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# **The politics of the body or shared intimacy in documentary cinema**

## *La politique du corps ou l'intimité partagée dans le cinéma documentaire*

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### Key words

body, documentary movie, territory, community, sharing

### Mots clés

corps, documentaire, territoire, communauté, partage

### Abstract

To speak of the body in a relationship with cinema is to enter into a form of intimacy through the representation that is made of this body. Introducing it into a documentary system means affirming the apprehension of a reality anchored in a place at the same time as the various protagonists of the film are positioning themselves. Based on the interactions between filmmaker, filmmakers and spectators, this film genre is based on an educational approach insofar as it allows to acquire knowledge on how to live in a territory. The experience of fifteen years of making workshop and documentary films in the so-called "cities" in the South of France, offers a unique situation to build a representation of this way of being in a space particularly stigmatized by the media. A process of collaboration, (co-)creation or participation develops at the same time as the bodies set up. These are affirmed at the same time as man positions himself within society, thus testifying to a policy of bodies.

### Résumé

Parler du corps dans un rapport au cinéma, c'est entrer dans une forme d'intimité à travers la représentation qui est faite de ce corps. L'introduire dans un dispositif documentaire, c'est affirmer l'apprehension d'une réalité ancrée dans un lieu en même temps que les différents protagonistes du film se positionnent. A partir des interactions entre filmeur, filmés et spectateurs, ce genre cinématographique s'appuie sur une approche pédagogique dans la mesure où il permet d'acquérir une connaissance sur la manière d'habiter un territoire. L'expérience de quinze années de réalisation de films d'ateliers et de documentaires dans ce que l'on appelle les « cités » dans le Sud de la France, propose une situation singulière pour construire une représentation de cette manière d'être dans un espace particulièrement stigmatisé médiatiquement. Un processus de collaboration, (co-)création ou de participation se développe en même temps que les corps mettent en place. Ceux – ci s'affirment en même temps que l'homme se positionne au sein de la société, témoignant ainsi d'une politique des corps.

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To speak of the body in a relationship with cinema is to enter into a form of intimacy through the representation that is made of this body. And defining intimacy can only be done by thinking about one's connection to the other. It is therefore necessarily shared ! The question then is to know to what extent this intimacy is shared with others ? This somewhat provocative assertion has the advantage of linking the private sphere almost necessarily with the public sphere in the cinema. It is in this logic that Eric Maigret and Eric Macé defined the term "*mediacultures*"<sup>2</sup> (2005). Then, at the crossroads of media images and the culture in which we live, the understanding of images would become a civic duty insofar as it contributes to the definition of our society. It is in any case in line with this logic, and even according to this claim, that artistic education workshops for cinema (Cyrulnik, 2016a), as well as documentaries, have been implemented in the french suburbs called « *cités* » for about fifteen years. Devices such as "*image couriers*" have highlighted it since their creation, insofar as its ancestor "*a summer at the cinema*" already wrote in these brochures in 1999 that the aim was to "*send young directors to the red-light districts*"! The ability to read images, or at least to have a critical mind about those consumed on a daily basis, is becoming a social issue.

A striking example of the change in the investment of young people<sup>3</sup> in the suburbs and the position of their bodies in relation to a camera is the emergence of reality TV show in France in 2003. While I had started to produce artistic workshops in cinema with the young people of the Cité Berthe in La Seyne-sur-mer as early as 1999, the young people were moving much further in front of the camera in order to become rich and famous by the simple fact of being filmed as suggested by these new shows in France. This district is scary at first sight because it opened the 8pm news on television with burning cars and other stone throwing. It represented in a way the caricature of these territories that the Anglo-Saxon media call "*no-go-zones*" and that are stigmatized in France under the terms of "*ghettos*" or "*lawless zone*", among others (Avenel, 2005). These television representations of social housing in France have become almost systematic on television for the particular territories that are « *cités* » in France. These are often large neighbourhoods, mostly bounded by traffic lanes that surround the area geographically; where immigrants who came to help rebuild France were initially welcomed in housing that was well equipped at the time but often became poorly maintained with a socially and economically precarious population; and with marked behavioural, verbal and clothing codes, thus creating a distinct culture and a sense of marginalization for the inhabitants of the cities compared to the rest of French society. Thus, building new representations by making films with these inhabitants helps to better understand this relationship to the world and the place of bodies in this space.

So I realized with the population of the Cité Berthe of La Seyne-sur-mer (and other cities also in France and abroad<sup>4</sup>) workshops of artistic practice in cinema during ten years. I then travelled around the South region of France as head of the artistic education centre for two years to see all the workshop practices with a camera, and then wrote a book about all these cinematographic experiences. I also extended these experiences in the suburbs through a documentary series entitled "*Living in the territory* ", which includes nine films in total on four cities with these kind of suburbs in the South of France. The idea was to produce documentaries (one per year in some social housing) to try to identify the urban and human evolutions of these spaces so stigmatized by the media in order to nuance their representations, whether social, urban, filmic, of oneself or of a community. The documentary, which comes etymologically from "*documentum*", which can be translated as "*example, model, lesson, teaching, demonstration*", thus testifies here to a form of pedagogical extension of the first workshop situations insofar as it allows new knowledge of this

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<sup>2</sup> Éric Maigret and Éric Macé (2005 : 10) propose to "*link media and culture in order to find the intersection point of meaningful construction practices, to decompartmentalize media, culture and representation studies*".

