambivalence between “that exists” (accentuated by the show effect) and the (pro-)filmic (re)construction of reality which necessarily leaves numerous other facts in the dark, is decisive in producing new knowledge, by analysing the discrepancies resulting from this very ambivalence. The film can then play a central role in a process of collective choices.

Formalising know-how

Mediation through film demonstrates a paradoxical nature in its relations with the knowledge produced and the bifurcations that its formalisation and mediatisation may bring to a qualification process. In fact, nothing of what is observed is really new: neither invention nor discovery, as we are seeing practices which are already performed and known. Nevertheless, film would appear to produce a novelty effect “*which arrives like a thief in the night*”¹⁰. The material action is relayed by the film operator’s eye then by that of the ergonomist or anthropologist. By means of its formal rebirth and aesthetics which filter through in the image, this action causes new questioning or judgements to emerge, opening a new area for possible investigations. This process of local confrontation between what is seen and what might still be to see highlights in particular the knowledge conveyed over generations which sometimes requires family memory to rediscover its meaning. The media of film acts, then, as an “assistant” to the group, for example to understand that a tool shown in an image does not always have a meaning outside its activation (Sigaut, 2006).

Scientific validation for research action and the ethics of the researcher

Despite its heuristic pertinence, this medium remains somewhat removed from the academic criteria for recognition. The teaching of a culture of the image remains incomplete and marginal in anthropological training courses (Augé & Colleyn, 2007, p; 69).

The delicate connection between film as a material support and film as a support for new interactions must be taken into account in research in order not to reify the audio-visual technique and the realities/cultures. Similarly, the researcher’s commitment to provide a copy of the film to all the actors of the filmed situation, irrespective of whether they are retained in the final editing process,

¹⁰ Propos borrowed from a conference by Michel Serres M http://www.conferencesetdebats.fr/entretien_05.php

strengthens the ethical requirement of film devices. Consequently, the use of video becomes part of an interaction which we will refer to as **emic-etic mediation**¹¹:

- the emic dimension is an essential value of the “ethnographic pact” (Olivier de Sardan, 1994) between the director and the public to give this type of production meaning;
- this dimension guarantees the spectator that what he has been shown really occurred (truth and credibility of the image and sound), reiterating the photographic *noema* “that existed”, put forward by Barthes (1980)¹²;
- later, during mediations brought about by the restitution, editing and realisation as external interpretative forms involve a risk of misunderstanding or over-interpretation, whereby the various expressions of the spectators (criticism, questions of precision or understanding) enlighten us as to the ethical dimension of the act and of the filmed product.

Conclusion

“Introducing fixed-films in rural areas, far away from towns, represents an important act the impact of which must be measured; a serious act if we believe the gravity of first impressions; an act with several meanings added to that given by researchers, “developers” or tourists...” (Maïzi, 1990). We therefore concluded our first experiences of film projections in rural areas for pedagogical purposes in Burkina Faso on behalf of the FAO. We found ourselves in a situation of inter-culturality in a region where photography and film represent new “methods of building appearances” (Ouedraogo, 1996) insofar as the local technical culture had not yet “integrated the knowledge of this science of light” (*idem*). For all that, has our *habitus* of consuming images relayed this statement in a proto-history of the use of cinema for development? Our recent experiences described here, in a contemporary rural context more and more familiar with the audio-visual, incite us to think, that these techniques retain numerous advantages, and numerous constraints, which the researcher cannot trivialize.

As with photography, film as we perceive it in our research activities is not only instrumental, it is also operational (Laplantine, 1996); it is part of both a process of statement and a dual process of communication (Chevanne, 1999) and of accompaniment. In this way it enables us, by comparing the points of view that it conveys at different instants of its realisation or use, to distance ourselves from the traps of dogmatic or unequivocal thought in attempting to describe collective dynamics. Finally, and this is what we wanted to demonstrate, film as an instrument for formalising and translating knowledge, and the social and professional values which in part create this knowledge, allows us to accompany the identity (re)constructions, the processes of change (product qualification for example), which it attempted to “capture” and which it de facto directed towards new negotiations between actors. These concern the forms and bases of their legitimacies, their positions in the public arenas and in a qualification process (which was, we recall, the pretext for the film).

In the end, our experiences and devices show that filming to interact with others though images is to know and to recognise; but it is also to imagine, as the dream is impossible without this prior recognition (Honneth, 2007). So many moments or situations which lead us willingly to agree with Fellini (1996), that cinema, and for us any form of image creation, represents a “meeting point between science and magic, rationality and imagination”.

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¹¹ **Emic** is used of the description of a cultural phenomenon by a member of the culture in question, while **etic** is used of the description of a cultural phenomenon by an observer from outside the culture in question (Warren, 1997). Cited on: http://www.idrc.ca/fr/ev-28710-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html

¹² Noema (Greek) is an intentional object of the mind. (French dictionary Larousse).

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