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'An invaluable guide to urban research design for undergraduate and graduate students alike. It provides the novice researcher with a wealth of practical advice on theory, methods, writing style, and everything else one needs to know to design and manage a successful urban research project. I wish this book had been available when I started my research career!'

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This is the practical guide for any student doing urban fieldwork.

- it explains how to undertake research: from the initial idea, through design and implementation, to writing up and representation
- substantive chapters explain all the core methods in detail: Archival Methods; Interviews; Ethnography; Questionnaires; Discourse Analysis; Diaries; using GIS; and Visual Methods
- using examples throughout, the text will help students think about fieldwork in relation to real-world evidence
- each chapter includes key questions and suggestions for further reading

Required reading for Urban Studies, Urban Geography, Urban Planning, and Urban Sociology.

Kevin Ward is Professor of Human Geography in the School of Environment and Development, University of Manchester.

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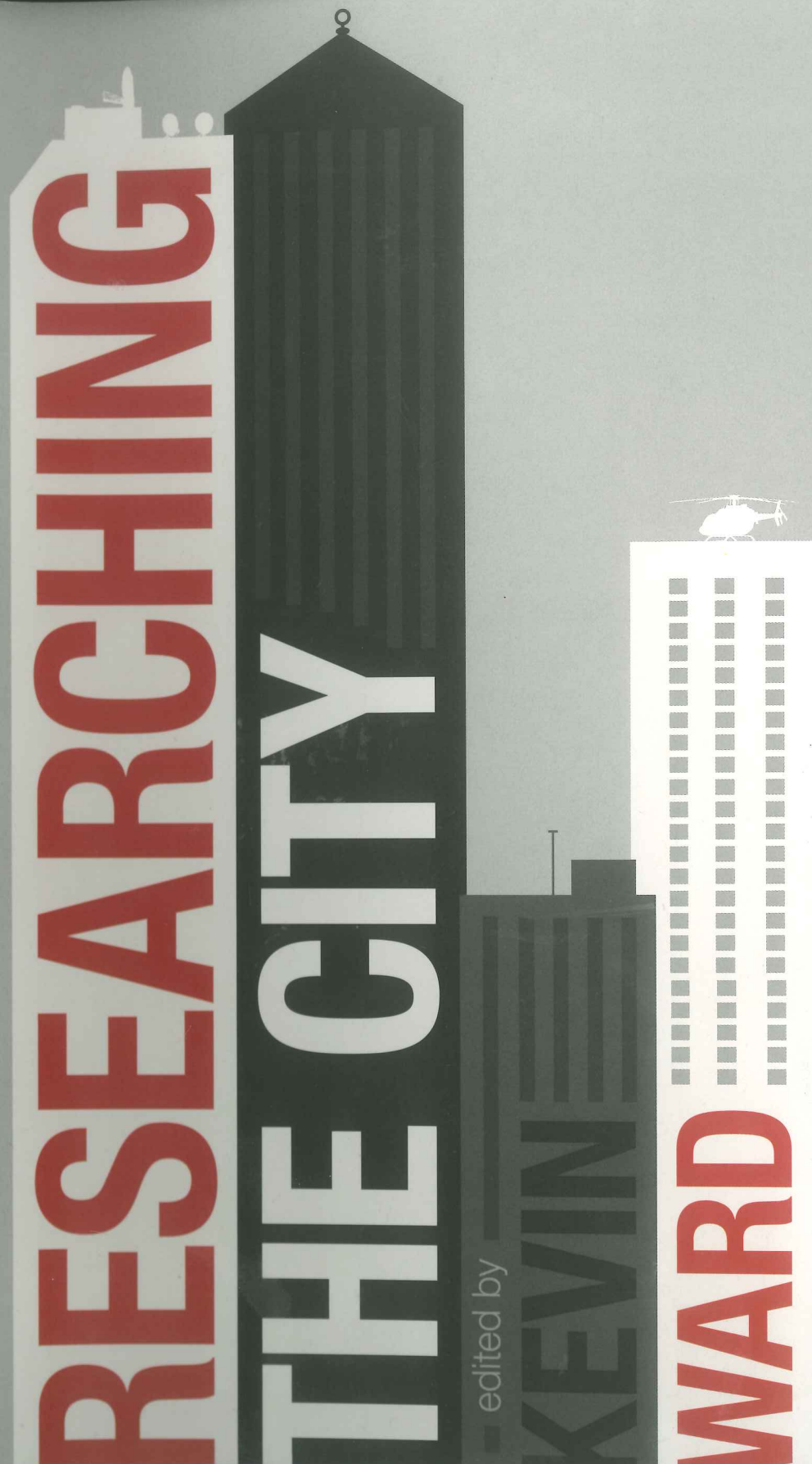
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RESEARCHING THE CITY