<sup>3</sup> Since reality TV, it is therefore mainly young people who are moving towards the camera, but these films are all interested in an intergenerational and multicultural way.

<sup>4</sup> More informations on <http://www.lacompagniedesembruns.com>

situation to be acquired. Knowledge and understanding through this film genre (Niney, 2000 and 2002) makes it possible to understand these particular territories in order to nuance the caricatured television comments from which the inhabitants say they suffer.

These films made in the suburbs involve interactions between the different protagonists who are the filmmaker, the filmed and the spectator (Cyrulnik, 2018b). From their exchanges, a community is created, both during the filming and during the debate at the end of the screening, where the spectators reformulate together what they have experienced (Cyrulnik, 2015a). Thus, through these exchanges, cinema encourages a way of asserting itself individually within a community that federates. These different situations of interaction position man in a creative situation that generates both a playful approach by playing at creating a representation, and a political assertion by engaging with others. This is the hypothesis that we are making and that we will develop on the basis of these fifteen years of cinematographic experience in French « *cités* ».

### ***Cinema, community and identity***

The simple fact of walking through the streets of a city with a camera already appeals to its inhabitants. After going beyond the relationship with the police, money, and reality TV which she immediately suggests, a reflection on what we could do with it challenges suburban youth. The presence of a single director with a camera quickly raises questions about the relationship to the images consumed daily. These become a first reference on which to build others. Little by little the camera comes to suggest new ways of representing this particular territory that is the suburb. A more personal register is set up, an complicity. A thought is articulated and a narrative is composed (Paillé & Mucchielli, 2005) : new representations take shape (Cyrulnik, 2016b).

With the new technologies the relationship to images has changed. Mobile phones shake up this apprehension of something personal that is made public, and *vice versa*. This object is used in an intimate register with its own selfies, musics, photos, etc. that reflect a personality. At the same time, it is a constant link to the outside world for communication. This duality reveals once again the need to be able to capture images of everyday life. But this relationship to intimacy already existed before these new technologies. These exacerbate it. The need to be able to read and/or construct images becomes a form of political commitment. To film is to acquire a critical and civic mind at the same time. It is also about bringing a new community together and finding its place in it. The positioning of the bodies in relation to the camera or screen suggests civic engagement (Cyrulnik, 2017b). In making these films, we are at the crossroads of an individual and collective affirmation at the same time.

As we have seen since the introduction, the whole process of artistic education in cinema is built on the desire to promote free will: for participants, as well as for those responsible for these situations or the inhabitants. However, this need to be able to read these images with hindsight is more a civic duty than an apprehension of a true artistic dimension that would promote personal development and would be a priority. In this world of "mediacultures", "*[i]t is up to the deliverer [media education] to build at the same time the motivation of the learner, and the conviction that he is right to educate himself in this way; [...] that [this education] is primarily aimed at developing learners distance from the media themselves so that teaching does not sink into bric-a-brac or whatever. Building critical thinking skills in the specialty is a major objective*" (Porcher, 2006: 80). In addition to Louis Porcher's comments on media education, Serge Tisseron adds : "*It is urgent to reintroduce the possibility for everyone to appropriate their own image experiences with their own means. To this end, media education must create spaces for verbal exchanges around images, but also spaces where children are invited to create their own images, to transform and manipulate them, and finally spaces where they can be solicited to stage them in groups in a playful and creative way*" (Tisseron, 2002: 140). Whether one makes the most interesting statements possible to testify in a documentary or experiments with filmmaking in a workshop situation, a device and its

related method forces each individual to position himself in front of the camera (Cyrulnik, 2016a: 11-12). Whether we start from the more or less displayed ego of the director as an artist, or from that of the filmed person who enters into action in front of the camera, the approach consists in going towards each other, and forging a bond. Bodies reveal their place in relation to each other.

### ***Device and method***

Claude Lévi-Strauss describes in "*Tristes tropiques*" (1955) a relationship of himself living ethnological experiences. In this respect, the book was considered unscientific by some of his colleagues. He had gone on an exploratory trip in 1955 to study virgin populations that would not be contaminated by civilization... Quite quickly, he insisted on the fact that it was necessary to avoid exoticism, but rather to constantly place man at the centre of nature and other men, in order to replace total humanity through ethnology<sup>5</sup>. While he did not know much about this discipline when he arrived in Brazil, he gradually invented a method to understand these populations who lived differently in the heart of the forest. If he felt the need to learn this discipline by trying to read all the books on ethnography when he returned home, this new understanding of these unknown territories allowed him to experiment with things and to refine a method of observation and analysis. His intuitive approach at first became analysed and then constructed (Paillé & Muchielli, 2005: 32). It will make it successful. Claude Lévi-Strauss' story introduces in detail the importance of the method for understanding a territory and the way of life of its inhabitants<sup>6</sup>.

Guy Gauthier, for his part, pointed out the importance of the method for documentary cinéma : "*To film reality is simply to record what the camera is able to record at the various stages of the technique. It is not a question of "truth" - which is likely to be rushed regardless of the technique used - it is a question of method*" (Gauthier, 2004: 12). What Claude Lévi-Strauss experienced could correspond to the documentary filmmaker's method. Each director must, each time he enters a new field, invent a way of going there that suits him. An ethical question, essential for the documentary filmmaker, is emerging. The method he will use or invent will correspond to the device he chooses to set up to approach a place. This link between method and device determines a way of representing a territory. The device (Agamben, 2007) assigned to a terrain adapts to it, and a method is associated with it: "*The meticulousness of observation, combined with attentive listening, makes life stories all the more interesting and, undoubtedly, the interest of life*" (Colleyn, 1993: 28).

