

Understanding people's views and visions.

A semiotic and cultural approach of amateur audiovisual productions.



Reality or representation?

A short study on the representation of the Ultras Napoli on YouTube

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Introduction

The rise of new media and technology has a large influence on our society, our daily lives and perhaps most of all on the lives of future generations. It is no longer preserved for professionals to either create or to appear in filmic documents. Everyone can make a registration of practically everything and put it on mass sites such as YouTube, where whomever can look at it. You can become filmmaker, journalist and actor yourself.

Digital technology has generated the possibility for grand scale production of amateur registrations either produced by telephone, photo camera or video camera. These documents can give us an idea of how these people experience their everyday life and therefore can attribute to better understand people's identities, visions and values. The quantity of the videos and the fact that they are accessible to everyone, additionally makes it an influential factor on the construction, circulation and transmission of models and cultural representations of knowledge (beliefs, values) and representations (images, stereotypes). These mass sites, therefore, provide opportunities to evaluate and carry out comparative studies on aspects such as family, friends, everyday life and certain events.

In addition to the fact that everybody can participate in the 'video sharing' on YouTube, everybody has the possibility to respond to the content of these 'digital texts'. Many clips have comments placed under it, where additional information is given, random people comment on the video, state their love for a certain artist, or give 'political or societal' opinions on the matter.

Reality or representation?

It is important to realize that every image shown in the videos is not representing a complete and objective reality. The view of the author should not be confused with the pro-filmic reality. A video shows merely a short registration of a reality. A viewer could be aware of this pro-filmic situation in several ways; one could have been at the same place and therefore recognize the location and reconstruct where it has been filmed. If the viewer has experienced the same event, he or she can agree or disagree with the film, knowing what actually happened. Regarding some topics, additional information can be found regarding the content, for instance in papers, reviews of cultural events, and so on. Even though these are interpretations as well, it can give you more angles regarding the represented 'reality'.

An author will most likely have a personal opinion on the matter, which can give the viewers a certain perspective. Out of all the possible interpretations of one situation, the author can lead the viewers towards a certain viewpoint which he selects (consciously or unconsciously) while filming.

In this paper we will analysis three videos from the same event. These videos all show a different point of view of the pro-filmic reality. With this analysis we want to show how much influence the representation of reality can have on the interpretation of the viewer.

Approach of the analysis of three registrations of ‘Ultras’

Alongside three registrations, we want to demonstrate that videos are a constructed reality, in which the author wants to communicate his point of view concerning a pro-filmic situation. In order to illustrate this, we must first make an important distinction between the outside of the text (the pro-filmic situation) and the text itself (the pro-filmic situation that is presented).

To be sure we make this distinction, we will start the analysis of every video with the question ‘what do we see in this video’: the main subject of the video. After that we will focus on the procedure of *mise en image*, with which we will be able to pin down the situation the author has created. *Mise en image* is the active process of creating a certain image, of making a visual representation of the people and the situation that is being filmed. It also gives an idea of the personal view and interpretation of the author on the filmic representation of the reality. In this segment of the analysis we will look at the six following procedures: the camera position, the camera movement, the shot, the zoom, the framing, and the duration.

Finally, we will attempt give the purpose of the author and what ‘reality’ he or she created about this event. We will try to reconstruct the intention and personal opinions of the authors on the matter. Also we will say some things about the probable interpretation of the viewer, to show how different these interpretations can be, with every different video.

Background information: Napoli versus AS Roma – 31-08-2008

As we pointed out, different representations of reality can be made, and these representations cause different interpretations, depending on different factors. In order to show the 'reconstruction' of the reality of the incidents on Termini train station at Rome on 31-08-2008, we have chosen three different registrations. On this day there was a football match between Napoli and AS Roma and many videos of the arrival of the Napoli fans ('Ultras Napoli') at Termini train station can be found on YouTube.

The three different registrations we will analysis in this paper are the following:

- Ultras Napoli arrivati alla capitale
- Roma-Napoli 31-8-08 scontri in stazione
- Ultras Napoletani alla stazione termini di roma

Before we give the actual analysis of the three videos it is necessary to have some background information about the match and what exactly happened at this particular day. The football match between Napoli and AS Roma is not a common one. This derby even has his own name, 'Derby del Sole' (Derby of the Sun), and many tensed feelings are involved. Both supporter groups are fanatic, more then for a normal match. Furthermore, the fans of Napoli are known to be 'a tough crowd'. On this particular day, 1500 fans hijacked the train from Naples to Rome. They caused damage of approximately 1,5 million Euros and the minister of internal affairs in Italy wants a restraint for Napoli fans to travel during the rest of the season. In a video of the *telegiornale* (found on YouTube¹) is told that 500 fans were already on the train with ticket. The hijackers refused to pay and 250 passengers, who had nothing to do with this match, were advised to leave the train. Four man of the railway personal got bruised in the process.

Now the background information is given, we will start with the actual analysis. The first video is made from within the in-group of the Napoli fans, whereas the two other videos are made by outsiders on train station Termini. Due to the title and the comments made by the authors on YouTube, we know that the supporters in the video are the ultras of Naples. Also we know that these videos are made on 31 August 2008 (and posted one or two days after) and that these supporters most probably came to Rome to watch the match Rome-Naples.

¹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KIWB3AWnK5w&feature=related>

Ultras Napoli arrivati alla capital: 0.00 – 1.14

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wh42wninqM8>

What do we see in this video?

