Video Lifestreaming Practices in the Light of Umberto Eco’s Semiology of Everyday Life

Krzysztof Gajewski
Institute of Literary Research
Polish Academy of Science

Łódź, 24-27 May, 2015
Contents

Umberto Eco’s semiology of everyday life

Lifestreams as an Interface Metaphor

Video Lifestreaming and Semiological Guerrilla
Umberto Eco’s semiology of everyday life
Umberto Eco’s semiology of everyday life

Semiology of everyday life

1. concentration on mass culture
2. lack of hierarchy among objects to investigate
3. no central value
4. semiology as a critique of culture
5. semiological analysis of kitsch
6. to be an interpreter, not a legislator (Z. Bauman)\(^1\)

\(^1\) Joanna Ugniewska, Słowo wstępne, w: U. Eco, Semiologia dnia codziennego, przeł. J. Ugniewska, P. Salwa, Warszawa 1996, s. 5-9
Lifestreams as an Interface Metaphor
Interface Metaphors: Desktop vs. Lifestreams

Eric Freeman’s Ph. D. thesis:

• the desktop model — a tree of files and folders, paper-based\(^2\), not sufficient for ”deluge of data”, because of categorization problem

• the Lifestreams model — ”a time-ordered stream of documents that functions as a **diary of your electronic life**; every document you create or other people send you is stored in your lifestream”\(^3\)

---


\(^3\)Freeman, p. 1.
Interface Metaphors: Desktop vs. Lifestreams

- the desktop model

- the Lifestreams model
• The desktop model is not sufficient for "deluge of data", because of categorization problem\textsuperscript{4}.
• The Lifestreams model gives up any taxonomy and relations between elements.

\textsuperscript{4}Eric T. Freeman, op. cit.
Lifestreaming has evolved into the act of documenting and *sharing aspects of daily existence online*. A lifestream website collects the things you choose to publish (e.g. photos, tweets, videos, or blog posts) and displays them in reverse-chronological order.\(^5\).

---

\(^5\) Jessica E. Mullen, Lifestreaming as a Life Design Methodology, 2010, p. vi.
Video Lifestreaming and Semiological Guerrilla
Lifecasting (LifeLog)

Steve Mann’s "wearable computer" and "reality mediator" inventions of the 1970s have evolved into what looks like ordinary eyeglasses.

(a) 1980  (b) Mid 1980s  (c) Early 1990s  (d) Mid 1990s  (e) Late 1990s

Source: Wikimedia Commons

Steve Mann, "father of wearable computing"

http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2012/apr/05/google-project-glass-digital-goggles
Surveillance and sousveillance

Surveillance

Sousveillance with wearable cameras

(Ceiling dome)  Mann 1998  Microsoft 2004  Memoto 2013

"Internet of People, Places, and Things" ⁷

”The Russian courts don’t like verbal claims. (...) Dash-cam footage is the only real way to substantiate your claims in the court of law."  

---

BraCam

Source: Wikimedia Commons

“wearable interactive art to reverse the male gaze” by Steve Mann (2001)
Surveillance, sousveillance, reflectionism

- surveillance — panopticon (M. Foucault)
- sousveillance — "surveilling the surveillers" ("Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?", Juvenal, Satire 6)
  
  *focuses on enhancing the ability of people to access and collect data about their surveillance and to neutralize surveillance*\(^9\).  

- reflectionism
  
  *a philosophy and procedures of using technology to mirror and confront bureaucratic organizations*\(^10\).

---

\(^10\)Mann et alii, idem
Surveillance and sousveillance

- "watching from above"
- "eye-in-the-sky"
- 1st person perspective

Source: Wikimedia Commons
Examples of sousveillance

- **fortuitous sousveillance**: Rodney King beaten by police, videotaped from a balcony by George Holliday (1991)
- **organizational sousveillance**
  - customers photographing shopkeepers;
  - taxi passengers photographing cab drivers;
  - citizens photographing police officers who come to their doors;
  - civilians photographing government officials;
  - residents beaming satellite shots of occupying troops onto the Internet\(^\text{11}\).

\(^{11}\text{Mann et alii, p. 334}\)
EyeTap

Steve Mann’s 1999 “EyeTap Digital Eye Glass”

2012, Google Glass

Source: Wikimedia Commons
Here Perp. 1 struck my Eye Glass (not a direct hit like a punch in the face, but a side-swipe, grabbing motion)\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{12}Steve Mann, Physical assault by McDonald’s for wearing Digital Eye Glass, 2012, http://eyetap.blogspot.ca/2012/07/physical-assault-by-mcdonalds-for.html
Equivelliance and inequivelliance

- Equivelliance — equilibrium of surveillance and sousveillance\(^{13}\)
- Inequivellance, eg. McVeillance

> "McVeillance is the installation or using of surveillance cameras while simultaneously prohibiting people from having or using their own cameras, handheld magnifiers, smartphones, or the like."\(^{14}\)

---

\(^{13}\)Ian Kerr, Steve Mann, Exploring Equiveillance, 2006, http://wearcam.org/anonequiveillance.htm

\(^{14}\)Steve Mann, McVeillance:How McDonaldized surveillance creates a monopoly on sight that chills AR and smartphone development, 2012, 1010 (October 10), http://www.webcitation.org/6Cb7y7KRb
McVeillance equation

Source: Steve Mann, McVeillance, op. cit.
What must be occupied, in every part of the world, is the first chair in front of every TV set (and naturally, the chair of the group leader in front of every movie screen, every transistor, every page of newspaper). (..) The battle for the survival of man as a responsible being in the Communications Era is not to be won where the communication originates, but where it arrives.\(^\text{15}\)

\(^{15}\)Umberto Eco, Towards a Semiological Guerrilla Warfare (1967)
1. A camera
   1.1 a sign
   1.2 a machine for production of (iconic) signs
2. Semiological Guerrilla warfare: to be recorded (to be translated into signs, to get objectified) is to get subjected to a certain power
3. fright of representatives of oral cultures to be ”described”
4. iconic signs, sympathetic magic
5. a semiotic trail of reality