To extend this into a more philosophical and political register, Hannah Arendt (1954) explains that it is ultimately the means that are more important than the purpose in trying to understand the world. Moreover, the films often testify, more or less voluntarily, to what happened during the shooting. The system and method determine the means used to open up to the world, as a documentary does (Cyrulnik, 2017b: 139 - 140). Methodology and meaning construction go hand in hand.

### **Mediology and construction of a cinematographic device**

Thus a method is affirmed by making all the protagonists of a film interact in order to build a new representation of a territory that is as close as possible to the daily life of its inhabitants (Cyrulnik, 2018b : 4-6) thanks to the presence of the camera. Because this object is there, people will discuss it and enter into a form of mediology (Debray, 1994; Bougnoux, 1998). Thanks to him,

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<sup>5</sup> Suburban youth often characterize themselves primarily as "*animals living in the jungle*" when they see a camera, as they clearly state in "*The word of Art*" (2005, 23') among others. In this respect, the documentary resonates with visual anthropology.

<sup>6</sup> The analysis of this method was the subject of my thesis defended in 2008 "*Representing the territory and acting with it, the creative documentary method*". It is therefore not a question of rewriting it but of extending it.

a territory is discovered through the speech made by the director, the inhabitants and the spectators (Cyrulnik, 2017b: 126) who reveal themselves.

Through mediology (Debray, 2000), the link between action and narrative is deepened. This relationship between a language and an object that would tell a story of a territory does not want to oppose technology and culture, but seeks to link ideologies and beliefs to technical and scientific innovations that are ultimately revealed in our behaviour and culture. « *In mediology, "medium" does not mean "media" or "medium" but "media", that is the dynamic set of procedures and intermediate bodies that interpose themselves between the production of signs and the production of events* » (Debray, 1994 : 29). The construction of a representation of a territory through the camera, which itself already suggests the upcoming film, links all these elements.

Daniel Bounoux insists on the fact that this mediological approach intervenes "on those environments, inseparably social and technical, which shape and recycle our symbolic representations, and allow us to hold together" (1998: 67). For him, "the digital tool encourages individualism, both in terms of expression, emission and reception of messages ; it also raises the question of how to show the general, the common good or a public space" (Bounoux, 2007: 46). Dealing with the narrative of a territory must therefore leave a large place to symbolic representations, which themselves contribute to the affirmation of a unifying link for the inhabitants of these territories thus narrated (Cyrulnik & Meyer, 2015b : 8).

The camera is a means of connecting people. The audiovisual tool is a stimulator and generator of particular communication situations: "The expression of juice requires the press and the grape; in the same way, an environment of objects that resist as well as an emotion and an internal impulse are needed to constitute an "expression" of emotion" (Dewey, 1915: 125). The object promotes expression by experimenting with art. Mediology is in line with the artistic and experiential dimension that documentaries enhance. Working on images and sounds requires communication; these techniques linked to the camera encourage reflection in relation to mediology. It is through the prism of the camera that we see a reality, and that we can give it to see. Capturing and transmitting make it possible to represent the world. When making a documentary film, one of the priorities is the human relationship: it is the human relationship that will make something happen and the subject become interesting (it will be a pretext to exchange later). Jean-Paul Colleyn even cites the method used with Jean Rouch's or Pierre Perrault's cameras because they have "as a prerequisite the love of humanity", this object provoking "performances in spontaneous interactions" (Colleyn, 1993: 88). The audiovisual tool offers a technique that must serve this idea above all : it is part of a mediation process, more than just a medium. Because the notion of transmission<sup>7</sup>, which has just been mentioned and which is underlying within the very word "documentum", is essential in a media approach. It must be taken even more into account with regard to the media, which themselves participate more or less happily in changing worldviews, particularly social representations (Moscovici, 1984). The technical associated with the media also reveal a culture based on their use, in relation to the "mediacultures" (Maigret & Macé, 2005) already mentioned. The documentary, a media object since it uses the camera and microphone to testify to the world while trying not to lock itself in too precise a format, offers a critical and alternative vision of the use of the media (television, and increasingly on the Internet) to get out of stereotypes. The documentary then proposes a mediological approach that goes hand in hand with the affirmation of a critical spirit about the media and the culture represented as well. It promotes the analysis of a method for the construction of a representation. Technical and audiovisual material thus contribute to the understanding of a culture, by constantly associating themselves with a reflection to build meaning through the different levels of representation. To study the social changes often present in suburbs undergoing urban change, the audiovisual tool seems to be an

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<sup>7</sup> Even if it can be understood as making a donation, sending, and teaching.

appropriate support<sup>8</sup>. This documentary method therefore fully fits into this mediological approach, through the interactions it offers between technology and culture. All this is also based on the intrinsic beliefs of documentary : the relationships between the protagonists of a documentary are based on the acceptance that these images come from reality (Lioult, 2004). Technical and beliefs go hand in hand, thus favouring a collective : that of the people linked to the camera during the shooting, in the movie theater during the debate, or in front of the film quite simply to receive social representations that are nuanced. Starting from technical considerations, we come to the positioning of people in their bodies and their status, which influences an interpretation of places, and the political dimension of documentary is affirmed when it helps man to find his place in the world (Cyrulnik, 2017b : 145 - 146).