In this video we see men singing and walking and there are no woman involved in this fragment. Remarkable is that all men are singing the same song, while putting both hands in the air and clapping at the same time. The participants in this video are all most probably fans of the Napoli soccer team, which is called 'Ultras Napoli'. The men are walking alongside the trains in the station of Rome, so they are most likely on their way to see the soccer match between Napoli and AS Roma. The shot is most probably made by someone from the in-group: another fan that walks together with the rest of the group towards the station.

Mise on image

- Camera position:* neutral, filmed from above the group – on a phone camera, held above the others
- Camera movement:* tracking shot, the author is filming his way through the train station
- Shot:* one long shot
- Zoom:* none
- In frame/out frame:* the authors main focus is the group of hooligans who are singing, on the sides there are some parts of the train
- Duration of the shot:* 1.14

Interpretation

The purpose of the author could be to make this film for personal remembrance of this moment. With this video he has a remembrance of a special moment in which he felt part of the in-group. The fact that the author has put this video on YouTube implies something about his purpose: he wants to share his video with other people. An option is that he wants to share this special moment with the other fans that were there as well. Another might be that the author wants to show what a strong unified group they are.

The interpretation of the viewer is interesting in this particular case. As we just mentioned, the intention of the author has something to do with sharing the feeling of being one of the in-group. The viewer most probably interprets the video this way. All members of the in-group are singing the same song, they are clapping together: there is a strong feeling of being one group. There is no reason to be frightened, because the viewer does not see any police or violence in this video. By watching this video, the viewer gets the feeling of being a part of the in-group.

Roma-Napoli 31-8-08 scontri in stazione: 0.00 – 4.47

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OZO2vBCBghw>

What do we see in this video?

In this video we see the arrival of football supporters at a train station. The author of the film stands behind the policemen that try to control the stream of supporters arriving. The large group of supporters runs by, while they are singing (the same song as the previous video, which implies that it is the same situation). Their hands are in the air and they are clapping. Sometimes the viewer hears some noises, which is most probably firework. We see some other people watching this scene. From 3.30 till 3.40 the author makes a panning shot, with which he shows the rest of the spectators. A large group of people is watching the supporters. Then he focuses again on the supporters.

Mise en image

The video is most probably filmed with a mobile phone. The quality of the video is quite bad.

Camera position: neutral, filmed from behind the police, filmed with a mobile phone – quality of the video is quite bad

Camera movement: static (with a mobile phone), with one pan shot of the bystanders

Shot: one long shot

Zoom: none

In frame/out frame: the authors' main focus is the group of hooligans who are passing by, some other spectators are accidentally filmed – only one time the author films the rest of the spectators on purpose

Duration of the shot: 4.47

Interpretation

The purpose of the author is most probably to show what he saw when he was on Termini train station. The fact that he placed his video on YouTube means that he wants to share what he saw with other people. He wants to show the supporters and their behaviour.

The interpretation of the viewer has two sides. On one hand, the viewer can be fascinated about this scene. It is quite impressive, this constant flow of supporters coming from this train, all singing and clapping. They show a strong group feeling and the author might feel some of their excitement. On the other hand, this video can cause some frightening. Policemen are present to make sure this all goes well, what suggests that the supporters are not behaving that well. Also the strong group feeling, men singing and clapping and the firework may cause some anxiousness.

ULTRAS NAPOLETANI ALLA STAZIONE TERMINI DI ROMA (VIDEO RARO)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xVczsnRuOyg&feature=related>

What do we see in this video?

In this video we see the arrival of the supporters again, as in the previous video, only from another angle. Whereas the previous video was filmed from the ground behind the police, this video is filmed from the balcony in the train station Termini. The video is taken from above and we see the supporters running towards the camera. The interesting feature of this video is that it is taken from exact the same event as the previous video.

This video gives the viewer a better look on the supporters: they are wearing caps and carrying flagpoles with them, they are screaming and singing, and they show their middle fingers to the bystanders. In the beginning of the video we see the policemen preparing for the supporters. Many bystanders are looking at the event.

Mise en image

The video is most probably filmed with a mobile phone.

Camera position: high angle, the camera is filming the event from above

Camera movement: static

Shot: one long shot

Zoom: some zooming, especially in 4.37 in which the camera zooms in on some supporters

In frame/out frame: the authors' main focus is the supporters arriving at the station; by filming this he also frames the bystanders

Duration of the shot: 4.57

Interpretation

The purpose of the author is, like in the previous video, to show that he was present at the event at Termini train station. He wants to show the arrival of the supporters. The interpretation of the viewer could be the fascination about the supporters, but along with that comes the frightening. In this video the viewer even stronger feels the power of the in-group. The police are much more present in this video, which creates a feeling of anxiousness. Besides that, the supporters are better visible then in the previous video, because the viewer can actually see faces and the object they are carrying with them. This video creates a feeling of insecurity.

Conclusion

With this analysis we want to show that one representation of the reality can give a different idea about the actual situation. The video taken from the in-group showed a 'safe' group feeling. The viewer might be fascinated about the situation, but does not feel so anxious. The interpretation of the viewer could be that one wants to belong to an in-group like this as well. In the other two videos a frightening feeling dominates much more. The viewer feels like an outsider and the strong group feeling gives a different feeling here. The viewer gets a feeling of insecurity and might feel uncomfortable by the idea what such a group feeling can cause.

These results lead to the following conclusion: 'The filmic shot does not show us the social reality 'as it is', but rather one vision and a model based on that vision fashioned by the knowledge, values, desires, interest, etc of the person(s) that made it.' (PP II Stockinger, slide 13) In addition to this conclusion, we could also say that both authors have different intentions by putting their videos on YouTube. The first video is placed there to show the strong bounding of the in-group. The other videos show how this 'in-group' looks from the outside.

Bibliography

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