

Fostering a relational sense of place through video documentary assignments

Krisztina Varró & Bouke Van Gorp

To cite this article: Krisztina Varró & Bouke Van Gorp (2020): Fostering a relational sense of place through video documentary assignments, Journal of Geography in Higher Education, DOI: [10.1080/03098265.2020.1803223](https://doi.org/10.1080/03098265.2020.1803223)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03098265.2020.1803223>



© 2020 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.



Published online: 06 Oct 2020.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 57



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Fostering a relational sense of place through video documentary assignments

Krisztina Varró and Bouke Van Gorp

Department of Human Geography and Spatial Planning, Utrecht University, Utrecht, The Netherlands

ABSTRACT

Research on the use(fulness) of student-led film has emphasized the benefits of combining fieldwork and the production of moving image in terms of active, deep and reflexive learning. This paper contributes to this literature by discussing how a video documentary assignment can (also) help fostering relational thinking – a main objective of human geography education. Inspired by Doreen Massey's notion of a "global sense of place", the assignment asks students to explore, in a neighbourhood of the Dutch city of Utrecht, how external influences and relations to other places have shaped the neighbourhood's development and identity. Based on the in-depth qualitative analysis of videos, students' logbooks and personal reflections from two cohorts, we argue that a film assignment can stimulate relational thinking, but there are some important caveats. The assignment needs to be embedded into a course where relational thinking explicitly figures as an overarching perspective. Furthermore, offering students supervised autonomy and continuous feedback, and the inclusion of follow-up reflection is key to making students critically engage with their own and others' "essentialist gaze". Finally, to help students exploit the added value of film in conveying a sense of relationality, sensitization to and training on aspects of cinematography is needed.

ARTICLE HISTORY



Received 11 July 2019
Accepted 10 May 2020

KEYWORDS

Relational thinking; global sense of place; Doreen Massey; student-led film; fieldwork; deep learning

Introduction

Relational thinking, understood as a perceptiveness of how places and place identities at different scales are shaped by their interconnectedness and interdependence, is commonly regarded as the core of geographical thinking. Fostering this thinking has been a key concern both in pre-university (Geographical Association, 2012; International Geographical Union, 2016; Jackson, 2006) and university-level geography education (see e.g., Allen, 2008; Daniels et al., 2016; Marston et al., 2011). In this paper, we discuss the use of a video documentary assignment, inspired by Doreen Massey's (1991) seminal article on "A global sense of place", to stimulate relational thinking in an introductory human geography course at University College Utrecht (UCU) in the Netherlands. The video documentary assignment asks students to produce a 10-minute film that applies Massey's relational perspective to demonstrate, for an Utrecht neighbourhood, how the

CONTACT Krisztina Varró  k.varro@uu.nl  Department of Human Geography and Spatial Planning, Utrecht University, Utrecht, The Netherlands

© 2020 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.

particularity of a place can be seen as the product of historically evolving relations that reach beyond the place. In preparation, writings of Massey (1991, 1995) and other prominent scholars (among others Crang, 2003; Florida, 2005; Harvey, 2001; Krugman, 1997; Rumford, 2006) are used to stimulate students' reflection on and discussion of how processes "at" different scales have been intertwined, how power relations have been (re-) produced as a result, and how mobility, interconnectedness and (new) practices of bordering continue to exist side-by-side in today's globalizing world.

In this paper, we are drawing on our experience with the assignment since its introduction in autumn 2016 and on the in-depth analysis of videos and students' personal reflections of two cohorts (spring and autumn 2018) more specifically to examine whether and how student-generated film can stimulate relational thinking. By doing so, we contribute to the modest but expanding body of work on the use of student-led film in human geography education. Previous studies have been unanimously positive about a wide range of benefits – including the enhancement of deep and active learning and the improvement of transferable skills – that accrue from using film assignments (see e.g., Adanalı, 2018; Anderson, 2013a, 2013b; Dando & Chadwick, 2014; Mavroudi & Jöns, 2011). However, the potential of student-generated film in fostering a relational view of spaces and places has not been explicitly dealt with to date. We argue that by combining the benefits of student-centred fieldwork and film-making, a film assignment can act as a leverage for developing a relational sense of place, provided the assignment is embedded in a "relationally inspired" course, students are offered supervised autonomy, and they are made to reflect on the affordances of film as a medium and their positionality as filmmakers.

The paper is structured as follows. In order to elucidate the kind of relational thinking that our video documentary assignment aims to foster, the first section offers a brief overview of calls for relational thinking in the field of human geography and in scholarship on geography education. Subsequently, the motivations for designing a film assignment are discussed with a focus on the expected benefits of combining fieldwork and the use of film as a medium. Following some background information on the context of the course and the practicalities of the assignment, the paper analyses and reflects on the end products as well as on students' and lecturers' experiences.

Stimulating what "kind" of relational thinking?

Fostering students' relational thinking seems an inherent aim of geography education. In discussions of secondary education curricula, there has been much emphasis on geography's concern with people-environment relations, aspects of interconnectedness (within a locality and between places), the differential impact of globalization on places, and with representations of "us" and "them" (see e.g., Geographical Association, 2012; International Geographical Union, 2016; Philips, n.d.). Similarly, university text books have converged on the understanding that geography is principally concerned with the study of relationships – those between people and the environment, and those between humans, and that the strength of the discipline lies in offering a deeper understanding of these relations and their implications (see e.g., Boyle, 2015; Daniels et al., 2016; Marston et al., 2011).¹

Nonetheless, concrete ideas on how relational thinking should be embedded into geography education vary. For some, relational thinking (in the context of secondary level geography education) contains “the analysis, explanation and/or evaluation of the vertical and horizontal relationships (the geographical relationships) that cause change in regions on different interconnected scales” (Karkdijk et al., 2019, p. 6). For others, fostering relational thinking has been about raising awareness of interconnectedness, yet, without a strong focus on causal relationships and without a distinction between vertical and horizontal relations. A good example is Jackson’s (2006) often-mentioned call for *Thinking geographically* (see e.g., Karkdijk et al., 2019; Phillips, n.d.) that proposes four key concepts of geography (space and place; scale and connection; proximity and distance; relational thinking) and illustrates their relevance with an example of consumer ethics. From this more normative perspective, relational thinking is key to making pupils engaged with issues of global interdependence and inequalities (A Level Curriculum Advisory Board (ALCAB), 2014; Phillips, n.d.). At university level, relational thinking has similarly been promoted as a way to address questions of solidarity and justice, amongst others (Barnett et al., 2008). In addition to that,² it has also explicitly appeared as an ontological and epistemological position that assumes the perspectival character of geographers’ gaze and calls for denaturalizing our common assumptions (Boyle, 2015).

This variety in interpreting relational thinking reflects the multitude of ways in which “relationality” has become conceptualized in human geography in the past couple of decades. As Jackson (2006, p. 1) put it, “[g]eographers have understood the power of relational thinking for many years, though they may not have described their understanding in these terms”. More explicit talk of relational thinking has become manifest with the heightened engagement with post-structuralist thought (see Murdoch, 2006), and by the early 2010s, a relational view of place and space has become dominant within the discipline (see Malpas, 2012). At the same time, understandings of relationality have been advanced by diverse theoretical strands of work and despite their convergence on questioning essentialist notions of place and space, “it is far from clear that there is any substantive agreement or indeed considered theorisation of what is actually meant by the term ‘relation’ and the consequences of a ‘relational turn’” (Harrison, 2007, p. 590). Presumably, this lack of agreement has been one of the reasons why “not all geographers have become converts [to relational thinking]” (Malpas, 2012, p. 229).

Against this backdrop, our ambition to stimulate relational thinking has been driven by the belief that this way of thinking helps students to grasp complex societal phenomena in an integrative fashion, combining a spatial *and* temporal perspective. Considering the (philosophical-theoretical) variety in which relationality can be conceived, we think that although these are relevant and necessitate further debate, they can be largely bracketed in the context of undergraduate education. We chose to focus instead on a key feature that different relational approaches (tend to) share, that is, to critically interrogate and unpack, i.e. *de-essentialize* taken-for-granted notions of place and spaces as given entities “out there”. Relational thinking sensitizes students to regarding places and spaces not simply in terms of “containers”, but in terms of entities, people, relations and processes (cf. Murdoch, 2006). As such, it is a vital fundament for grasping issues of geographical differentiation, interdependence and (uneven) development. Furthermore, relational thinking also offers a basis for a more active, normative engagement with these issues.