### ***Experience of a territory through art***

The definition of a device, and of a related method, also requires that the documentary proposes another experience, through art (Dewey, 1915), of a territory.

#### Moving from the intimate to the universal

Philippe Meirieu (2003) in educational science, Denis Guénoun (2006) in comparative literature, or Pierre-Michel Menger in sociology, define being an artist in much the same way when they explain that it consists in making something intimate universally perceptible. This articulation between the intimate and the universal therefore seems to be part of any artistic process, whatever the discipline that analyses it. Something intimate resonates for others... This immediately questions the place of the body in relation to others : the place of the words spoken, of course, but also a particular management of space (E.T. Hall, 1976) and behaviours. Claudio Paziienza, for example, clearly explains that when he chooses to film himself next to his father who has just died to start shooting " *Wild boar hunting scenes* "<sup>9</sup> (46', 2007), it is an extremely intimate procès ; but that he does so by telling himself that it will resonate in others. The lying body and his body sitting next to him, almost curled up on his microphone to testify to what he was feeling at that moment, led the spectator into a very personal, even disturbing, register of exchange. Does the resonance of these images bring something to the viewer? In any case, he questions this relationship between the intimate and the universal in an extreme way.

Without necessarily going that far, the relationship with the public is in any case present as soon as you choose to put your camera somewhere. The place of the bodies tells a story and the spectator is more or less disturbed by it. It is also the experience in his own body that he will do that must be analyzed. Experiencing (common) through art (Dewey, 1915), both during filming and screening, is a strength of cinema that will help us to better understand a place or situation.

#### Experimenting through art

Experience and expertise are linked, making each inhabitant a specialist in the analysis of their own city. But the fact of proposing to make it a new experience with the help of a camera will precisely provoke a situation that forces him to enter, in terms of method, into a phenomenological reformulation (Paillé & Mucchielli, 2005: 72-75). This in turn will transform his experience into knowledge, for him and for the spectators afterwards. The social and intimate dimension of this experience through documentaries is affirmed in the field. A form of pedagogy is developing to better understand the territory and daily life in the related cities.

John Dewey claims "*art as an experience*" (1915) and helps us to better understand the issues involved in acquiring knowledge about a territory through documentary, in a common experience.

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<sup>8</sup> It should also be remembered that documentaries often work over a much longer period of time than reports, thus offering a trace of life in social housing that is more appropriate to bear witness to a memory of places, their practices and their evolution.

<sup>9</sup> When Claudio Paziienza came to meet the students of the art school of Villa Arson in Nice (master class on November 10, 2011 organized by ECLAT), he testified about his work, his reflection, his experience and his journey.

To define what it means to live an experience through art, he explains: "*The primary emotion on the part of the postulant can be at the beginning of hope or despair, and, in the end, joy or disappointment. These emotions give unity to the experience. But, as the interview progresses, secondary emotions develop, such as variations of the underlying primary emotion. It is even possible for every attitude, every gesture, every sentence and almost every word to express an emotion that is more than just a fluctuation of the main emotion; that is, to express a change in nuance and hue in its quality*" (Dewey, 1915: 93). In the context of a documentary, this would mean using all these steps, as an emerging method, to formulate states felt in the body, to state intentions, in order to compose a narrative for the film (Cyrulnik, 2016b : 31). Each brushstroke gives the painter (as well as the filmmaker or the filmed) the opportunity to put meaning into it and to apprehend the reception of his work (or himself). The creator exercises his thought, becomes demanding, and builds a representation, himself and his environment at the same time. He connects (Dewey, 1915: 97). The artistic dimension refers to the act of production, that of aesthetics to the act of perception and pleasure (Dewey, 1915: 98). Here again, we are in an intuitive approach that will be analyzed and understood later (Paillé & Muchielli, 2005: 32). In the case of the artistic experience, it is the action that matters, but the fact of having to build a representation in the end favours the consideration of the other's point of view and the notion of pleasure. The two dimensions come into play together based on the co-presence of the film's protagonists. What is experienced, with all the emotions that go with it, will be transformed in one way or another into a narrative for the film. From an intimate emotion at the beginning, a work of art is created.

#### The territory and the senses

For the Greeks, the arts were directly associated with the experience we were having together ! That is why they gathered at the theatre of Epidauros:" (...) *Existence takes place in an environment; not only in that environment but also because of it, through its interactions with it*" (Dewey, 1915: 45). We are at the heart of our problem. What could be called "*set*" for a film, even a documentary, contributes to the construction of the film. The context is largely responsible for this. In a french suburbs, for example, this "*set*" is necessarily a driving force that helps creation because it is so strong and present. It is the subject of the documentaries films in the series "*Living into the territory*" since they question these special places. "*Art as an experience*" connects man to his environment, to his world. The aesthetic experience<sup>10</sup> that is made in his body at first offers a form of knowledge that helps to better understand the world (Cyrulnik, 2016b: 33).