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10

WORLDS THROUGH GLASS: PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEO AS GEOGRAPHIC METHOD

Bradley L. Garrett

Introduction to glass geographies

Photography and video are two methods often paired under a banner of 'visual methodologies' within geography (Rose 2001). While both methods share the ability to capture and relay images, and making still and moving images often can now be accomplished with a single piece of equipment, the process of preparation, utilization, processing and dissemination are, in fact, quite different, given that video captures motion and sound as well as images. In this chapter I will discuss using both photography and video, identifying points of crossover where possible, to unpack the merits and pitfalls of each through my ethnographic work with urban explorers, where I have used media methods extensively.

It must be said, as a starting point, that much of the engagement geography has had with photography and video has been in the context of studying images produced by others, be it in an archive (Brickell and Garrett 2013; Rose 2000) or in more popular contexts (Aitken and Zonn 1994; Cresswell and Dixon 2002; Curti 2008). While those studies are interesting and useful, this chapter, in terms of method, is focused purely on media *production* rather than *analysis* (Bauch 2010; Sidaway 2002), with the researcher, often alongside project participants, taking on the role of media maker. I am interested in photography and video work as *being* and *doing*, a process of engagement and interaction with the world around us in ways

that meld and blur representations and practice. Therefore, I suggest, the process of making photos and videos is just as important as what we do with them. For those of you reading this chapter as a guide to using 'visual' methods in the process of, for instance, putting together your dissertation, I hope you will find it a useful starting point to using those methods effectively and critically.

The title of this chapter implies that mediation takes place when we see worlds *through* glass, that the world is filtered through the lens. While that is true, we also now live our lives through glass, on screen, through other people, through emotional filters, social and cultural sieves – in other words, life is a morphing, complicated meld of human and machine, culture and biology, analogue and digital – it is all at once hybrid (Haraway 1991; Whatmore 2002). Technological devices like cameras, and what we choose to do with them, are a part of our daily existence, wrapped up in the choices we make and desires we harbour in every moment of every day, especially now that those machines are almost always on our bodies (and likely soon in them). Photographs and videos 'are not something that appear over and against reality, but parts of practices through which people work to establish realities' (Crang 1997: 362). Those realities are part of who we are as people, part of our sociality, part of our culture, and as researchers it is our role to engage with them critically. While photography and video now are part of our daily lives, the way we use them as research tools should be quite different to the way we use them at home, in setting up, recording and dissemination of those media. Think about the ways in which photography and video might be used in your work. Consider the ranges of scale, differing contexts and innovative ways you might apply these methods.

In this chapter, I will make three important points in the context of audio/visual research. The first is that video and photography are utilized and conceptualized in quite different ways as research tools, even as they both become more common, accepted and appreciated. I will try to bridge the practices where I can, given that many students may want to try using both on research projects. Second, I will suggest that video and photos, now more than ever, are part of a process of creating worlds, not simple representations of them. Researchers should and do play an active role in the production and reproduction of those media cultures even as they interrogate them. Finally, I will make it clear that now is the perfect time for geographers to confront long-held concerns around the 'ocularcentrism' (Jay 1993), 'masculine gazes' (Rose 2001) or 'touristic gazes' (Urry 1990) of visual methods by directly confronting the ways in which we wield these methods (Driver 2003). As undergraduate or graduate researchers, you perhaps have more facility with these methods than many established geography researchers. This puts you in a strong position to lead the way in their use.

