

## Editorial NECSUS

NECSUS 9 (2), Autumn 2020: 1–4

URL: <https://necsus-ejms.org/editorial-necsus-6/>

**Keywords:** editorial, method, methodology

In this new issue of NECSUS we present a special section on the topic #Method. This themed section spotlights our reliance on the systems of thought that structure the work of knowledge (re-)production. This work is carried out through writing and teaching, but also through the ever-expanding share of our labour that goes into network relations, team-building, individual or collective fundraising, and dissemination of activities within and outside academia, across the multiple intersecting fields in media studies. 'Method' is most of the time assumed rather than theorised, internalised rather than spelled out, adhered to rather than questioned. Method can also sometimes make itself felt as a set of external constraints that clash with increasingly fluid positionalities within the compartmentalised space of contemporary academia. We rarely write about method, perhaps because we rarely leave its confines in the academic practice of writing.

The consideration of method at a meta-disciplinary level, its crystallisation into methodologies that map disciplinary contours, and the two-way street between methods and objects of study at the basis of research epistemology are key threads across the ten pieces that make up the special section. Opening the section, NECSUS editor Toni Pape issues a philosophical provocation, reclaiming the place of intuition in method and exploring metamodelling as a method open to intervention through practice. Pape's piece sparked an online conversation among the editorial board that we have transcribed and edited, presented here as a roundtable discussion in which we informally respond to Pape's piece and contextualise the section's topic with regard to our own research experiences, identities, and views on method and its translation into practice.

In this special section Diane Burgess looks at recent debates at the intersection of film festival studies and industry studies through a focus on the notion of festival *buzz*. Burgess examines how an ephemeral concept may

translate into the creation of material value and sets out to describe the structure of methods required to describe and evaluate the channels through which value is accrued and re-directed into film circulation and consumption. Jessica Balanzategui advocates for a confluence of methods, namely audience research, genre studies, and platform analysis methods drawn from digital studies in order to overcome the limitations of existing screen studies paradigms when it comes to the new children's genres emerging on video-sharing and video-on-demand platforms and the analysis of usage patterns and consumption habits prevalent among this demographic. Malini Guha proposes the essay film as a place of encounter that constitutes a form of interdisciplinary praxis. In her piece, Guha makes a plea for a hybrid method of thinking through film with the potential to de-Westernise critical practice. Through case studies focusing on exchanges across the work of Doreen Massey and Patrick Keiller on the one hand, and Stuart Hall and John Akomfrah on the other, Guha shows how the scholarly essay and the essay film – with particular reference to *Robinson in Ruins* (2010) and *The Stuart Hall Project* (2013) – may function as communicating vessels. Maria Korolkova and Simon Bowes theorise the 'mistake' as a semantic field which has historically planted the seeds for the methodological transformation of disciplines; by drawing on examples from performance studies, this contribution illuminates the ways in which the mistake may act as a form of method in and of itself, releasing creativity in the humanities and in particular in modes of research by practice. Roberto Letizi and Simon Troon turn their attention to the audiovisual essay as pedagogic practice. Arising from a curriculum-enhancing education project, the authors reflect on professional audiovisual criticism in relation to the audiovisual essay developed in the classroom environment for assessment purposes. Taking the feature *F For Fake* (1973) as a starting point, Letizi and Troon set out to interrogate the form in a continuum of critical practices as well as its value in facilitating students' reflection on their own creative agency and authorship in the learning process.

Mario Sluga discusses the experimental method in relation to film studies and interrogates what a field of scientific film studies may look like; this contribution examines the long-standing tensions between the paradigms of cognitivism and continental theory and deconstructs the binary between the natural sciences and humanistic disciplines in analyses of viewer behaviour, proceeding to reclaim the usefulness of experimental methods to tackle problems of representation and ideological belief, traditionally intertwined

with humanistic assumptions. In a sustained meta-reflection on method, Michael Stevenson and Tamara Witschge caution against the limits of formalised methodologies and the 'ordered procedures' of research methods, advocating instead for a more capacious understanding of the term, taking into account the particularities of process. Deb Verhoeven and the collective Kinomatics turn to academic networks themselves (taking as an example their own research network) as an object of analysis mirroring film networks in the global cultural industry. Using data tools deriving from the digital humanities, Verhoeven et al. look at the modes of collaboration and sociality that sustain the formation and transnational functioning of research communities, with connectedness emerging as the very condition for intellectual labour in the process of generating methods.

In the Features section, we offer a varied mixture of topics and authors. Doron Galili interviews Henry Jenkins, a preeminent voice on participatory media and the restructuring of film and media studies in the past decades. They talk about Jenkins' book *Convergence Culture*, its impact on the field, and related matters in media and politics. Charles Musser offers a significant contribution to the genealogy of documentary, both the term and the audiovisual form. For the longest time, the documentary was assumed to be inaugurated with the writings and films of John Grierson. Musser, by contrast, positions a 'longue durée' across different media formats, with roots in the illustrated lecture. Kathrin Friedrich, Mortiz Queisner, and Matthias Bruhn introduce adaptive images, discussing the implementation of this image type in medicine, industrial production, and other fields, as well as the resulting implications for media theory.

In the book review section, Rosella Catanese inspects two entries in the area of colour studies published in 2019. Spiros Chairetis covers publications on the intersection of queer studies and television, with particular emphasis on the situation comedy. Sarah Polley pays tribute to recent books on the film star system, and particularly on the unique star power of George Clooney. Marie Rebecchi pulls together two disparate studies, one on Caravaggio and the other on Sergei Eisenstein, via the thematic linkage of displacement.

The festival review section in this issue consists of a special and very timely dossier on Covid-19 and its oversized effects on the film festival circuit. Section editors Marijke de Valck and Antoine Damiens outline their aims for this dossier in a short introduction that contemplates the challenges and opportunities of this monumental shift in the landscape. Contributions

include studies on festivals in Europe, the United States, and Canada, covering such topics as communal viewing, corporate partnerships, and decolonisation.

The exhibition review section features a long conversation between researcher Claire Salles and curators Peter Szendy, Emmanuel Alloa, and Marta Ponsa on their exhibition *The Supermarket of Images*, presented at Jeu de Paume in Paris. Mariana Cunha delivers a piece on Meteorological Mobilities, presented online, on the site for the nonprofit arts organisation apexart, which is based in New York. Rania Gaafar covers the show *Glitch: Art & Technology*, presented across three new galleries on the former campus of the American University in Cairo, on Tahrir Square.

The audiovisual essay section in this issue offers the first entry in a two-part focus on sound and music. Liz Greene is the guest editor of this section, which covers dialogue, music, and effects through a range of creative interventions. Greene herself creates an entry on *The Elephant Man* and the unsolved mysteries of its sound design. Cormac Donnelly interrogates the sound design in two films set in newsrooms. Oswald Iten explores scoring in Walt Disney Studio productions, through the art and craft of the composer George Bruns. Jaap Kooijman cuts together a montage of talking heads in documentaries on the late singer Whitney Houston. The second part of this thematic focus continues with another unique collection of audiovisual essays in the Spring 2021 issue. In addition, NECSUS will celebrate ten years of publishing with a very special anniversary issue in Autumn 2021. More details soon. For now, happy reading, happy holidays, and good health to all.