" *The term "significance" covers a wide range of content : sensory, sensational, sensitive and sentimental, not to mention sensual. It includes almost everything from the pure emotional and physical shock to the meaning itself, that is, the meaning of the things present in the immediate experience* " (Dewey, 1915: 59) : all these terms from "*significance*" must be considered as the premises of a formulation on how to live in one's french suburbs for a resident who comes into action and testifies. But, because he is in front of the camera, with all the viewers it suggests in the future, he will rather spontaneously use these first "*sensations*" to extract a meaning, then a story, for the film. The position of his body itself will be transformed by the presence of the camera : he stands in front of it, he stands a little straighter, articulates a little more, makes humorous strokes to try to make himself understood as best as possible... in any case this is what happens most of the time during the first exchanges in front of the camera. The documentary is inspired by this first state. It promotes exchange between all, analyses its environment (or at least refers to the world in general), in order to affirm an individual and collective dimension : "*Experience is the result, sign and reward of this interaction between the organism and the environment which, when completed, is a transformation of interaction into participation and communication*" (Dewey, 1915: 60). The experience through art places the body within its environment, and transforms it into a mode of

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<sup>10</sup> " *Because experience is the accomplishment of an organism in its struggles and achievements in a world of objects, it is the embryonic form of art. Even in its rudimentary forms, it contains the promise of that exquisite perception that is the aesthetic expérience* " (Dewey, 1915: 55).



communication with the world outside the city in our case. Art thus prefigures the very "process" of existence (Dewey, 1915: 63), and documentaries offer a sensitive new experience of french suburbs. This is achieved through the body and its sensations: "*Art is the best proof of the existence of a union, realized and therefore achievable, of the material and the ideal*" (Dewey, 1915: 68). This is in line with the media mentioned above. From this link between nature and spirit can arise from meaning and spirituality (Cyrulnik, 2016b: 33).

Art thus proposes a form of method insofar as it is the very process that is questioned. The action offered by the experiment makes it possible to analyse the production procedures of a work. A more or less spontaneous perception of what is happening is revealed in each shot, for both the filmmaker and the filmed, in co-presence. The experience becomes aesthetic (Dewey, 1915: 104). Art as an experience offers a device and a method that is reflected in the work in the end, whatever the more or less visible presence of the aesthetic dimension put in place (even more in documentaries !). The founding perception of this artistic experience is for the artist, the one being filmed, and the spectator. Human relations become witnesses to the artistic act (Dewey, 1915: 123).

#### Experimenting and symbolizing a territory

Through the strength of the experience (of a territory) that art fosters, it is both action, appropriation and symbolization that are called upon. The place of man on the ground, the situation in which he finds himself and which makes him move, the position he chooses to take, will lead him to build his personal projections and what he tells himself about it. When a young girl in "*A meadow in the city*" (44', 2002) says that she dreams for later of a man who "*is kind and doesn't drink too much*" she reveals a lot of things about her daily life, but who can be said because it's in a film... The symbolic dimension of art, also possible through documentary cinema, offers a new openness, it being understood that the symbol keeps a natural link with the thing (Berque, 2010: 289). This precision links art to nature. Moreover, Augustin Berque, in his approach, which is primarily geographical but also philosophical, insists on "*trajectories*": "*It is this double process of technical projection and symbolic introjection. It is the coming and going, the existential pulsation which, animating the mediation, makes the world matter to us. It is important to us carnally, because it comes from our pulpit in the form of technical and it comes back to us in the form of symbols. This is what makes us human, this is what the ecumene is, and this is why the world makes sense*" (2010: 208). Everything he has theorized about human environments leads us to an approach to symbols for which the artistic dimension is a plus. Art is a possible support to talk about man and his environment. The documentary is a help to talk about territory more precisely. John Dewey returns to the links between art and the environment in the broad sense of the term : "*The interaction between the environment and the organism is the direct or indirect source of all experience; these controls, resistances, additions, balances which, meeting in the appropriate way the energies of the organism, constitute the form*" (1915 : 250).

In this quest for meaning, and concerning this apprehension of a reality, Nishida Kitarô (1911) starts from the theme of pure experience, to come to the "*logic of place*" or "*logic (of identity) of the predicate*" that would promote the identity of the subject. Because things (places) are named, qualified by a relationship or built by our hands, they unfold our world (Berque, 2010: 234). Augustin Berque develops further : "*If I, domiciled in Sendai, do not like the idea of building an aerodrome in Adelie Land, it is not because I experience its decibels or kerosene vapour; it is because the symbolic systems of modernity make them present in my animal body; and if they make them present to me, it is indissolubly because the technical systems of the same modernity, very materially, produce and can reproduce such artifacts, as well as those that physically connect me to them (communication networks etc). The Adelie Earth is not only through symbols that it is part of my existence; it is really part of it as long as I exist within modern civilization*" (2010 : 254 - 255). The symbolic dimension then evokes the place of the documentary film spectator who thinks of the world in which he is, at the same time as the place he finds there. Experience leads us to symbolism.

Documentary as an art affirms the place of the viewer, and as a genre it contextualizes and validates an intrinsic rhetorical approach (Soulez, 2011).

In summary and to conclude this section on the relationship between community and identity through film, documentary has emerged as a socio-technical device (Cyrulnik, 2015a) that helps to improve "*being in the world*" (Schaeffer, 1999). Jean-Marie Schaeffer (1999) said this to justify our need for fiction; to the extent that the documentary tells us (it romances) the world, and a particular territory, it participates in a certain way in this anchoring in society. It is part of an approach that often oscillates between the social and the territorial, even the political (Cyrulnik, 2017b : 148 - 153). From an intuitive approach to the body, we come to value the symbolic dimension of documentary work and to consider its political significance.

### ***Sharing the sensitive to engage***

Intimacy is the process of forging a bond with another participant or with the director to reveal something about oneself... which will then resonate in a more universal way when the spectator becomes aware of it. The fact of sharing, with several people (whether during the shooting, through the articulation of the story in the editing, during the screening or during the debate that follows), these experiences and emotions offer a basis for building a representation of them, which are transformed into reflection, before becoming a film. This process is gradually maturing. The participant's commitment is confirmed as the film is being made. It is by seeking to analyse, decipher, interpret images, his environment or representations, that an operation is carried out in the person and that he affirms a position that evokes a form of commitment. By affirming his place in the world, the person who participates in films also anchors his posture as a citizen (Cyrulnik, 2016a: 108).

### **Sharing the creation**

Already the way of sharing the creation of the film extends the chosen method and encourages human interaction between the protagonists that gives substance to the film.

**Workshop situations** more often correspond to a form of **co-creation** insofar as all participants are on equal terms (director - accompanying person included). The film is invented between all of them. The director accompanies this act of creation by constantly stimulating them, while withdrawing as an artist, so that the participants become full-fledged authors. The film is written during the shooting, all together, and by positioning oneself individually and collectively at the same time. From intuitive practice to understood analysis (Paillé & Mucchielli, 2005: 32), the film takes shape from the moment it is shot, anticipating the editing insofar as we are already thinking about the construction of the film. Thus, after an afternoon strolling through the streets of the « *Cité Berthe* » to find the inspiration for a new film, the older sisters seized the audiovisual material as soon as they saw a little boy of Senegalese origin offer a bouquet of wild flowers that he had just picked during this walk to a pretty Algerian girl. From this scene, it was therefore decided collectively that the film to be made this year would take place exclusively in this large abandoned field, investing it as a separate space where we should "*only talk well, not say swear words, and only say intimate and sincere things to each other*". "*A meadow in the city*" (2002, 44') was being born. Through this scene that became fictionalized (but whose main interest was documentary since the invented characters made it possible to make them say many things about everyday life<sup>11</sup>), an

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<sup>11</sup> It is not a question of opposing fiction and documentary but on the contrary of signifying to what extent one is constructed in relation to the other (Guynn, 2001). That said, over the years, participants in these workshops (Cyrulnik, 2016a) have come to make real documentaries because they wanted to show themselves more. As Jacques Rancière says: "*[The film] brings to its highest power the double resource of silent printing that speaks and editing that calculates the powers of significance and the values of truth. And documentary cinema, cinema dedicated to "reality" is,*

urban and human reflection emerged in connection with the suburb in full mutation. The principle is that each participant contributes his own little stone to the creation of the film because he is forced to position himself in front of or behind the camera, thus affirming himself in one way or another both individually and collectively. These young people invented a new understanding of their territory by mobilizing their friends and enacting common rules of conduct to better live together. If they did not formulate them like that, these criteria became the first steps in a scenario that was built on the logic of intimacy to be revealed in all confidence, to be shared... From a filmed secret, new representations are set up as people affirm themselves. By choosing the subject to be addressed in the strong setting of the territory, the participant reflects what is important to him to tell about this space. The participatory process in a workshop is the basis for the construction of the film.

These emerging interactions are also reflected in **the collaboration in the making of a documentary** insofar as it is finally the relationship that has been established between the filmmaker and the filmed person that gives rise to the testimony that the spectator will ultimately see on the screen. These situations of exchange make it possible to co-construct an urban representation (the territory also appears through what the participants tell about it), filmic (the documentary), social (the comprehensive approach makes it possible to get out of the stigma on the suburb), and self (the filmed person catalyzes his behaviour) at the same time (Cyrulnik, 2016b). All these levels of representation attest to the different contributions of documentary. Through this set of representations, the filmed person, by collaborating through his testimony, finally also participates in the creation of the film: he feeds it, he also thinks it by testifying to his daily life, he tells his city by making all his part of subjectivity and the part of romance that goes with it show through, he puts himself on stage in front of the camera, etc. When a young person walks towards the camera by hiding behind a hood and rolling the mechanics, he reproduces the clichés in which he feels locked, reproducing the television codes of the "*scum that should be cleaned with a karcher*"<sup>12</sup>. But, after a few minutes of discussion, he finally pulled down his hood and began to tell his life and feelings<sup>13</sup> in a more intimate register. A part of creation emanates from him through his way of being in front of the camera. It is the enhancement<sup>14</sup> of this one that will make the film all the more interesting and will touch the spectator, thus encouraging him to feel concerned in his turn. The emergence of the comments accompanied by this self-direction of the filmed, the narrative that is composed live in front of the camera, the resonance of the comments collected with each other, and the one that the spectator will have in the end, propose stages of collaboration that arise from the possible interactions between the different protagonists of the film.

The director remains the conductor in all circumstances, but it is the relationships he knows how to establish that will best reflect the daily life in the cities. The importance of the I of "*I am another*" by D. W Winnicot (1975) suggests that one is never alone, that one must think of the other in oneself ; documentary cinema and these workshops help to do this. This is a question that is put under tension especially for adolescents, at a time when their bodies are changing. To touch the principle of creation with your finger at that moment emanates. These situations are examples that show how living and experiencing these feelings related to the moments of creation, going through

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*in this sense, capable of a stronger fictional invention than "fiction" cinema, easily dedicated to a certain stereotype of actions and characters*" (Rancière, 2010: 60 - 61).