As Bauch has written, visual media, especially video, are 'socially ubiquitous yet almost awkwardly absent' from geography (Bauch 2010: 475). What will become clear by the end of the chapter, however, is that this is changing quickly: visual methods are being rapidly deployed across the social sciences (Garrett 2010b; Jewitt 2011) and will inevitably become a vital part of what geographers do; it is up to

new generations of researchers – such as you – to define the terms of engagement. There are also dangers here that need to be addressed – the potential pitfalls of working with these methods. Using them uncritically gets us into ethical, legal and logistical deep water very quickly. Some of these issues, which we will explore here, have been negotiated by other social sciences (Erickson 2011). Other problems are, perhaps, unique to geography. The final take-away point is that photography and video are not 'shortcut' methods; they are sensitive, difficult work.

Initiating a process of doing research using video and/or photography is not ever as simple as just 'packing a camera' and heading out. The process of making image and sound recordings of people is a highly sensitive and politically charged issue. It is therefore very important that, as a potential media researcher, you put a great deal of thought behind what it is you intend to do with those devices, making objectives clear to the people you are working with.

Kitting up – preparing for research

As part of my PhD research I produced more than 12,000 still images and recorded more than 60 hours of video footage. I published this material on my blog, on Flickr, Vimeo, Facebook and YouTube, and used those recordings for presentations and publications in many different contexts. In the process of my work I undertook a wide 'visual ethnography', using four still cameras, four video cameras and various types of note taking, creating a multimodal, multisensual, multimedia ethnography intended to integrate more of the embodied experience of the research process into the final product (Herbert, 2000). This process, while deeply rewarding, was long, arduous, even tedious at times, and is not readily reflected in the polished final products available online. In this first section of preparing for research, I would like to unravel a bit of what goes on outside the frame when setting up a research project of this sort. Set-up and learning curve are two things you need to consider carefully – particularly as I had three years to do my PhD while you may have only a matter of months to do your dissertation!

As a self-confessed technophile, I would love to suggest that preparing to do glass geographies begins with choosing the right equipment. It doesn't: it begins with intention. Before embarking on any research project, you must first confront the fundamental question of whether media methods are appropriate for what you intend to do (see Chapter 2, this volume). In many instances creating recordings of people, places and events can be seen as threatening or exploitative and the last thing you want to do, as a researcher, is close doors before you even begin because you chose a method based on your preference or desire rather than for the appropriateness to the situation. For my colleague Erika Sigvardsdotter, who works with undocumented persons in Sweden, taking images of her project participants could actually endanger their lives or livelihoods, should they be published or shared inappropriately (Sigvardsdotter 2012). This may seem counterintuitive to those of

us used to being photographed and filmed almost constantly, and indeed many of her project participants enjoyed being photographed, but the social, cultural and political implications of making media records is a necessary point of interrogation. That said, photography and video can, equally, be empowering and open doors for a researcher. Hester Parr, who has done extensive work with the homeless and mentally ill, follows Sara Kindon (2003) when she writes that 'video work can reduce the "distance" between researcher and researched and destabilize power relations in this relationship in ways that facilitate research that "makes a difference"' (Parr 2007: 115). Both Kindon and Parr have undertaken research from a participatory angle, bringing the 'researched' into the production process. In this context, as Mike Crang argues, video, as well as photography, is 'a research tool that is socially embedded and closes the gap of representation and practice' (Crang 1997: 365).

Turning back to my own experience, I conducted an audio/visual ethnography with urban explorers in London over the course of three years (Garrett 2010a; Garrett 2011; Garrett 2013). Urban explorers recreationally trespass into derelict, obsolete, temporary and infrastructural places in cities. Many urban explorers are exceptional photographers, producing stunning low-light, long-exposure photographs that they have become widely known for (see Figure 10.1), and they are used to having cameras around them, if not necessarily trained on them.