To stimulate relational thinking in the course discussed here, a key consideration when compiling the reading list was that most of the selected texts (amongst others Crang, 2003; Dicken, 2015; Harvey, 2001; Rumford, 2006) should make a case for thinking places and spaces in relational terms. In particular, two articles by Massey (1991, 1995) have formed the backbone of the course's relational perspective. Taking her neighbourhood Kilburn (in North-West London) as an example, Massey (1991, p. 27) summarizes her relational stance as follows:

Instead [...] of thinking of places as areas with boundaries around, they can be imagined as articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings, but where a large proportion of those relations, experiences and understandings are constructed on a far larger scale than what we happen to define for that moment as the place itself, whether that be a street, or a region or even a continent.

From Massey's (1991) perspective, places are thus being constituted by historically evolving relations that reach beyond the place itself; as inherently hybrid meeting points that escape any attempt to be defined in terms of a coherent identity (see also Massey, 1995). While we have been aware of the criticisms of Massey's relational approach (e.g., Malpas, 2012; Rose, 2007), we considered that putting this approach centre stage is warranted because Massey's work is widely seen as a reference point for a relational view on places and spaces. Perhaps most importantly, Massey makes clear that relational thinking is not simply about acknowledging that places are interconnected (see Painter, 2016), but more broadly about appreciating that places are differentially positioned in dynamically shifting relations that make up "the global", while they are also – to different extents and in different ways – the agents of globalizing processes themselves. Along with many others (e.g., Hubbard, 2008; Painter, 2016; Rodgers, 2004), we also found that Massey's relational notion of place has insightfully underlined that places are not to be assumed as unproblematic collectivities, but are always contested. Finally, we believed that Massey's accessible and appealing style, and her use of empirical examples and personal anecdotes (e.g., Hubbard, 2008; Sparke, 2007; cf. Malpas, 2012) would invite students to engage with complex and abstract theoretical ideas.

Fostering relational thinking through student-film

Recent technological advancements, the rise of social media, coupled with the growing accessibility of mobile devices capable of capturing moving image have turned video into the primary source of world communication in the twenty-first century (Weynand & Piccin, 2015). In this light, it is perhaps not surprising that video assignments have become a topic of interest, among others in human geography education. In the expanding literature on the matter, studies have commonly discussed how student-led film, by combining fieldwork and the production of visual material, can enhance active, deep and reflexive learning in geography (Adanali, 2018; Anderson, 2013a, 2013b; Dando & Chadwick, 2014; Mavroudi & Jöns, 2011). There is now a wealth of literature showing how fieldwork – commonly regarded "the sine qua non of the geographer" (Dummer et al., 2008, p. 459; see also Fuller et al., 2006; France & Haigh, 2018) – enables students to develop a better understanding of concepts by linking them to their own experience, while also encouraging them to modify or evaluate their previous ideas or knowledge

through critical reflection (Dummer et al., 2008; Hovorka & Wolf, 2009; May, 1999; Oost et al., 2011). The use of visual materials – photos, videoclips (Ferretti, 2009), movies (Ansell, 2002; Sigler & Albandoz, 2014), documentaries (Hay, 2017) – has similarly been said to facilitate more active and deep learning, especially if it goes beyond passive watching (Di Palma, 2009) and includes the creative process of producing photo(s) (Sanders, 2007; Van Melik & Ernste, 2019) or a video (Anderson, 2013a, 2013b; Mavroudi & Jöns, 2011). As it has been argued, in the creative process of image-making students are made to “look with intention” (Van Melik & Ernste, 2019) and to reflect on the way they want to represent geographic meaning about people and places (Lonn & Teasley, discussed by Anderson, 2013b; see also Dando & Chadwick, 2014; Sanders, 2007). In doing so, they position themselves as active interpreters of the world (Anderson, 2013b) and (re)articulate their relationship with it (Lukinbeal & Craine, 2009).

Informed by these findings, our motivation for introducing student-led film for the stimulation of relational thinking more specifically – an issue that has received little explicit attention so far³ – have been twofold. First, we have been inspired by insights of (visual) ethnography (e.g., Coleman & Collins, 2006; Cruz et al., 2017; Murphy & Kraidy, 2004; Pink, 2009) and film theory (e.g., Elsaesser & Hagener, 2015; O’Brien, 2019) emphasizing the embodied and relationally situated aspects of knowing (through film). During the past two decades, ethnographers have increasingly problematized place – and thus the “field” – as a closed, “local” site (Pink, 2009) that is ontologically placed against the “global” (Murphy & Kraidy, 2004). The challenges mentioned in this regard – treating the local and the global “as relational and fluid scales of meaning and subject positions”, rather than separate categories (Frohlick, 2006, p. 95), and seeing the local as a “point of reference through which to engage the emergent dimensions of globalization” (Murphy & Kraidy, 2004, p. 14) have indeed been the same ones that we wanted students to engage with “in” Utrecht neighbourhoods. The usefulness of Massey’s perspective here is mentioned by Pink (2009, p. 30), who argues that “Massey’s understanding of place and space as “open” offers a way to understand the situatedness of the ethnographer in relation to social relations and power structures” (see also Baldwin, 2012; Lagendijk et al., 2011).

Expanding on Van Melik and Ernste (2019), one could argue that students could also cultivate their *relational* sense of place by writing a photographic essay on how changing but always-present external influences have shaped a neighbourhood. Indeed, it might appear reasonable to assume that both the creation of a photographic essay and a video documentary on place relationality occur through similar iterative cycles: that of 1) tracing and observing the relations that have (re)produced the particularity of the place in the course of its history; 2) that of recording and selecting images that are thought to capture this relational production and 3) that of crafting a narrative that discusses this relationality. We became interested, however, in the potential of film to enable students a better awareness of the(ir) situated way of knowing (Oliver, 2017; Pink, 2009) and a deeper understanding of their relational emplacement “at” interconnected scales. As MacDougall noted, “the film is a conceptual space within a triangle formed by the subject, film-maker, and audience and represents an encounter of all three” (MacDougall, 1978, as cited in Garrett, 2010, p. 528). Experiential filmmaking has been said to elucidate these encounters and to allow for mediating (and not only for reflecting, as texts do) film-makers’ multisensory experience, in a way that engages the audience (Garrett, 2010). An

essay might offer a new, relational way of knowing to the reader, based on the author's reflexive translation of his/her experience (see Van Melik & Ernste, 2019). We reasoned, however, that film has the potential to go beyond this: by implying moving image and sound, it "inscribes itself in the spectator's innermost physical being" (Elsaesser & Hagener, 2015, p. 11), or as O'Brien (2019, p. 6) notes, "the movie camera [...] extends the viewer into the film" (O'Brien, 2019, p. 6). Overall, we were thus intrigued by the promise that film might propose "a new [we could add: relational] way of 'being in the world'" (Elsaesser & Hagener, 2015, p. 11 see also Barbash & Taylor, 1997, as cited in Garrett, 2010, p. 535). In particular, we assumed that certain affordances of film – most notably the possibility of zooming-in and out⁴ – allow students as filmmakers (to reflect on how) to more effectively convey a sense of relational emplacement and scalar interconnection.