<sup>12</sup> Expression comes from Nicolas Sarkozy's words that the young people finally appropriated and diverted in their own way and now call themselves the "*Kairas*" (verlan de "*scum*").

<sup>13</sup> This is a visible sequence in particular, since it is a relatively common practice that testifies to the importance of "mediacultures" (Maigret & Macé, 2005), in "*La revendication d'un regard*" (2008, 39) and in "*Ceux qui pensent le projet urbain, ceux qui le vivent*" (2011, 80').

<sup>14</sup> The filmmaker, behind the camera, directly means by his gestures and facial expressions during the shooting, that what the filmed person tells is interesting, in order to encourage him to develop his idea. A relationship is forged ; it enhances the value of the filmed. In any case, this is what happens most of the time for the takes that will be retained during editing....

all these stages, taking action and taking shape, open up a view of the wider world. D. W Winnicot (1975) speaks of a transitional object as a reference point for opening up to the outside world. The creation of the objects or images just mentioned is part of this logic (Cyrulnik, 2016b: 63).

Without positioning themselves as authors, this set of interactions encourages the construction of several levels of representation and engagement in a collaboration of which the documentary film is intended to be both the goal and the relay for a better understanding of these territories. Co-development, combined with a form of co-responsibility due to speaking in public, makes it possible to make these words better heard about everyday life in the suburbs. This is combined with a form of recognition for the inhabitants that corresponds precisely to what they claim above all, so that a less caricatural view is taken of them (Cyrulnik, 2018a). Through these situations exposed, the logics of co-creation, collaboration, and participation in all these forms show that the positioning of bodies plays a role according to their status, their way of assuming it, and especially their commitment to it.

### **Aesthetics, relationship and politics**

Jacques Rancière approaches « *the sharing of the sensitive* » (2000) as an exchange within a community<sup>15</sup>. From the title of the book, the relationship takes root as the foundation of our relationship to the world. Aesthetics would be in the logic of emancipation, like a battle to be fought. Schiller, in his « *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* » (1943), presented " *a specific mode of living in the sensitive world that must be developed by "aesthetic education" to train men likely to live in a free political community* " (quoted by Rancière, 2010: 39-40). Art helps to find its place in the world by making an act of creation; it is in any case what many young people from the suburbs of the South of France have been able to experience during these years. As if to deepen these issues of the workshops of artistic practices of cinema, Jacques Rancière adds : " *To make a way of technique - whether it is a use of words or the camera - qualified as belonging to art, its subject must first be qualified as belonging to art* " (2010 : 49). He extends it with : " *The ordinary becomes beautiful as a trace of truth* " (2010: 52). Cinema thus becomes a new art of storytelling and self-engagement, in all sincerity. And this spontaneity is confirmed after the first ten minutes of exchanges necessary to forget the camera<sup>16</sup>. It is on this sincerity and complicity that the making of a film is based. It becomes useful to the person in the sense that it brings him something, thus a process of transformation takes place. Jacques Rancière comes to describe " [...] *art as the transformation of thought into a sensitive experience of community* " (2010: 71) (Cyrulnik, 2016b: 107-108). This process of transformation of the film's protagonists takes on a social and political dimension insofar as it is what is at stake between them, together, that matters.

### **Freedom, education and politics**

Still in this emancipatory and democratic logic, Hannah Arendt, in « *between past and future* » (1954), makes comments that resonate with our situations. She speaks of processes (1954: 80-84), truth being challenged according to a capacity for action (action being obviously the driving force behind the making of these films in these streets). She then wondered what freedom was and made free will a priority (1954: 188), thus recalling the critical spirit of the beginning as a necessity, while linking it to artistic considerations. It distinguishes the performing arts from the creative arts

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<sup>15</sup> " *The surface of the "painted" signs, the duplication of the theatre, the rhythm of the dancing choir : these are three forms of sharing the sensitive structuring the way in which the arts can be perceived and thought of as arts and as forms of inscription of the meaning of community* " (Rancière, 2010: 16). The experience favours the sensitive division of the community and then raises the question of the relationship between aesthetics and politics (Rancière, 2010 : 25)

<sup>16</sup> As for example at the beginning of " *La revendication d'un regard* " (2008, 39').

of manufacturing : " [...] *It is not the free creative process that ultimately appears and imports into the world, but the work of art itself, the final product of the process. Performing arts, on the other hand, have a strong affinity with politics. Both need a publicly organized space for their "work", and both depend on others for the performance itself* " (1954: 199-200). Documentary films, like workshop films, bear witness to a reality and debate it ; they are therefore considered as performing arts. They display both their freedom and their place in the world. They fully participate in an affirmation of identity in the political sense : " *If, therefore, we understand politics in the sense of politeness, its purpose or purpose would be to establish and preserve in existence a space where freedom as virtuosity can appear. This is the area where freedom is a reality of the world, tangible in words that can be heard, in actions that can be seen, in events that are spoken of, remembered and transformed into stories before being incorporated into the great book of human history. Everything that happens on this stage is, by definition, political, even when it is not a direct product of action* " (Arendt, 1954 : 201).