However, the implications of photographing and video recording us undertaking unauthorised activity together was quite serious. When I initially approached the community, I offered to produce a documentary film about the practice, thinking it

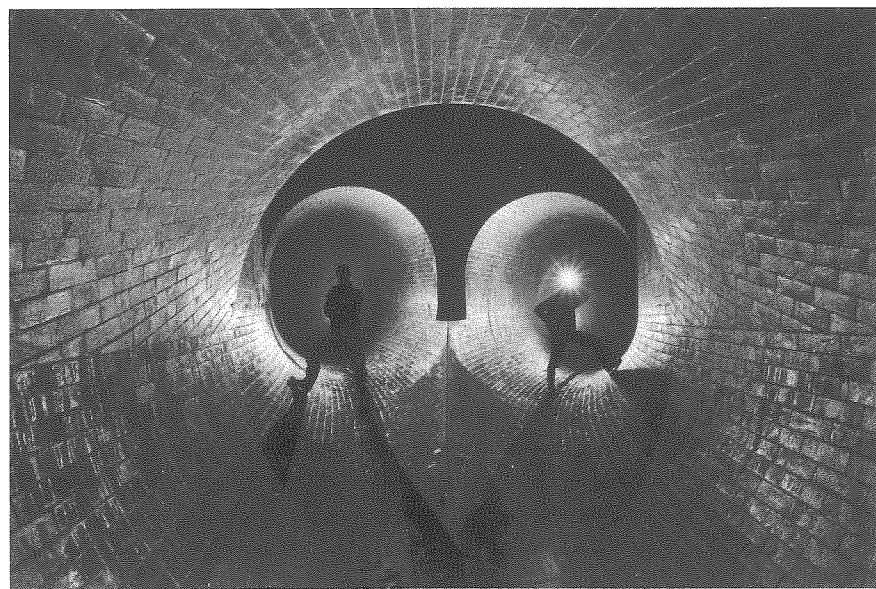


Figure 10.1 Brad and Marc Explo at Unibrow

would be seen as a valuable addition to the photography work already thriving within it. However, when many participants made it clear they were not comfortable being filmed (especially with me filming access details to places we explored), I decided to purchase a still camera so that I could better blend with the photography culture I was studying and, at the least, get some photos for my thesis. Little did I know that I would end up learning far more about photography than I ever expected; and many of my project participants, after seeing my enthusiasm for video as well as photography (I eventually carried both cameras everywhere), not only got excited about my video productions, they also used my equipment (and their own) to take over the production! In the end, the research process took off in all sorts of unexpected directions. The important point here is that when I realized my methods were slightly inappropriate, I changed them. On your dissertation you may have much less time than I did and quite possibly will not be able to change tack. Again, careful consideration of which techniques are going to work best before beginning your fieldwork are vital. Know who you are working with and what might make them uncomfortable. Know what you intend to do with the resulting images after fieldwork is 'done' and talk to your project participants about it. Most universities will have ethics and risk assessment guidelines that you should read and adhere to whilst doing your dissertations, and these are helpful templates. That is not to say you shouldn't push those boundaries: sometimes you have to and should, but be clear about what you are doing and why. Sketch out a rough plan for your project from beginning to end, paying close attention to those ethical sticking points (Chapter 2, this volume).

Let us now consider what you might do with your cameras, and what tools will be best for the job. Often, you will use more than one camera. Sarah Pink argues convincingly that there is some case to be made for obtaining as many forms of records as possible, as she did on a walking tour of a Cittàslow town, collecting 'multi-sensorial and multi-modal experience ... represented with different intensity in different media' (Pink 2008: 190). Spinney (2009) and Brown et al. (2008) have done interesting work using head-mounted video cameras, which can be used in conjunction with other media, to capture first-person perspectives of events. I used a similar technique for parts of a 2010 film called *London's Olympic Waterscape* where we took the viewer on a recorded 'triathlon' around the under-construction 2012 Olympic stadium (Anton et al. 2012). In other cases, such as in Laurier and Philo's work in an Edinburgh café (Laurier and Philo 2006a) and Paul Simpson's work as a busker in Bath (Simpson 2011), a static shot from a fixed video camera can capture moments that the researcher may have missed or wished not to be present for. Your choice of lens (thinking about the width of the frame and zoom capabilities) may also greatly affect how much of the scene is captured and there are important implications to framing a shot to be considered – what and who is going to be in and out of frame and why? What will you choose to be in focus? Each of these decisions have important implications. Finally, whatever you choose, make sure you leave yourself enough time to get comfortable with your equipment before you go into the field.

