

Thinking with sound and images: Audiovisual essays as a different way to represent scientific work

26 ÚNORA, 2026 • ENGLISH LANGUAGE CONTENT • BY ŠTĚPÁN ŠANDA



“There is nothing spontaneous, nothing natural about human desires” proclaims Slovenian philosopher

We use cookies only to help us understand how the site is used. We do not collect personal data, nor do we sell data to third parties, or use cookies for marketing purposes. If you continue to use this site we assume that you are happy with this. To learn more, please look at our Privacy Policy. Ok

using various examples, presents a psychoanalytic interpretation of a number of famous and lesser-known items from world cinema.

But you don't have to be an eccentric thinker like Žižek. Nor do you have to have access to the nearly unlimited BBC archive, as British documentary filmmaker Adam Curtis, who creates collages of ideas and commentary on the present, using historical footage to communicate his insights in an audiovisual way. Digitalization, among other things, has brought greater accessibility to film and audiovisual material in general, as well as the ease of editing and manipulation of such content. This has given rise to a specific genre of the audiovisual essay, or the video essay as it is sometimes also called, which is now also used by the academic community to present their research.

Visual thinking as a scientific method

“It draws on the older tradition of thinking in moving images, or working with moving images that think for themselves. Examples include projects by theorists such as Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen” explains Veronika Hanáková, a doctoral student at the Institute of Information Studies and Librarianship at Charles University's Faculty of Arts (ÚISK FF UK), who produces video essays herself. She also mentions other early pioneers of this format, such as critic John Berger and his BBC series Ways of Seeing, as well as the artistic community.

She herself was inspired to create video essays by the TV Dictionary project, for which she teamed up with film scholar Jiří Anger to create an [essay on the television series Vodník](#). Jiří then arranged a platform for publishing cinephile-style audiovisual essays for [Film a doba](#), as well as popular science and research essays for the Czech National Film Archive (NFA) and the Kontexty section of its Filmový přehled website. “Together with other people from Film Studies at Charles University (Lucie Formánková, Jáchym Šidlák, Jan Kinzl, and others), we created audiovisual essays about Czech films”, she describes, adding that they also worked with NFA materials that were not available to the public, thus bringing them to a wider audience. She places their production in the context of a practically oriented research field, the outputs of which are not traditional scientific works.



Film essay Agon

Nico Carpentier from ICSJ at Charles University's Faculty of Social Sciences also mentions audiovisual production as another way of presenting academic work and sharing it, when talking about his new film essay Agon, which was part of the European [research project MeDeMAP](#).

“It works as dissemination, which is quite important in research projects. We try to get film essays into cinemas and film festivals, which is very difficult because it is a hybrid format combining academic and artistic work. And hybrids don't always have it easy. So we try to use academic publications that publish such outputs, but also artistic distribution” says the media scholar, describing the process he is currently involved in.

This year, he and Jeffrey Wimmer published the book [Democracy and Media in Europe](#), and its key themes were used together with doctoral students Ali Minanto and Jhon Sany Purwanto in the creation of the film essay [Agon: Constructions of Democracy](#), which premiered on October 22 at the Ponrepo cinema in Prague.

This format can indeed reach audiences who do not otherwise read academic journals – the [Marienbad](#) Film Festival has its own video essay section, co-directed by Veronika Hanáková. She herself mentions multi-genre events in the Czech context, such as the [Festival of Film Animation and Contemporary Art](#) and [Academia Film Olomouc](#). She also points out that these audiovisual essays can find a place in galleries.

When a book is not enough

However, this also means a completely different way of thinking about one's work, as communication through audiovisual works involves different practical and theoretical approaches. “You can actually express different things using different modes of communication. We shouldn't stop being academics, but we should be more creative in our knowledge production and communication,” Carpentier outlines. Although the creation of audiovisual essays is closely related to film studies or broadly conceived media studies, it also benefits from a multidisciplinary approach.

One example is the video [Cycles of Labour](#), created by Jiří Anger and Veronika Hanáková in collaboration with Martin Tremčímský from the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, which focuses on invisible and reproductive work. The diversity is also evident in magazines, where audiovisual essays can be found, such as the new media [Digital Humanities Quarterly](#), or [in]Transition, the feminist-theoretical [Feminist Media Histories](#) and MAI: [Feminism & Visual Culture](#), or general audiovisual [NECSUS](#), [Movie: A Journal of Film Criticism](#), or the Czech [Illuminace](#).

In the anthology [Practical Aesthetics](#), theorist and philosopher Bernd Herzongerath, points out that the titular approach does not necessarily mean thinking about aesthetics as rationally as possible, which is expressed by written and de facto strictly linear text, but rather allowing oneself to be guided and thinking together with individual formats, whether it be image, sound or audiovisual outputs. Veronika Hanáková recalls an example from her own practice, the creation of an audiovisual essay on the so-called star wipe.

“Almost nothing has been written about this phenomenon, therefore, the audiovisual component was crucial in order to show what kind of object it is. Only then was it possible to delve into its history, but also into the implications of the star wipe for the history of editing. At the same time, we were interested in whether it allows us to see editing not as something purely utilitarian, but as something playful, going against the logic of automation. In text form, we would have had to create a broad and descriptive foundation before we could dive into the research question, which would have meant that the study alone would not have been enough and we would have had to consider a book project” she explains the thought process behind the audiovisual essay [The Return of the Star Wipe](#).

Nico Carpentier, of course, had to proceed in the opposite direction – after all, he was using an already written text as a source of inspiration. Nevertheless, even the team of authors temporarily abandoned the written text as a means of expression. “At the beginning, Ali, Sany, and I started thinking about how to express the core ideas of the book visually. We created storyboards for them, which immediately allowed us to think visually. It was only through dialogue about these storyboards that the script began to take shape. Translating one type of text into another – a book into a script – would be difficult and risky. We wanted to protect the film as a genre from being classified as a book” says Nico Carpentier, describing the creative process behind the film Agon.

Fail better

If social media dominates today's media diet (at least in Europe), with an increasing preference for audiovisual content, we can also perceive the video essay format as a unique and, in a way, surprising contribution to our current communication culture. Its multimedia nature often raises concerns about whether it is too superficial.

“A rather doubtful argument is often used, claiming that the younger generation cannot hold their attention for longer than thirty seconds. Not only is this a broad generalization, but it also assumes that people are frozen in time and that their communication needs will never change” comments Nico Carpentier.

Furthermore, audiovisual essays show that even video can be used to explore topics in depth. However, it may run into problems with the regulations on platforms such as YouTube, where large media corporations monitor the use of materials to which they hold the rights and can block videos.

Although this platform-based nature has complicated the publication of audiovisual essays in many ways – Veronika Hanáková also mentions the need to offer them through various channels – there is growing interest in their creation. “Working with video is seen positively not only in terms of research, but also as a pedagogical tool, or for the purposes of popularizing research on various social and other platforms” says the researcher, who has also lectured on these possibilities at her home institute.

“It is important to note the famous and often repeated quote by Samuel Beckett: ‘Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better.’ My informal education gives me perhaps a little more space to develop my own style and language, which I also appreciate because it means I don't have to stick too closely to conventions” adds Nico Carpentier on the question of the various skills needed for audiovisual production.

It is the low bar of today's possibilities for creating and editing audiovisual material that tempts us to try to portray our topic in a different way or to include an audiovisual essay as one of the possible outputs when applying for a grant. They can be used to discover new insights not only for the scientific community and a wider audience, but also for ourselves.



Tags: [audiovisual essay](#), [film](#), [multimodal research](#), [science communication](#), [scientific communication](#), [visual culture](#)



Štěpán Šanda

Vystudoval žurnalistiku na FSV UK, pokračuje ve Studiih nových médií na FF UK. Publicista přispívající do různých médií (A2, Seznam zprávy, web Revue Prostor aj.).

» English language content » Thinking with sound and images: Audiovisual...

Související články



Návštěvnost filmu a kinodistribuce: Analýza trendů



Náboženská tematika v ČT: Uspět v tvrdé



Nová média jako vetřelec? Pokus o novou

VE SPOLUPRACI S



SPONZOROVANO



NAJDETE NAS NA FACEBOOKU

ARCHIVY

Vybrat měsíc

STITKY

- AI
- boj s dezinformacemi
- cenzura
- covid-19
- datová žurnalistika
- demokracie
- dezinformace
- digitální média
- etika
- EU
- Evropská unie
- Facebook
- fake news
- internet
- investigativní žurnalistika
- kvalita žurnalistiky
- mediální gramotnost
- mediální výchova
- média
- média veřejné služby
- novináři
- nová média
- online žurnalistika
- politická komunikace
- politika
- propaganda
- rozhovor
- rozpravy
- Rozpravy o médiích
- Rozpravy o českých médiích
- Rusko
- socialní síte
- socialní média
- svoboda médií
- svoboda tisku
- televize
- Twitter
- umělá inteligence
- výzkum
- Výzkum médií
- Zpravodajství
- Český rozhlas
- česká média
- česká republika
- žurnalistika

POSLEDNÍ POPULARNÍ NAHODNÝ

- Proč se novinářská profese stává oborem pro ty, kteří si...
9 BŘEZNA, 2026
- Thinking with sound and images: Audiovisual essays as a different...
26 ÚNORA, 2026
- O nás bez nás. Aneb jak se (ne)daří queer médiím...
23 ÚNORA, 2026
- Ruská operace Doppelgänger a klonování zpravodajských webů
9 ÚNORA, 2026

RECENT TWEETS

Could not authenticate you.

ARCHIVY

Vybrat měsíc

BLOGROLL

- Columbia Journalism
- European Journalism Centre
- Journalism.co.uk
- Journalism.org
- Mediashift
- Nieman Journalism Lab
- Online Journalism Review
- Pew Research
- Polis

NEJNOVEJSI PRISPEVKY

- Proč se novinářská profese stává oborem pro ty, kteří si ji mohou dovolit
- Thinking with sound and images: Audiovisual essays as a different way to represent scientific work
- O nás bez nás. Aneb jak se (ne)daří queer médiím v Česku
- Ruská operace Doppelgänger a klonování zpravodajských webů
- Novináři v nebezpečí: sexismus, výhrůžky a nejistota