Education and culture are at the crossroads of these implemented films. Yet what is put in this word " *culture* " is a little far from the artistic dimension that makes all the difference. The risk is that it becomes a value of exchange by losing " *the power to stop our attention and move us* " (Arendt, 1954 : 261). " *Culture is destroyed to generate leisure* " (Arendt, 1954: 266) : in this respect, film workshop owners must be careful not only to "occupy" children who are bored in the suburb, but to ensure that something really happens for them, something that transforms them all a little, something artistic..." *Culture and politics then belong to each other, because it is not knowledge or truth that is at stake, but rather judgment and decision, the judicious exchange of opinions about the sphere of public life and the common world, and the decision on the kind of action to be taken there, as well as the way of seeing the world in the future, and the things that must appear there* " (Arendt, 1954: 285) : workshops in artistic film practice and documentary experiences, by developing a form of critical thinking that leads to the creation of a filmic representation of a particular territory, contribute to this form of affirmation, which is also of a political nature.

*" Political thought is representative. I form an opinion by considering a given issue from different points of view, by going to present to the mind the positions of those who are absent ; that is, by representing them. This process of representation does not adopt a different perspective ; it is not about sympathy as if I am trying to be or feel like someone else, or to count and join the voices of a majority, but to be and think in my own identity where I am not really. The more positions of the people I have in mind while I reflect on a given issue, and the better I can imagine how I would feel and think if I were in their shoes, the stronger my ability to think representatively and the more valid my final conclusions, my opinion will be "* (Arendt, 1954: 307).

Finally, Hannah Arendt helps to demonstrate that building a representation, as is the case in workshops or for documentaries, is part of a form of political engagement (Cyrulnik, 2016b: 109-112), and "aesthetic empathy" (Lemarquis, 2015) would be a major factor (Cyrulnik, 2017a : 37-38).

## **Conclusion**

From the need to foster a critical spirit in the face of images that are so easily consumed, from the experience that makes it possible to move from something intimate to a more collective vision, the artistic and political dimensions of these cinematographic situations are becoming more apparent. It is a question of fully assuming the fact that these steps involve all persons, participants and project leaders alike. This social and artistic commitment has a real political dimension. The process of artistic and political transformation takes place during the shooting, and continues thereafter. The lived experience matures over time. This is also the strength of these artistic experiences in film. Citizen engagement began with emotions that are transformed into different

forms of expression: through speech, framing, the situation to be filmed, or self-direction in front of the camera, among others.

In addition, there is the question of the " *cult of the banal* " : is it better for these young people from suburbs to blend into a mass or to emerge in a particular situation such as that of making a film ? Reality TV has tended to value the banal (Jost, 2007), the process of creating a film offers an original situation that encourages interaction. This aspect, which may seem playful (Winnicot, 1975), seals these interactions in a form of identity affirmation, where bodies assume their place, whether they are in front of or behind the camera, or sitting in the cinema....

Everything was built on the basis of a complicity between the filmmaker and the filmed person at the beginning. This process, which values otherness, promotes a form of recognition as well. If the audiences affected are sometimes in difficulty, the commitment is still there. The principle of recognition combines both societal and emotional values. Axel Honneth concludes his book on recognition by defining it in relation to an experience of love : " *the experience of love thus gives access to self-confidence, the experience of legal recognition to self-respect and the experience of solidarity, and finally to self-esteem* " (Honneth, 2010: 208). Is it a " *journey* " (Ricoeur, 2005) or a " *struggle for recognition* " (Honneth, 2010) ? In any case, the documentary genre is part of a collaborative process that promotes this (Cyrulnik, 2018a: 2-5), and that goes beyond the film alone.

Current digital reconfigurations accentuate this understanding of shared intimacy. If identity is constructed in the other's eyes, film is an artistic tool to talk about oneself, and to allow something of the body to be tied by speech (or any form of expression). Modesty, decency and indecency, ethics (already mentioned and essential to make a documentary film), or empathy, are all feelings that contribute to this body policy.

The content of the films, which has not been discussed much here, also often reflects precarious situations, especially in suburbs. The last film in the series " *Living in the territory* " shot in the Cité Berthe, " *Adieu Berthe !* " (2013, 39'), testifies to the commitment of the participants after all these years of films as they decide to implement " *citizen barbecues* " as they say, to re-mobilize and federate all the people who have lived in these districts in full mutation. This film is a form of cry from the heart, from the inhabitants and the director whose subsidies have been withdrawn, putting an end to this work, and ends up mixing the destruction of the towers filmed over fifteen years with the images shot there with such flame, joy and enthusiasm in these places. All these forms of destruction are mixed in this film, still combining creation with the political dimension it implies.

To conclude and try to overcome these claims, from emancipatory potential to new forms of critical and political thought, new forms of sociability now offer new perspectives to these cinematographic situations. " *Participation* ", " *co-productions* ", " *co-creations* ", and other collaborative and cooperative situations, become the breeding ground for new communities that federate and take charge of things, thus building other meetings and situations of sharing. They are the ones who ultimately remain the priority of all these artistic adventures that cinema, and art in general, offer... (Cyrulnik, 2017a : 39)

A little girl with whom I worked in 2005 to make " *La parole de l'Art* " with her, (23', 2005) told me almost the same thing. While at first she found my question incongruous, which consisted in knowing what art is and what it is for, she concluded the film by letting go of her own reflection that had developed as the film was being built : " *You are obliged to love art, because otherwise you only love yourself, and you can't stay alone. You have to love art because you have to love others...*" (Cyrulnik, 2016a : 117).

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### **Filmographie**

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