Video footage can, in some instances, replace written records where the primary goal is to record non-verbal communication such as subtle eye movements and body language (Laurier and Philo 2006b). Alasuutari (1995: 43) writes that 'to record non-verbal communication one needs a movie or video camera, and in a group discussion situation there should probably be several of them'. The multiple gazes of multiple cameras, as well as strategically placed microphones, might capture what your eyes did not, especially if you were staring at a notebook. In a participatory video environment, a digital camera where you can show people images you have taken in the field may be crucial. In my work with urban explorers, learning to take decent digital photographs quickly and being able to review and discuss them after an exploration was vital to be able to participate in the culture.

It is important to keep in mind that video, unlike photography, also records sound. This can be very useful in, for instance, getting people to speak candidly while recording with the lens cap on (collecting no visuals) and in thinking about how audio recording can be used separately and in conjunction with images. On a project I undertook with Brian Rosa and Jonathan Prior in Dundee, Scotland, we decided to make a film that foregrounded audio rather than visuals. Jonathan, who worked with audio recording as part of his research method, collected sound on a professional recorder using various microphones while Brian and I shot video, often without sound. The result, *Jute*, is a film as much about what you hear as what you see (Garrett et al. 2011) and challenges the implied 'visuality' of video (Crang 2003).

On long road trips during my urban exploration project, I took inexpensive disposable still cameras that I put in multiple pockets so I always had one within reach at a moment's notice. I also gave them to my project participants and asked them to



Figure 10.2 The crew heading underground in Paris

photograph whatever they wanted. Often they photographed me. We threw those cameras around, took technically horrible pictures of each other and broke or lost a few of them. Seemingly half of the pictures didn't turn out. However, those photos and memories, looking back on them now, are more important to me than I ever could have imagined. Viewing them triggers the feelings, flashes and fleeting associations that made up my time in the field (see Figure 10.2) and are far more important, in many ways, than the beautiful 'formal' images I took with my more expensive digital cameras.

In other instances, my large shoulder-mounted, broadcast-quality video camera could get me into places or get me an interview I would not have otherwise been able to land, since I looked 'professional' – the role of 'cameraperson' here playing out a 'double game which consists [of] acting in conformity with one's interests while giving the appearance of playing by the rules' (Bourdieu and Lamaison 1986: 113). Crang and Cook (2007: 43) point out:

Some researchers have found that activities such as photography ... can provide a readily understood reason and purpose for their presence in certain places at certain times. At tourist sites, weddings or historical reenactments, for example, someone hanging around taking photographs will not stand out in a crowd.

So, in choosing equipment, consider what *roles* you want to play as well as what technical abilities you require.

Before leaving for fieldwork, I spent a great deal of time practising filming and photographing in low light conditions, learning to identify buttons on my cameras by touch alone (sometimes gluing grains of rice on buttons or wrapping tape around one



Figure 10.3 Two-week field kit

zoom ring to help with tactile identification), packing and repacking my bag to make sure I knew where everything was intuitively and checking that I had all the necessary batteries, cables, cleaning cloths, memory cards, lights and tripod equipment. While my gear all fits in a backpack (Figure 10.3), glass methods do require a lot of 'kit' and it is easy to forget a battery or memory card. Methodical organization really is essential because once you leave, often there is no going back and you may not be able to find a Nikon D90 battery car charger in rural Poland (don't ask).