In addition to the above, a second motivation for opting for a *collective* film assignment was our interest in exploring the potential of group work for fostering relational thinking. In existing studies on film assignments based on student teamwork, the notion of relationality has already been present implicitly in the ("post-structuralist") sense of meaning-making as an inherently relational act. In other words, there has been an acknowledgment of the point that meaning is "arising from a relationship between the reader *and* the text", whereby "this relationship is non-deterministic" because the reader is an active agent of meaning generation (Murdoch, 2006, p. 7). Also, such assignments have been grounded in an implicit understanding of educational practices in relational terms, i.e. conceived in terms of the relations between the different actors involved in those practices (see Decuyper & Simons, 2016). This relational engagement among group members has been said to enhance students' reflection on their own positionalities (cf. Mavroudi & Jöns, 2011). We were interested in how relational thinking can be stimulated by making this process of collective reflection to focus on Massey's (1991, p. 25) insight that "different social groups and different individuals, are placed in very distinct ways in relation to these flows and interconnections". Our course appeared as an ideal context for such a reflection as – similar to the whole of UCU's student population – half of those enrolled have an international/non-Dutch background. Indeed, the fact that many of our students have a bi-/multinational parentage and/or have lived in a third country/multiple countries allowed us – in line with the relational philosophy of our course – to make students problematize the practice of labelling people and their culture in national terms (and, by extension, to critically reflect on the use of the term "international"). Furthermore, given our students' diverse background, we assumed that teamwork can potentially unleash a productive exchange among students on how the identity of the neighbourhood can be presented without "privileging one vantage point – and thus one cultural group – over others" (Crang, 2003, p. 176).

Course context and assignment guidelines

Introduction to Human Geography at UCU is a course followed by 20–25 students on average, of whom around 80% are first-year students and 80–85% are female. The course (see Table 1 for an overview) aims at familiarizing students with some of the main subfields of the discipline (most notably economic, political, cultural, urban and tourism geography) and their key concepts, with the aim of deepening students' critical understanding of how space

Table 1. Introduction to Human Geography (7,5 ECTS¹) course overview. (Weekly breakdown varies per semester. The one-week semester break is not indicated in the table).

Weeks	Thematic blocks and main issues & concepts	Type of sessions (number)	Assignments (deadline)
Week 1-5	<i>Economic geographies of globalization</i> Time-space compression, global production networks, global division of labour, clusters, the theory of the 'spatial fix', uneven development in the 'Third World'	Interactive lectures (7) Question and answer session – essay (1) Office hours – essay (1)	2000-word individual essay (week 5)
Week 6	<i>'Intermezzo': exploring city spaces</i> Introduction to urban geography and explanation of video documentary assignment	Interactive lecture (1) City walk	Video documentary (group) assignment (week 16)
Week 8-12	<i>Territorial politics and identities in the age of globalization</i> Nation-state, nationalism, national identity, borders and bordering, re-scaling, European integration	Interactive lectures (5) Question and answer session – essay (1) Office hours – essay (1)	2500-word individual essay (week 11)
Week 13-15	<i>Tourism</i> Tourism area life cycle and geography of tourism, 'the tourist gaze', impacts of tourism, sustainability	Interactive lecture (1) Office hours – presentation (1) Presentation session (3)	25-minute group presentation of a particular (economic, environmental etc.) impact of tourism
Week 16	(no class – working on video documentary)	Office hours – video (1)	

¹ECTS refers to European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System and was introduced with the aim of making studies and courses more transparent in the [European Higher Education Area](https://ec.europa.eu/education). 60 ECTS credits are the equivalent of a full year of study or work (see <https://ec.europa.eu/education>).

and place (and thus geography) matter in a globalizing world. The readings for the course have been carefully selected with the core learning objective in mind that students should be able to “think geographically”, that is, that they should be able to critically evaluate different arguments on globalization and its implications “at” different, interconnected scales, and to recognize and illustrate how “local” phenomena have been constituted by broader-scale events and developments. So, for example, we discuss how the rise and the fall of the city Detroit (Doucet, 2014) has been linked to the reorganization of the global division of labour and the forming of new economic relationships in global production networks (Dicken, 2015), or how national identities can be seen as constituted through social relations and how and why they have persisted under globalization rather than fading away (Croucher, 2003; Tomlinson, 2003). Relational thinking is thus presented as being key to “thinking geographically”. Furthermore, it is emphasized that “[g]eography is not just a way of thinking, it is a way of looking at the surroundings and landscape as well. Asking questions, making observations, reading the landscape” (excerpt from Course manual Introduction to Human Geography 2016-17).

The video documentary assignment, which is the final assignment of the course, is meant to enhance and assess students' geographical thinking and seeing. The assignment guidelines are made available in the online learning environment, and they are introduced during a meeting following the teacher-led city walk that sensitizes students to interpreting observable elements of the urban landscape within broader, changing scalar-

historical contexts. The guidelines discuss issues of ethics and describe the deliverables in addition to the video documentary (supporting documents): the script of the narrative; a logbook that (briefly) documents all visits to the site and the observations made, explains the choices made during the process and reflects on the difficulties of creating the documentary. Groups are asked to attach members' individual reflections to the logbook. The video assignment makes up 20% of the final grade. For grading purposes, a rubric has been deduced from the guidelines. [Table 2](#) contains the aspects of evaluation that figure in the rubric; for each aspect (except the one related to individual reflections⁵), an assessment is made on a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (very good), and detailed explanation and feedback is provided in the comments section. We do not apply any weighing, and it is emphasized to students that although sound and footage quality and the quality of editing are also subject to assessment (both under “comprehensibility, viewer-friendliness”, the latter also under “logical structure”), the application of a relational perspective is the most important dimension of the assessment (under “Development of an explicitly geographical perspective” and “Discussion of global-local interplay”).

Students are asked to form mixed groups of four to five students whereby each group should have at least one Dutch-speaking member, because many sources (neighbourhood statistics, historical accounts) are in Dutch and not all respondents might feel confident about being interviewed in English. Groups sign up for one of the six following sites in Utrecht (neither of which are covered by the city walk mentioned earlier): the Central station (a major railway hub in the Netherlands) and adjacent Hoog Catharijne shopping mall; Jaarbeurs (a fair and exhibition centre) and adjacent residential area; Uithof Science Park (university campus), Oudegracht (main canal in the historic centre), Amsterdamsestraatweg and Lombok (two neighbourhoods that started to form during the city's industrialization between the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, and which are both commonly perceived to be “multicultural”).

The assignment asks students to address two sets of questions through their video documentary in a theoretically informed yet accessible⁶ manner: 1) How do global

Table 2. Aspects of evaluation ‘A global sense of place’ video documentary assignment.

Video documentary

Clear visual presentation of the area and of research focus
 Development of an explicitly geographical perspective
 Discussion of global-local interplay by drawing on relevant course readings
 Relevant collection of necessary sources
 Logical structure
 Comprehensibility, viewer-friendliness
 Clear conclusions
 Correct use of language and style
 Own initiative and creativity of students
 Total length within the norm
 Clear visual presentation of the area and of research focus

Script

Appropriate composition, clear storyline

Logbook

Comprehensive documentation of the visits to the site and of the observations made
 Clear explanation of choices made
 Reader-friendliness
 Correct use of references and quotes
 Individual reflections

flows manifest themselves in the area studied? How can the character of the place be captured in terms of a specific articulation of “the local” and “the global”? 2) How is the past present in the place studied (materially, or in the form of names, stories etc.)? How can its qualities be explained by past (historically evolving) interconnections that reach beyond the place? Apart from these questions that they need to address and some formal requirements concerning the end product, students are given the room to independently choose the entry point of their analysis (for example, a historical overview or a key feature like a canal), as well as the particular objects of observation (particular buildings, such as a mosque, or an event, like a neighbourhood festival) and other sources of data used (existing archive – footage or photographs). Also, students are given freedom concerning the concrete delimitation of the area studied,⁷ the creation of a storyline, the organization of group work and the shooting/editing of the video. The course does not include any training in cinematography, but a video documentary from a previous year has been made available by way of example and we discuss in class how (well) this video discusses and illustrates place relationality. Finally, we did not foresee providing any technical training (cf. Mavroudi & Jöns, 2011) at the beginning. Given the generally high quality of the videos from the start and that – with a few exceptions (see later) – this issue has not been not raised by students, we saw it confirmed that the “net generation” is technologically capable (France & Wakefield, 2011) and did not include any guidance in this regard.

Overall, autonomous participation (Herrick, 2010; Panelli & Welch, 2005) has figured as the dominant aspect, but we find it important to offer students “structured” or “supervised” autonomy (Anderson, 2013a; Panelli & Welch, 2005). Course readings, the assignment guidelines, the example and feedback moments provide a “scaffolding” that help students through the process. Two important elements of this scaffolding are a suggested observation guide and a planning. The former (see Table 3) is meant to remind students that they need to stay focused on the networked relations and flows that make that place what it is. The guide gives some examples of questions (see in *italics*) that can be used as a starting point, but it is emphasized that this is not a blueprint and that students have to formulate (further) questions themselves, based on their insights gained from observations in the field and from desk research. Furthermore, it should be noted that – except four guest lectures – the whole course is taught by the same lecturer, who has also co-designed the assignment and has thus a good overview of the whole scaffolding.

Table 3. Suggested observation guide in video documentary assignment guidelines.

Material objects	People	Immaterial things
- Transport connections <i>(How is the place connected to other places?)</i>	- Background of inhabitants/occupants ...	- (Hi)stories told about the place ...
- Built environment <i>(What external influences can one observe – be it concerning the material used, the architectural style, etc.?)</i>	- Connections of ‘locals’ outside the place
- Products sold

Strict adherence to the suggested planning (see Table 4) is not compulsory either. Feedback moments – written feedback on two fieldwork reports and a face-to-face feedback meeting – are crucial in making sure that students are on track and are working iteratively, that is, are moving back-and-forth between observation (and the recording of footage), reflection and secondary data collection, with each iterative step helping to refine their account of the place.

Studying “a global sense of place” in Utrecht neighbourhoods through student-led film: discussing experiences

Methodology

Since its introduction in fall semester 2016, 43 groups of students have made a documentary, and our experience with the assignment during six semesters formed

Table 4. Suggested planning in video documentary assignment guidelines.

Stages/ deadlines	Tasks		Important issues
	Organizational tasks	Core tasks	
Kick-off	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Distribute tasks among group members - (Think about ways to share and discuss collected material and impressions - Keep records for logbook and personal reflection) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Carefully re-read the two articles by Massey and other relevant course material; look for additional literature - Go to the place and take notes/ photographs of your first impressions - Try to draw a map that visualizes the networks and flows relevant for the place - Collect some background information - Draw up preliminary observation guide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Delimit the actual area under study - Keep in mind that the assignment is not simply to make a documentary about the place, but to show how ‘the global’ is embedded ‘in’ it
[Date]	Hand in first fieldwork report and plan to lecturer		
Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Distribute tasks among group members - Share and discuss collected material - Keep records - Brainstorm session on storyline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Iterative steps of observation and desk research - Finalize observation guide - Select some key aspects that you will focus on - Take photos, refine your map - Approach respondents, conduct (record) interviews - Look for and study secondary material - Practice making video 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seek consent - Start thinking about an engaging storyline - Remember that desk research is principally meant to put your observations in a historical context and to give your account more body
[Date]	Hand in second fieldwork report and plan to lecturer		
[Date]	Feedback meeting with lecturer		
Observation/ making video)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Make final decision on storyline - Draw up list of necessary (still missing) elements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Site visits/make video - Collect missing elements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Check the evaluation criteria of the assignment in the course manual
Rounding up		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Compile documentary components, make selection - Prepare script and presentation - Write individual reflection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Show your video to an ‘outsider’ for feedback - Check video and script for consistency
[Date]	Video presentation & hand in all elements of assignment to lecturer		

the starting point for our reflection and assessment. In the spring semester of 2018, a short individual reflection assignment was included in the video assignment to further stimulate deep learning (see e.g., Dummer et al., 2008; Glass, 2015; Oost et al., 2011), by making students address two issues: 1) How do you think this group project has helped you to develop “a global sense of place” and to apply a relational perspective on places? 2) How have you experienced the group process? How do you think your different experiences and backgrounds helped you develop a global sense of place and look critically at the urban landscape in Utrecht? While inspired by our overall experience, for this paper we performed a detailed and systematic analysis of the twelve video documentaries from the cohorts of spring and autumn 2018 (one for each of the six neighbourhoods in both cohorts) and the logbooks containing the individual reflections (in total fifty), to be able to make well-funded claims about the benefits of the assignment. In the case of videos, the analysis focused on how students represent places as relationally constituted (for example, by using archive material) and to what extent the videos propose a relational way of “being in the world” (for example, through the use of zooming techniques). As to the logbooks and the individual reflections in particular, they were closely read several times with a special attention to how students make sense of “thinking relationally”. Reflections were coded using codes that were deduced from the literature review on student-led film as a form of assessment (focusing on aspects of deep learning and of the role of the visual, on the benefits of doing fieldwork and group work) and from the learning objectives of the assignment (and the course) more broadly (relational thinking about places, scales and identities). In addition to that, we introduced a code to assess the level of reflective thinking following the fourfold categorization of Kember et al. (2000), that is, 1) habitual action, 2) understanding, 3) reflection and 4) critical reflection. Coding was carried out by both authors and the codes were then compared and merged into a final set of codes (see [Table 5](#)) to ensure intercoder reliability.

In the remainder of this section, we present our findings under three separate headings. In the first two, we discuss the added value of student-led film in fostering a relational sense of place 1) as apparent from the end product (that is, the documentaries), and 2) as apparent from students’ reflections. Under 3) we discuss aspects of process, including the relevance of group work and that of lecturer supervision.

Conveying a relational sense of place through student-led film: a look at the end product

Perhaps not surprisingly, the presence of international brands, chain stores, restaurants or shops is mentioned in all videos. In many cases, this goes beyond a mere example of the external influences on a place, and a reflection is included on the blending of cultures. While some illustrations of this, such as that of McDonald’s tailoring its menu to local preferences, are rather obvious, others are clearly the result of a deeper, reflexive observation. In one video, an Italian restaurant is shown both from the outside and then from the inside to discuss how an “authentic” ambiance is created (claimed) through the design of the interior. In two videos, buildings such as a church (now in use as a mosque) or a mosque (built of red bricks) are discussed as the examples of how the intermingling and negotiation of cultures becomes manifest in the (use of the) built environment. In one case, the issue of cultural hybridity is also more explicitly considered



Table 5. Coding scheme for the analysis of student reflections.

Learning to apply abstract concepts (more generally)	Applying Massey/geo perspective; seeing place in terms of historically evolving globb/local intersextions	Greater awareness of the inter-connectedness of scales and places	Reflecting on (own personal notions of) the taken-for-granted/new realizations (more generally or concrete examples)	Questioning essentialist notions of places and spaces, and their identities	Added value of fieldwork/observation	Added value of video-making/assignment having a 'filmic' aspect ²	Added value of group members' different perspectives/cultural backgrounds, experiences, nationalities/	(Level) of reflective thinking
------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------

²By 'filmic' aspect we understand the more-than-visual, aural qualities of film, that is, the fact that film combines moving image with layers of sound (Jacobs, 2013).

from a multi-scalar perspective, by showing a café with a Dutch name that has a menu in English and offers a selection of raw and organic food, thus “following a global food culture”.

Overall, the (verbal) content of videos shows that the key learning objective of understanding place relationality has been achieved: from the twelve videos, eleven were assessed as responding (very) well the core aspects of “Development of an explicitly geographical perspective” and “Discussion of global-local interplay”; one was found to elaborate on them in a satisfactory way. While many of the issues discussed could probably have been described equally well in a textual report, several groups used the affordances of moving image to instil a sense of being emplaced in the place under study. Six of the twelve videos start by showing footage of one or several of the students walking or cycling through the neighbourhood. The two videos of the Central Station include footage of flows of people entering or crossing the Central station; similarly, a video of Lombok contains a sped-up footage of the hustle and bustle of the neighbourhood’s festival. These examples realize the potential that video has in terms of “recording an experiential stream of time in the field as a researcher, in the world as a participant, in the flux and flow of passage and encounter on a sliding range of scale, time and space” (Garrett, 2010, p. 522).

All the videos from the two cohorts analysed devote attention to the history of the area. By showing alternating images of the place as it looks today and of how it looked in previous historical periods (using archived photographs and archived footage), they compellingly show how the place studied is “the product of the historical accumulation and combination of numerous layers of such articulations over time” (Massey, 1995, p. 188). Four videos illustrate external influences explicitly by inserting maps or other (moving) images. The two Oudegracht videos use maps to show how the canal, as a trade vein, played a key role in “geographical connectivity” and in facilitating the “inflow of the foreign” in the Middle Ages. One video shows maps indicating the origins of flows of migrants to the Netherlands, and another uses existing footage of the worldwide distribution of Volkswagen manufacturers to remind viewers that a random car parking on the street is a product of a global production network. These videos offer thus a strong visual backing to Massey’s idea that “[i]t is (or ought to be) impossible even to begin thinking about” the neighbourhood “without bringing into play half the world” (see Massey, 1991, p. 28, referring to Kilburn Road).

Zooming in and zooming out is used to visualize the interrelatedness of scales in three of the videos. In one of the videos (examining the Central Station – Hoog Catherijne shopping mall area) it is used as an editing technique that is purposefully deployed to structure the narrative. In the first part, the video zooms in on a couple of chain stores to critically reflect on their “typical” Dutch nature; so, while the viewer is “led around” the place, links beyond the place are discussed. In the second part, the focus is on the architecture and the history of the station and the mall, and the area’s evolving function is discussed in the context of Utrecht’s development. In the final, third part, the study area is placed (again, but more explicitly than in part one) within the networks of globalizing capitalism by discussing how the mall is part of the portfolio of a real-estate trust that is operating malls Europe-wide. As the students explained in their logbook:

We chose this structure to zoom in on the minute manifestations of global/local connections, then zoom out one stage to see how these networks manifest in the architectures and histories of these places, and then zoom out fully to see how connections between local and global forces come together under the forces of global capitalist flows in the mall and in the central station (Logbook Central Station/Hoog Catherijne, spring 2018).

Two other videos use literal camera zooms (zooming from a world map or the globe to Utrecht) to convey a sense of being emplaced within a set of interlinked scales. One of the two uses both literal zooming in and out (starting off by showing the globe, subsequently zooming in on Europe, the Netherlands, Utrecht and again zooming out to the region) and then shows one of the students moving up on the escalator. This is a powerful way of alluding to the spectators' own experience while also making them aware of the fact that that experience is always situated within broader scalar contexts. While some of the videos exploit thus the potential of the visual component quite well for conveying a relational sense of place, the audio component has played a rather subordinated role. The previously mentioned shots of the Central Station showing the buzz and including the background noise of the place are the only notable instances where a multisensual experience is offered to the viewer. Furthermore, the audio component comes into play when fragments of one or more interviews (conducted in English or Dutch) are shown (in all except one of the videos). For the rest, all videos employ soundtrack recording throughout.

Students' thoughts on relational thinking through filmmaking

Studying students' reflections, it appears that the video documentary assignment has helped them to understand and apply the abstract concepts and theoretical perspectives dealt with in the course. A bit more than half of the reflections (26) explicitly mention that the film project had this benefit ("it was very helpful to deepen the understanding of the concept by practically applying those theories on the actual site in Utrecht" – Student #11, female, spring 2018; "while walking down the Oudegracht [...] I grasped a better understanding of the term 'place'" – Student #18 male, spring 2018). More significantly, thirty-six reflections contain remarks that demonstrate that Massey's relational perspective has been well "internalized" ("the connection to the global has always existed" – Student #12, female, spring 2018; "investigating the socioeconomic relations that are present in every interaction" – Student #31, female, autumn 2018). Overall, thinking in terms of the earlier mentioned categorization of Kember et al. (2000), most reflections fall into the second and/or third category (i.e. understanding and reflection, respectively),⁸ as they show that relational concepts of place have been understood and/or they apply theory to concrete situations while also bringing in personal insights (Kember et al., 2008). The following remark is a good example:

[...] there is more to the neighbourhood than at first seemed, especially regarding the materially visible interplay between history and geography. By looking into the history of the Jaarbeurs and the functions of the neighbourhood's districts, I detected similarities which are inherently linked to space and time. For example, the historically continuous focus on trade and logistics characterises both the neighbourhood and the Jaarbeurs, but also defines Utrecht's position in a broader framework of national, international and global flows (Student #5, female, spring 2018).

Thirty-six students also note that the assignment has brought about a change of perspective, which is a sign of critical reflection according to Kember et al. (2008): two explicitly call the assignment an “eye-opener” (Student #18 male, spring 2018 and Student #37, female, autumn 2018), others note that “I was suddenly employing this new, geographical way of looking at things to not only this one concrete example but many aspects of my own daily life” (Student #9, female, spring 2018) or that “[the project] made me reconsider the way in which I view all places” (Student #27, female, autumn 2018). In some cases, we were struck by the sophistication with which students explicitly reflected on their own personal notions of the taken-for-granted and on how the assignment helped them questioning their essentialist views of spaces and identities:

Realizing that there is a great interconnectedness between places nearly 5,000 miles away has impacted me on a very personal level. I have become much comfortable in Utrecht, a place that I now consider home. Recognizing its global implications, I do not feel isolated from my culture and way of life that I have back at home. I feel inspired and enlightened knowing that this global sense of place makes even two seemingly separate places home (Student #21, female, spring 2018).

I can now appreciate that it is extremely difficult to determine a distinct culture, as in almost any place there is constant interplay between the local and global on all different levels, such as through products, cuisines or people. Thus, gaining this alternative perspective has allowed me to reconsider the way in which I view all places that are both familiar and unfamiliar to me, and to not simply see them as a single place but as a multitude of flows that are connecting it to numerous places and people around the world (Student #27, female, autumn 2018).

The aspect of creating own visual material is explicitly mentioned as being a leverage for developing and conveying a relational sense of place in thirteen reflections. Students noted that “making video allowed to be more involved” (Student #13, female, spring 2018), that “film[ing] everything made it easier to interpret” (Student #15, female, spring 2018) and that “the project really helped me to visualise the role that capitalist flows and spatial fixes play in developing the environment around us” (Student #4, female, spring 2018). The student mentioning the latter point also commented that

Compared to a written assignment, the video format encouraged us to really ‘zoom in’ and immerse ourselves in the area in order to analyse what impact local influences had on the area. Additionally, it allowed us to include helpful visual aids such as pictures of what the station and mall looked like in the past, which was beneficial when attempting to examine the connections which exist between the current area and its historical past (Student #4, female, spring 2018).

Confirming our assumption that the potential strength of the assignment lies in its combination of fieldwork *and* the production of visual material, some reflections explicitly mention how the video project encouraged one “to pay more attention to small characteristics of the street [...] because they are all able to indicate how the global is embedded in the local” (Student #13, female, spring 2018) and “to actively find situations, images and occurrences that represented the trends of the course literature” (Student #19, male, spring 2018). As another student put it, “in this project you are almost forced to look for the spokes that connect little hubs such as the Amsterdamsestraatweg to hubs all over the world” (Student #10, female, spring 2018).

Although the task of conveying a relational sense of place through film made thus students more perceptive, it is notable that they have foregrounded the visual aspect and show (almost) no awareness of the fact that as filmmakers, they are producing moving *audio-image*. The following quote is exceptional in this regard:

My favourite moment of this was when we were going by the booths of countries/universities/companies [at the Jaarbeurs Go-Abroad Fair], and [name] recognized a place name and started talking to the man at the booth in their language, for me this was a perfect example of globalization and made the experience/assignment that much more relevant and interesting (Student #50, female, autumn 2018).

Finally, it should also be mentioned that three students were doubtful whether the form of the end product had contributed to their in-depth understanding of Massey's relational notion of place, or that this perspective had an added value. One student remarked that "I still find it difficult to identify the local characteristics of the places since the global influences seem to be stronger and stronger" (Student #42, female, autumn 2018); another one found that the "project [was] less helpful in understanding and applying concepts" and that although "the local, national and global scale were definitely present and visible when visiting the site, [...] this was not necessarily novel information" (Student #46, female, autumn 2018). As to the prescribed medium and format, three students⁹ were explicitly sceptical; two would have preferred writing an essay (or working with other media), while the third wondered "what has improved more with this task; my video making skills, or my understanding of Massey?" (Student #16, male, spring 2018). These remarks point to the risk of technical aspects of the project distracting from the academic dimension and, as such, they certainly merit our attention when it comes to further improving the assignment; however, given their sporadic occurrence they do not compromise the findings presented here.

Aspects of process: the added value of group work and the relevance of supervision

Students have generally appreciated the benefits of collaborating with others, with thirty-eight of them making positive comments on aspects of teamwork. One student even remarked that "the group process and dynamic were extremely positive and simultaneously productive" and that "the working morale was unprecedented" (Student #18, male, spring 2018). Furthermore, although one student explicitly questioned the added value of working with peers with different backgrounds ("I don't necessarily think our different backgrounds of culture have helped us" – Student #39, male, autumn 2018), differences in cultural and educational background and personal experiences have been explicitly put forward as an important source of both individual and collective reflection by twenty-six students. They noted for example, the following:

Overall, having groupmates that have different backgrounds and experiences introduced a myriad of viewpoints of how different elements (both the global and local) in the Uithof can be connected to the function and identity of Uithof, establishing a comprehensive and analytical perspective of how a global sense of place is manifested in the Uithof (Student #14, female, spring 2018).

I think, because we all came from such different backgrounds, we had insight on different perspectives about how different senses of places can be. It also helped us to relate to the multiculturalism that was present in Lombok (Student #23, female, spring 2018).

At this point, it should be noted that the appreciation of cultural differences has sometimes missed a “reflexive edge”, tending to reify everyday understandings of (national) culture(s) rather than to critically engage with these. This was particularly apparent in the case of the Central Station – shopping mall group where students remarked that some “felt more comfortable with the big international stores. Since they are Americans, this makes sense” (Student #35, male, autumn 2018), and that “the exchange students from the United States had more experience seeing the extent of an international influence of American based stores” (Student #37, female, autumn, 2018).

This brings us to another important aspect of the videomaking process, that of the role of the lecturer in helping to develop a “de-essentializing attitude”. The importance of this becomes clear if we consider that despite the evidence that Massey’s relational perspective has been well internalized, in some instances, videos refer to Massey without thinking through the relevance of her insights. For example, in one video (on the Central Station and the shopping mall) it is remarked that “[a]s such, a local farmers market right outside one of the largest malls in Europe integrates in a positive way the global and local”. Moreover, the tendency to assume scales and cultures to be fixed and given is still discernible. In one of the videos on Lombok, the trope of “multiculturalism” is mentioned without further reflection, and when a meeting place of locals and asylum seekers is discussed, it is not problematized who is “local” and who counts as “newcomer”. In fact, groups working on Lombok seem especially susceptible of falling into the trap of resorting to common sense, stereotypical representations of the place. However, simplistic interpretations of place have been noticeable in other groups as well. For example, respondents’ views of the allegedly “multicultural character” of the neighbourhood or its “old atmosphere” (in the case of Oudegracht) are taken at face value without any further reflection, and some speak of traditional Dutch products without interrogating the socially constructed character of “traditions”. Lecturer feedback has proved to be crucial in reminding students of the (conceptual) insights gained about place relationality during the course, as well as in making sure that they remain critical and continuously question their views. A group working on the Jaarbeurs exhibition and convention centre first proposed to discuss the Jaarbeurs in terms of the global. Eventually, they effectively showed the intertwinement of the local and the global (and the national) by pointing out that the study abroad fair organized at the centre is largely tailored to a Dutch audience. Another group also revised its approach after receiving feedback on their preliminary script. As they report in their video:

When first visiting the street [Amsterdamsestraatweg], we believed these cosmopolitan and migrant identities to present in separate and distinct environments, however, upon further exploration, we discovered how interwoven and intersectional they are (Logbook by Script Amsterdamsestraatweg, autumn 2018).

This excerpt clearly shows how students (with the help of the feedback) have learnt to approach the place through the intended iterative process.

Concluding remarks

Doreen Massey (2006, p. 93) summarizes her relational perspective on places and spaces as a proposition of “[a] throwing oneself into space; into an awareness of the planetwide configuration of trajectories, lives, practices . . . into which we are set and through which we are made”. In this paper, we discussed our experience with a video documentary assignment that asks students to show this “relational becoming” (Massey, 1999) of Utrecht neighbourhoods. Expanding on the findings of previous research that emphasized how video assignments [are] “bring[ing] together two essential elements of geography education, i.e. fieldwork and the visual”, (Dando & Chadwick, 2014, p. 79¹⁰; see also Mavroudi & Jöns, 2011), our account intended to make a contribution by assessing whether and how the combination of fieldwork and the production of film can enhance students’ relational understanding of places. To be sure, the assessment of deep and reflective learning – in this case regarding what it means to “think places relationally” – is far from straightforward (Dummer et al., 2008). Nonetheless, we contend that by analysing students’ (individual reflections on making) video documentaries it is possible to offer a well-substantiated assessment.

Based on the analysis of videos and reflections produced by two cohorts, we found that deep learning about the relational character of places did not simply take place because students critically engaged with and deconstructed dominant – relationally shaped – place meanings. Rather, deep learning occurred (also) as students became immersed in the (relational) field and actively traced the material connections, flows, as well as the actor-relations constituting the place. In addition to this, working in mixed teams, supervisor feedback and the individual reflection assignment have played an important role.

While the (verbal) content of the videos has convincingly shown that students have internalized Massey’s (1991, 1995) relational lens, the detailed analysis of the end products and reflections may make us to reconsider the choice not to provide (more) training in cinematography. The filmic qualities of some end products and the limited use of sound/audio suggest that to better realize the added value of film as a research method, students need more guidance in filmmaking. Half of the videos have exploited the distinctive capacity of film to visually capture movement and flows, and around a third used this capacity to raise spectators’ awareness of how one is emplaced in a world made up of flows and socioeconomic relations. In comparison, relatively few (around a third of the) end products exploited the potential of film to demonstrate how processes taken to unfold “at” discrete scales are intimately interlinked. Moreover, a bit less than a quarter of the fifty student reflections mentioned that the creation of own visual material had facilitated the development of a relational sense of place. Especially given the lack of any substantial training in cinematography as part of the course, we interpreted the above results positively. Nonetheless, we recognize the importance of helping students to more explicitly reflect on the way in which they use the affordances of moving image (and sound effects) to convey an understanding *and* an experience of inter-related scales. At the same time, the question also arises until “which point” the (future) efforts invested in (training on) filmmaking are proportional to the academic gains.

Concerning aspects of process, the course’s unique setting has resulted in diverse group compositions in terms of cultural background and experience that has facilitated a reflexive engagement with the relational character of place meanings and identities. Furthermore,

the fact that fieldwork was student-centred and regarded students as autonomous and active participants of the immersion and learning process appears to have played an important role in developing a relational sense of place. Yet, our results also highlight the crucial role of the lecturer-supervisor in helping students to subvert their essentialist gaze and to guide them through the project. Although videos and students' reflections generally show a good understanding of Massey's (and others') propositions, we concur with Kember et al. (2008, p. 379) when they claim that "[c]ritical reflection is unlikely to occur frequently". Reflections that show a clear evidence of a consistently internalized, sophisticated relational lens are in the minority, and there is a noticeable tendency to revert to imaginations of places and spaces as container-like givens. To counter these tendencies, feedback moments at different stages are key.

Overall, we have found both the films produced and the process highly rewarding and we recommend the use of student-generated film for fostering a relational view, but with a few provisos. First of all, as in the case of fieldwork more broadly (see e.g., Bradbeer & Livingstone, 1996; Higgitt, 1996; Hovorka & Wolf, 2009; May, 1999), adequate preparation, including sensitization to reflexive observation, as well as follow-up activities are crucial. Second and perhaps more importantly, a film assignment cannot help to foster relational thinking as a standalone exercise. Rather, it needs to be embedded into a course where relational thinking figures as a(n explicit) common thread, and where the critical discussion of carefully selected texts prepares the ground and serves as a reference point for feedback talks throughout the filmmaking process. Furthermore, to help students exploit the added value of film in conveying a sense of relationality (*vis-à-vis* other forms of assessment), students need to be more explicitly sensitized to and taught about aspects of cinematography, and they need to be given (more) feedback on their ideas concerning filmic realization. To follow Hay's advice (Hay, 2017), it is not only critical to make students reflect on their documentary's message, but also to "dwell on the medium".

If the above conditions are met, film assignments can help to cultivate a way of thinking that is geographers' key asset, and which has relevance beyond the field of geography. Massey (2014, p. 39), reflecting on the core knowledge of human geography curriculum (in the UK) points out, "[a] 'sense of the global' [...] is crucial to spatial awareness more generally"; this, in turn, is indispensable for understanding environmental issues or for framing discussions of global citizenship. Geography has thus a strong, although to date ill-recognized, conceptual contribution to make in addressing key societal concerns, and "as geographers we need to be less timid about this" (p. 38). By making this contribution more explicit, film assignments geared towards the stimulation of relational thinking can play a role in achieving a broader recognition of why and how a geographical perspective matters.

Notes

1. It should be noted here that the present paper draws almost exclusively on literature on Anglo-Saxon human geography education.
2. It goes beyond the scope of this paper to discuss in more detail whether and how (and why) understandings of relational thinking are different in curricula at pre-university and

university levels. The aim of our brief overview was merely to point out the importance attached to relational thinking in geography education at large.

3. Relational thinking appears, for example, in the study of Barndt (1997) and Anderson (2013b). Barndt (1997) discusses a photo project aiming at simultaneously examining and connecting globalization from above (as unfolding through corporate advertising) and globalization from below (as exemplified by the daily lives of Mexican women working in agriculture as food producers). Anderson's (2013b) report on a film assignment explicitly asks students to move "away from a perspective of space as a fixed geometric entity" (p. 138.) towards a view of places "transacted by all kinds of relations, with multiple connections in space and time" (Madanipour et al., as cited in Anderson, 2013b, p. 138). However, Anderson's (2013b) main aim is to sensitize students to the benefits of qualitative methods, rather than to foster relational thinking.
4. Zooming-in and out has been discussed as a technique helping to illuminate different aspects of globalization through photographic research (Barndt, 1997). We assumed, however, that *moving* image can more successfully incite – both its makers and its spectators – to think relationally than the mere juxtaposition of photographs.
5. In the case of individual reflections, no scores are assigned, but students only receive their individual grade if they had submitted a properly executed reflection. Because to date, students have taken this seriously, we have not included any additional requirements.
6. It is communicated that the intended audience is the peer group without prior knowledge of (university level) human geography.
7. Sites are not strictly delimited given the assignment's concern with the relations that reach beyond the area under study; students can divert from the original perimeters but need to consult the lecturer and explain their choice.
8. As Kember et al. (2008) note, these categories are not necessarily distinct; intermediate categories are conceivable as well.
9. One of them is part of the previously mentioned three.
10. Dando and Chadwick's (2014) remark does not only refer to videos but also to maps and photographs (made by students).

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank our former students at UCU for the enthusiasm with which they have worked on the video documentary assignment and for their interesting and insightful videos. To those from the spring and autumn 2018 cohorts, we are also grateful for giving their consent to use their personal reflections. Finally, we have greatly benefited from the constructive comments of three anonymous referees.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

Compliance with standards of research involving human subjects

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from each study participant after they were told of the potential risks and benefits as well as the investigational nature of the study.

References

- A Level Curriculum Advisory Board (ALCAB). (2014). *Report of panel on geography*. <https://alevelcontent.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/alcab-report-of-panel-on-geography-july2014.pdf>
- Adanali, R. (2018). The effect of digital documentary production through field work on geography students' problem-solving skills. *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, 6(1), 113–123. <https://doi.org/10.11114/jets.v6i1.2847>
- Allen, J. (2008). Claiming connections: A distant world of sweatshops? In C. Barnett, J. Robinson, & G. Rose (Eds.), *Geographies of globalisation: A demanding world* (pp. 7–52). Sage.
- Anderson, J. (2013a). Active learning through student film: A case study of cultural geography. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 37(3), 385–398. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03098265.2013.792041>
- Anderson, J. (2013b). Evaluating student-generated film as a learning tool for qualitative methods: Geographical “drifts” and the city. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 37(1), 136–146. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03098265.2012.694070>
- Ansell, N. (2002). Using films in teaching about Africa. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 26(3), 355–368. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0309826022000019927>
- Baldwin, J. (2012). Putting Massey's relational sense of place to practice: Labour and the constitution of Jolly Beach, Antigua, West Indies. *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography*, 94(3), 207–221. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0467.2012.00410.x>
- Barbash, I., & Taylor, L. (1997). *Cross cultural filmmaking: A handbook for making documentaries and ethnographic films and video*. University of California Press
- Barndt, D. (1997). Zooming out/zooming in visualizing globalization. *Visual Sociology*, 12(2), 5–32. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14725869708583778>
- Barnett, C., Robinson, J., & Rose, G. (Eds.). (2008). *Geographies of globalisation: A demanding world*. Sage.
- Boyle, M. (2015). *Human geography: A concise introduction*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Bradbeer, J., & Livingstone, I. (1996). Problem-based learning and fieldwork: A better method of preparation? *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 20(1), 11–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03098269608709340>
- Coleman, S., & Collins, P. (2006). *Locating the field: Space, place and context in anthropology*. Oxford-New York.
- Course manual Introduction to Human Geography. (2016-17). University College Utrecht
- Crang, M. (2003). *Nations, homelands and belonging in hybrid worlds*. Routledge.
- Croucher, S. L. (2003). Perpetual imagining: Nationhood in a global era. *International Studies Review*, 5(1), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1521-9488.501001>
- Cruz, E. G., Sumartojo, S., & Pink, P. (Eds.). (2017). *Refiguring techniques in digital visual research*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Dando, C. E., & Chadwick, J. J. (2014). Enhancing geographic learning and literacy through filmmaking. *Journal of Geography*, 113(2), 78–84. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00221341.2013.846394>
- Daniels, P., Bradshaw, M., Shaw, D., Sidaway, D., & Hall, T. (Eds.). (2016). *An introduction to human geography* (5th edition ed.). Pearson Education Limited.
- Decuyper, M., & Simons, M. (2016). Relational thinking in education: Topology, sociomaterial studies, and figures. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 24(3), 371–386. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2016.1166150>
- Di Palma, M. T. (2009). Teaching geography using films: A proposal. *Journal of Geography*, 108(2), 47–56. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00221340902967325>

- Dicken, P. (2015). *The global shift: Mapping the contours of world economy*. Sage.
- Doucet, B. (2014, January). The story of Detroit through ten buildings. *Town & Country Planning*, 83(1), 34–40.
- Dummer, T. J. B., Cook, I. G., Parker, S. L., Barrett, G. A., & Hull, A. P. (2008). Promoting and assessing ‘deep learning’ in geography fieldwork: An evaluation of reflective field diaries. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 32(3), 459–479. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03098260701728484>
- Elsaesser, T., & Hagener, M. (2015). *Film theory: An introduction through the senses*. Routledge.
- Ferretti, J. (2009). Effective use of visual resources in the classroom. *Teaching Geography*, 34(3), 108–110. Autumn.
- Florida, R. (2005). The world is spiky. Globalisation has changed the economic playing field, but hasn’t leveled it. *The Atlantic Monthly*, October, 48–51.
- France, D., & Haigh, M. (2018). Fieldwork@40: Fieldwork in geography higher education. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 42(4), 498–514. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03098265.2018.1515187>
- France, D., & Wakefield, K. (2011). How to produce a digital story. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 35(4), 617–623. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03098265.2011.560658>
- Frohlick, S. (2006). Rendering and gendering mobile subjects in a globalized world of mountaineering: Between localizing ethnography and global spaces. In S. Coleman & P. Collins (Eds.), *Locating the field: Space, place and context in anthropology* (pp. 87–103). Berg.
- Fuller, I., Edmondson, S., France, D., Higgitt, D., & Ratinen, I. (2006). International perspectives on the effectiveness of geography fieldwork for learning. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 30(1), 89–101. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03098260500499667>
- Garrett, B. L. (2010). Videographic geographies: Using digital video for geographic research. *Progress in Human Geography*, 35(4), 521–541. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132510388337>
- Geographical Association (2012). *Thinking geographically*. https://www.geography.org.uk/write/MediaUploads/Support%20and%20guidance/GA_GINCConsultation_ThinkingGeographically_NC_2012.pdf
- Glass, M. R. (2015). International field courses: Practices and challenges. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 39(4), 485–490. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03098265.2015.1108044>
- Harrison, P. (2007). How Shall I Say it? Relating the nonrelational. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 39(3), 590–608. <https://doi.org/10.1068/a3825>
- Harvey, D. (2001). Globalization and the “spatial fix”. *Geographische Revue*, 3(2), 23–30. <http://www.geographische-revue.de/gr2-01.htm>
- Hay, I. (2017). Moving pictures: From ethnographic to autoethnographic documentary in the internationalization of the geography curriculum. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 41(4), 562–573. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03098265.2017.1337731>
- Herrick, C. (2010). Lost in the field: Ensuring student learning in the ‘threatened’ geography fieldtrip. *Area*, 42(1), 108–116. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-4762.2009.00892.x>
- Higgitt, M. (1996). Addressing the new agenda for fieldwork in higher education. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 210(3), 391–398.
- Hovorka, A. J., & Wolf, P. A. (2009). Activating the classroom: Geographical fieldwork as pedagogical practice. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 33(1), 89–102. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03098260802276383>
- Hubbard, P. (2008). Introduction [book review of *World city* by Doreen Massey]. *Area*, 40(3), 411–415. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-4762.2008.840_1.x
- International Geographical Union. (2016). *2016 International charter on geographical education*. www.cnfg.fr/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Charter_2016-IGU-CGE_May_9.pdf
- Jackson, P. (2006). Thinking geographically. *Geography*, 91(3), 199–204.
- Jacobs, J. (2013). Listen with your eyes; towards a filmic geography. *Geography Compass*, 7(10), 714–728. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12073>
- Karkdijk, J., van der Schee, J. A., & Admiraal, W. F. (2019). Students’ geographical relational thinking when solving mysteries. *International Research in Geographical and Environmental Education*, 28(1), 5–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10382046.2018.1426304>

- Kember, D., Leung, D. Y. P., Jones, A., Loke, A. Y., McKay, J., Sinclair, K., Tse, H., Webb, C., Wong, F. K. Y., Wong, M., & Yeung, E. (2000). Development of a questionnaire to measure the level of reflective thinking. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 25(4), 381–395. <https://doi.org/10.1080/713611442>
- Kember, D., McKay, J., Sinclair, K., & Wong, F. (2008). A four-category scheme for coding and assessing the level of reflection in written work. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 33(4), 369–379. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602930701293355>
- Krugman, P. (1997). In praise of cheap labor: Bad jobs at bad wages are better than no jobs at all. *Slate*, March 20. http://www.slate.com/articles/business/the_dismal_science/1997/03/in_praise_of_cheap_labor.html
- Legendijk, A., Pijpers, R., Ent, G., Hendriks, R., van Lanen, B., & Maussart, L. (2011). Multiple worlds in a single street: Ethnic entrepreneurship and the construction of a global sense of place. *Space and Polity*, 15(2), 163–181. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562576.2011.625225>
- Lukinbeal, C., & Craine, J. (2009). Geographic media literacy: An introduction. *GeoJournal*, 74(5), 175–182. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10708-008-9216-y>
- MacDougall, D. (1978). Ethnographic film: Failure and promise. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 7(1), 405–425. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.an.07.100178.002201>
- Malpas, J. (2012). Putting space in place: Philosophical topography and relational geography. *Environment and Planning, D, Society & Space*, 30(2), 226–242. <https://doi.org/10.1068/d20810>
- Marston, S. A., Liverman, D. M., Del Casino, V., & Robbins, P. (2011). *World regions in global context: People, places and environments* (4th ed.). Prentice Hall.
- Massey, D. (1991). A global sense of place. *Marxism Today*, June, 24–29.
- Massey, D. (1995). Places and their pasts. *History Workshop Journal*, 39(1), 182–192. <https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/39.1.182>
- Massey, D. (1999). Philosophy and politics of spatiality: Some considerations. *Geographische Zeitschrift*, 87(1), 1–12. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27818829>
- Massey, D. (2006). Space, time and political responsibility in the midst of global inequality. *Erdkunde*, 60(2), 89–95. <https://doi.org/10.3112/erdkunde.2006.02.01>
- Massey, D. (2014). Taking on the world. *Geography*, 99(1), 36–39. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00167487.2014.12094389>
- Mavroudi, E., & Jöns, H. (2011). Video documentaries in the assessment of human geography field courses. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 35(4), 579–598. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03098265.2011.559578>
- May, J. (1999). Developing fieldwork in social and cultural geography: Illustrations from a residential field class in Los Angeles and Las Vegas. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 23(2), 207–225. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03098269985470>
- Murdoch, J. (2006). *Post-structuralist geography: A guide to relational space*. Sage.
- Murphy, P. D., & Kraidy, M. M. (2004). *Global media studies: Ethnographic perspectives*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis e-Library.
- O'Brien, D. P. (2019). Hap-Tech Narration and the Postphenomenological Film. *Philosophies*, 4(3), 47. Retrieved 27 March, 2020, from <https://doi.org/10.3390/philosophies4030047>.
- Oliver, J. (2017). Imagining technique: Reflexivity, ethnographic arts and the digital real. In E. G. Cruz, S. Sumartojo, & P. Pink (Eds.), *Refiguring Techniques in Digital Visual Research* (pp. 117–129). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Oost, K., De Vries, B., & Van der Schee, J. (2011). Enquiry-driven fieldwork as rich and powerful teaching strategy: School practices in secondary geography education in the Netherlands. *International Research in Geographical and Environmental Education*, 20(4), 309–325. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10382046.2011.619808>
- Painter, J. (2016). Doreen Massey (1944–2016): An appreciation. *Soundings*, July, 38–44.
- Panelli, R., & Welch, R. V. (2005). Teaching research through field studies: A cumulative opportunity for teaching methodology to human geography undergraduates. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 29(2), 255–277. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03098260500130494>

- Phillips, R. (n.d.) *Changing Places*. <https://www.rgs.org/schools/teaching-resources/changing-place-changing-places/>
- Pink, S. (2009). *Doing sensory ethnography*. Sage.
- Rodgers, J. (2004). Doreen Massey. *Information, Communication & Society*, 7(2), 273–291. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118042000232693>
- Rose, G. (2007). For Space – By Doreen Massey [book review]. *Geographical Research*, 45(2), 205–207. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-5871.2007.00452.x>
- Rumford, C. (2006). Theorizing borders. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 9(2), 155–169. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431006063330>
- Sanders, R. (2007). Developing geographers through photography: Enlarging concepts. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 31(1), 181–195. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03098260601033118>
- Sigler, T., & Albandoz, R. I. (2014). Beyond representation: Film as a pedagogical tool in urban geography. *Journal of Geography*, 113(2), 58–67. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00221341.2013.764918>
- Sparke, M. (2007). Book review symposium: Commentary 2: Acknowledging responsibility For space [book review]. *Progress in Human Geography*, 31(3), 395–403. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03091325070310030702>
- Tomlinson, J. (2003). Globalization and cultural identity. In D. Held & A. McGrew (Eds.), *The global transformations reader* (pp. 269–277). Polity.
- van Melik, R., & Ernste, H. (2019). Looking with intention: Using photographic essays as didactical tool to explore Berlin. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 43(4), 431–451. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03098265.2019.1660864>
- Weynand, D., & Piccin, V. (2015). *How video works: From broadcast to the cloud*. Focal Press.