

Prof. Dr. Horst Niesyto
University of Education, Ludwigsburg

Video and Global Communication

“VideoCulture” was an ethnographic research project which set out to explore the potential of audio-visual media production as a means of communication between young people in different cultures. The project took place from 1997-2000 with research groups in Germany and England and integrated colleagues in the Czech Republic, the United States and Hungary. Including a pilotphase around 35 videofilms were produced by young people (14-19 years) from different social-cultural milieux. The challenge was to express experiences, feelings and fantasies in short videos (max. 3 min) only by images and music.

The project was based on the assumption, that communication and media cultures now increasingly transcend national borders: new trans-national cultures are emerging, with their own distinctive practices, bodies of knowledge, conventions and lifestyles. These trans-national cultures are based on symbolic systems and conceptions of the world which overlay local and national cultures. In the process, it is suggested, new relationships between the local and the global are beginning to emerge, and new kinds of symbolic communities are growing up. These symbolic communities provide their own characteristic combinations of socially-generated and media-generated patterns and lifestyles.

Another assumption was, that there is still a gap between an enormous technological extension on the one hand and the lack of inter-cultural exchange on the other. In the age of electronic media, audio-visual competence and media literacy are increasingly necessary in order to understand other cultures and symbolic milieux. The exchange and understanding of cultural self-representations requires new forms of inter-cultural, symbolic learning.

“VideoCulture” set out to begin this process by means of a series of inter-connected case studies in very different national contexts. In summary, then, the project sought to address three main questions:

- 1) To what extent can we identify a trans-cultural, audio-visual symbolic language in videotapes produced with groups of young people from different language areas and symbolic milieux?
- 2) Which styles of symbolic representation and understanding are involved in the production process, in the productions themselves and the interpretations? To what extent are these styles influenced by factors such as education, gender, ethnic and class background, as well as by the characteristics of the young people’s media cultures?
- 3) Which teaching strategies are most useful in attempting to encourage this kind of cross-cultural communication by video?

The presentation will outline the approach “Media Self-Productions as an Object of Research” and summarize most important findings of “VideoCulture”, especially referring to question 1. “VideoCulture” shows the potential of media-ethnographic research in context of media-educational settings and offers new perspectives for intercultural communication in a globalized world. At the same time the presentation will relate to issues of visual and symbolic anthropology.

Literature:

Niesyto, Horst (Hrsg.), 2003: VideoCulture. Video und interkulturelle Kommunikation.

München: kopaed-Verlag. (Including a CD-ROM with videofilms, project material and a part in English language.)

Niesyto, Horst, 2000: Youth Research on Video Self-productions. Reflections on a Social-aesthetic Approach. In: Visual Sociology 15, pp. 135-15

Niesyto, Horst, 1999: Video and Intercultural Communication. In: Feilitzen, Cecilia v. / Carlsson, Ulla (Editors): Children and Media. Image Education Participation. The UNESCO International Clearinghouse on Children and Violence on the Screen at Nordicom, S. 323-326.

Journal of Educational Media, Volume 26, Number 3, October 2001 (Taylor & Francis): Special Issue on VideoCulture (pp. 165-225). Articles written by H. Niesyto & D. Buckingham (introduction), D. Buckingham & I. Harvey (London), P. Holzwarth & B. Maurer (Ludwigsburg), J. Fisherkeller, A. Butler & E. Zaslow (New York), H. Niesyto (conclusions).

Internet:

- <http://www.ph-ludwigsburg.de/medien1/forsch.htm> ("VideoCulture")
- http://www.kreidestriche.de/onmerz/pdf-docs/niesyto_video.pdf (article about "Youth Research by Video"; English language)

Dr. Horst Niesyto is Professor of Education with special reference to Media Education and Head of the Dept. of Media Education at the University of Ludwigsburg, Germany. He has published widely on aspects of youth research, media production by young people and symbolic self-presentation.

E-mail: niesyto_horst@ph-ludwigsburg.de