Make it or break it! Doing research

Despite my (probably by now obvious) preference for video, I cannot over-emphasize the importance of the role photography played on my urban explorers project. As a result of my project participants teaching me photography, I was able to pull from multiple media for recall, from pictures and video for images, from audio for 'field interviews' (much of my footage in the London and Paris sewers ended up being too dark to see much), as well as from field notes where I scribbled thoughts while shooting. Although I am reluctant to call my work a 'visual ethnography' since it was so much *more* than visual, I felt very content in my creation of multimedia documents constructed from text, photos, audio and video because that is a reflection of what the project had been in the 'real world'. Again, 'the photograph always carries its referent with it' (Barthes 1982: 5). These recordings are markers to experiences and are imbued with memory, associations and emotions, a lot of which are not immediately obvious. However, any attempt at representation, including the written word, will be guilty of that; it is not a particularly 'visual' pitfall. Remind yourself that you are not there to 'collect data' or 'create representations' of things and events, that you are working with the 'media as practice rather than representation, as taking part in the world rather than reflecting it' (Crang, 1997: 360), will serve you well. If you have chosen your medium/media to suit your project, practising it should break the ice, bring you closer and bridge gaps.

If you find your tools are getting in the way of your research, get rid of them! As an example, two of my project participants and myself found ourselves at 3 am perched over a ventilation shaft with a 30 metre drop in Belgium, securing ropes to abseil into the never-completed Antwerp metro system with a thunderstorm rolling in. I was photographing the rope setup for my thesis as a sort of 'photography of action', creating 2- to 3- second shots of Winch and 'Gary' tying the ropes and dropping in (Figures 10.4 and 10.5).

Winch, as he was threading loops and clipping carabineers, looked straight at me and said 'Will you put down that camera and help us with these ropes, mate?' Never had my outsider status been so evident while acting as an ethnographic photographer. I put the camera away and helped, and then harnessed up and dropped in the shaft, camera safely tucked away.



Figure 10.4 'Gary' and Winch tying off ropes to abseil into the Antwerp Premetro



Figure 10.5 'Gary' abseils into the Antwerp Premetro

My project participants also often commented on the fact that I was not photographing the same things as them. LutEx, another explorer, noted that I was 'always taking pictures of people taking pictures'. Silent Motion once said to me,

'I like how your pictures look like they're in motion, they are of us actually *doing* exploration'. As anthropologist Sol Worth writes, 'film (and photography) is not so much about what is "out there" as what is "in here"' (Worth 1981, cited in Crang and Cook 2007: 112), and my photographs revealed active processes of being and doing as much as it created the staged experiential representations urban explorers are known for.

While some have argued that photography is 'an act of non-intervention' (Sontag 1977: 11), I found that it became very much a part of me and brought me closer to the action. The best advice I ever received in terms of shooting video, and this easily applies to shooting photography, is to follow Rouch and Feld (2003) in conceiving of the camera as an appendage to the body. Capturing images, after making those initial rational decisions about what to use, when, where and why, is far more felt than thought. An ethnographic film instructor I took a class with called Mike Yorke told me that in India, where he shot a film about holy men and women in 2008, the Sadhus said he did 'camera yoga', impossibly bending around obstacles, walking backward, controlling his breathing and holding a heavy camera for hours on end. Filming and photographing project participants becomes a dance, where you run and scramble to get shots and they work to screw them up, act up for them or ignore you. After a time 'camera intimidation', which may keep them from acting 'normally', dissipates if you have chosen your method wisely and wield it with grace and confidence. On my project, after I started shooting video a few people asked not to be filmed (even when they were happy to be photographed), so I simply cut them out of frame or edited them out in postproduction (more on this in the following section) where necessary. It wasn't a big issue here, though that is not to say on another project it might not be more of a sticking point or even totally inappropriate. Again, consult your university guidelines and speak with your instructor about what might and might not be suitable.

Before we move on to the next section I want to emphasize that in your methodological framework the intentionality that you are carrying from beginning to end should be serving you in the field. It is best not to haphazardly record everything that is happening, though if you are working on a very limited time frame (a weekend perhaps where you are recording an event), it may make more sense to do so. Keep in mind that everything you collect will have to be transferred, organized, edited, stored and shared (Snell 2011). As a general rule, one day of photography will require one day to process, and one day of videography will require three days to process. I collected 60 hours of video footage during my PhD work and spent over 180 hours going through it and compiling rough edits. In total, I spent more than 3,000 hours collecting, sorting, editing and organizing almost four terabytes of recordings and it was, as much as I loved my research topic, quite painful. Although it is unlikely you will make the same mistake on a more short-term project, do keep these thoughts in mind every time you hit the shutter/record button.

Honing media – what to do with all this stuff

Now that you have collected a bunch of recordings, you will need to sort through and organize them. Do so carefully and then back up everything twice. Put a second backup drive with everything on it in a different location or in a data cloud (not a physical location). This is not paranoia; it is the reality of working with digital media. In the event you have your bag stolen with your laptop (first copy) and hard drive (backup) inside, you will have just lost all of your work. I have three copies of everything that automatically back up hourly and it has saved me a number of times. Do keep in mind that universities do not grant extensions for 'lost' work and you are not going to receive preferential treatment for choosing to use a method more complicated to capture and organize.

Editing photos is relatively straightforward unless you want to start doing more creative work like layering, prints and montage. Adobe Lightroom, for instance, is a great tool for organizing and adjusting exposure, colour saturation, cropping, rotating and the like. For video editing, simple programs may do, but it is also well worth obtaining something more versatile like Final Cut Pro (Mac), Avid (PC) or Adobe Premiere (Mac and PC). Once you have laid out your timeline and begun dropping in video, audio and still photos, the possibilities are innumerable. Nicholas Bauch, when writing about the production of his geography film *Across Space: Finding the Farm in the City*, writes that 'it was a constant maneuvering, shifting, manipulating, and changing of voice, audio, and visual clips to make what I thought would relay the academic aims of the project' (Bauch 2010: 479). It is easy to lose yourself in editing, just like writing. Be sure you have in mind what it is you want to relay, even as you let the intuition guide you through the creative process.

Keep in mind that the images you produce will not be passively consumed; you must remain critically aware of the decisions you are making. Good instructors will question you on why you framed an image a particular way, why you hit the record button when you did, why you edited film in a certain sequence. Keep in mind there is a critical geography behind every decision, both in the field and in the lab – expect those issues to be teased out in the analysis of your work. Your project participants, should you have any, are also likely to have concerns about how they are represented. You could use some of your time in the field to negotiate and discuss these issues with them, looking for gaps, triggering new ideas, provoking unexpected memories, and layering up your research. This type of engagement with photos is often referred to as photo elicitation – using photos to trigger discussion (Harper, 2002). Video can also be used in this way by filming yourself reviewing footage with project participants (should you have time for a return visit).

As should now be clear, taking on a project such as this will be challenging. However, your role as an emerging visual researcher is a vital one. You should feel confident that the use of photography and video will become increasingly ubiquitous

and encouraged over time; it is simply of a matter of students and instructors broaching the topic and getting out there to do the work. It is important that we now make the production of video, audio and photography just as valid a form of scholarly output as text in academia. There are new potentials to produce entire video and audio articles, photo-essays and even as-yet unimagined creative forms that critically interrogate the world around us in new and exciting ways. But these steps require us to continue pushing the envelope of utilization and critical examination of these methods and you have a key role in that.

As Mike Crang writes in *Cultural Geographies*, 'literature is ... just one creative "media" [sic] through which cultural ideas are produced and reproduced' (Crang, 1998: 81), and new forms of, and growing interest in, scholarship discussing the importance of video and photography should reinforce our desire to use, experiment with and disseminate those media where possible. As an academic community, we depend on each generation to push those boundaries further and it should be clear from this chapter that there is no better time than now to do so. The best way to learn about the merits and pitfalls of these methods, as with any, is through first-hand experience.

The golden age of digital media geography

Photography and video are ubiquitous tools and practices with which people define themselves and their worlds. As a result, while images proliferate and we become increasingly enraptured by them, we are also becoming more suspicious of them. As scholars and students, it is our role to interrogate the modes of conceptualizing, producing and utilizing media, new and old. Putting ourselves in that productive role places us in a much stronger position to then see the strengths and weaknesses more clearly. As should be clear now, there is no right or wrong way to do glass geographies, but there are more or less engaged and informed ways of practising them and there are methods that can quickly overproduce material. Use them critically and carefully.

Although I used both photography and video on my own research project and understand others will do the same, it is difficult to write about them as conjoined methods. They are as related, perhaps, as film and text, meaning they share characteristics (like narrative, structure and editing process) but the goals, practice and dissemination of each can be quite different. This is, of course, rapidly changing with technological shifts and media convergences (Jenkins 2006). Where once posting video online was expensive and cumbersome, it is now largely free and simple. Equipment is becoming less expensive and increasingly easy to manage. During my explorations I regularly carried two or more cameras and switched between them, often while sneaking through windows and running from security guards. It was not easy. If I had to do it all again, I would have sold all my cameras to purchase a digital single-lens reflex (DSLR) camera that also shot high definition (HD) video,

investing everything in one piece of equipment with a lot of extra memory cards and batteries. Whatever you choose to use to undertake your visual geography, just make sure you know it well and enjoy using it. And of course, be prepared to lose and break it!

The most important thing to keep in mind here is that a piece of technology will not solve your problems or do your fieldwork for you. Some of the best photo work I have seen from projects comes from people's mobile phones – because they were in the right place at the right time. What matters most is that the researcher saw the opportunity and took it. Be brave with your glass geographies; ask people if you can record them, work with them to create something they appreciate and enjoy, and spend the time to work with instructors and other students to carefully unpack what you did and why you did it. New advances in digital technologies are changing the nature of geography every day and increasingly video and photography are being seen as exciting ways to get involved with the world around us. All that is left now is for you to take the lead on what future worlds through glass will look like!

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What are the benefits of photography and video?

First, photography and video can give viewers an excellent sense of space and place. It is much easier to show a clip of your research than to describe it. Using still and moving images and/or audio also allows you to work more creatively, trying out new ways of recording and presenting information. Photography and video can also empower the people you work with, allowing them to speak for themselves or take over the production, rather than having you (as an 'expert') speak for them. These methods are also very useful for sharing your research online. Finally, they are fun!

2. Should I use photography or video on my project?

Your choice of method is very important and you want to first consider whether either is appropriate. If you will be working in strenuous field conditions where a camera will be a hindrance or in a situation where people may be uncomfortable with it, consider another method. However, if you are deciding between photography and video, remember that photographs take less hard drive space

(Continued)

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11

WRITING UP

Kevin Ward

Introduction

This final chapter turns to the writing up of your research. As Northedge (1990: 156) notes, 'writing can ... be an extremely satisfying activity'. And so it can. There will be times when the words flow, when at the end of the working day you pat yourself on the back and say, 'well done' or 'good job'. However, the writing-up process can also be very annoying, demanding and frustrating! For Wolcott (1990: 12), 'Writing is always challenging and sometimes satisfying, but that is about as far as I can go in singing its praises.' I have been through the process of writing a dissertation four times. While on the one hand each has got progressively easier, as I have learnt from previous experiences and benefited from the advice of others, the production of each dissertation has still been hard! Trying to assemble all the pieces you have generated into something that you would be happy to call a dissertation is just plain difficult – although it is also extremely rewarding. Its writing – from the introduction to the literature review and the discussion of methods, to the representation of the 'data' and its analysis, and right through to the conclusion – is not something that is left to the end of the research process. The writing of the dissertation is instead something you have actually been doing since you began reading articles, taking notes and reflecting on the focus of your research. As Hennink et al. (2011: 273) put it: