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14. Audiovisual Narratives for the Creation of Community Identity in a Digital Culture: The Case of Vilnius University

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14.1. Introduction: the need for relationships and identity

The media consumer in today's post-modern society is confronted with audiovisual communication media daily in various places and situations. This phenomenon influences people's leisure time, personal psychological state, and education, and promotes long-term social transformation and learning (Budzinski, Gaenssle & Lindstädt-Dreusicke, 2021; Nicolaou & liris, 2020). Audiovisual communication is not only encountered through traditional digital media, such as cinema, TV, and the internet, but also through video screens in public spaces in the world's metropolises, such as squares and transport stations. Even the great basilicas, which have long fascinated us with their medieval visual artworks illustrating biblical texts for those who could not read, are entering a new phase of public audiovisual communication today. In Rome, for example, large digital screens on the exterior walls of the Basilica of Maria Maggiore, which overlooks the city's vast piazzas, nowadays feature a variety of attention-grabbing images, from advertisements for contemporary fashion products to invitations to go inside and explore the ancient basilica. Thus, it seems, in the modern era every institution must seek innovative modes of communication and endeavour to enhance its visibility.

Institutions bring people together, and people are essentially problematic beings because each one has all kinds of needs from birth. The leaders of institutions must understand people in a complex way and see them from different perspectives: they must appreciate and be aware of the basic daily physiological needs of their members – after all, it is vital for people to satisfy their thirst and hunger, to take care of their health and, more generally, to take time to look after their bodies.

In addition to these considerations, intellectual, social, and spiritual needs exist, including love, respect, and empathy (Crete, 2020, pp. 279-283). In the end, all types of needs are only grasped and met through effective communication within a community (an organization, institution, family, etc.). Only comprehensive communication can ensure the authority of an institution and its impact in the long term.

The human need for identity is closely linked to emotional experiences, and communication is inseparable from the experience and expression of emotions. In this context, the colourful spectrum of the Emotion Wheel (Plutchik, 1980), or the circumplex model of affect, highlights the importance of feelings in all types of communication as impactful phenomena (Wirth & Schramm, 2005). There are rules of coexistence, elementary laws of ethics, and respect, all of which people naturally inherit as part of their nation's cultural heritage. The cultural adoption and transmission process creates and maintains multifaceted human relationships: personal, group, national, and transnational. The totality of these communicative relationships highlights the evolutionary changes in our culture (Debray, 2000). Through relationships individuals, communities, organizations, and societies discover their identities, and ultimately this helps to answer the fundamental existential question: who am I, who are we, and what is our identity?

Let us remember: humanity began to communicate its ideas by creating stories. Initially, the stories were oral, taking the form of tales, myths, legends, and a bit later, folk songs. Then came manuscripts, books, lithography, printing, photography, cinema, radio, television, the internet, smart devices, and artificial intelligence. All these evolving means of communication served the creation and articulation of narratives. The key feature of many the old narratives is that they tell stories about the triumph of good over evil. This theme has been present since the earliest known epics and myths (e.g. The Epic of Gilgamesh, etc.).

The classic mythological narrative developed to an extreme level the idea of a happy ending based on the dynamics of the struggle between good and evil. It reveals humanity's desire to uphold and preserve moral justice. Here the values of good and evil are not tied to the battlefield of the social classes, since values are seen as absolute imperatives of the collective consciousness, derived from common human ethical norms. At the centre of the mythological audiovisual narrative is the belief that resolution of the conflict is possible. While they focus all their ingenuity playfully on ways to resolve it, the most important element

is the value, the belief, that good must prevail over evil. However, each ideological or propaganda narrator chooses their starting point of what is "good" from their own perspective, and sometimes in defining good, they may falsify the facts of objective truth. Today, ideological and falsifying narratives can be found not only in dictatorial societies but also in the free world.

There is a question we must answer: What in the modern world can counter the falsifying narratives of the audiovisual media, and the false stereotypes that prevail in them, and open up an alternative pluralistic view of social phenomena? In the 20th century, audiovisual narratives were created exclusively by professionals: filmmakers and television companies. In the 21st century, alongside the traditional film and TV monopolies that grew up in the 20th century, the new media platform YouTube (2005) was born. The phenomenon of YouTube contributed to ending professional videomakers' monopoly of audiovisual culture. Today, virtually anyone with a film camera or a smartphone can create and publish an audiovisual narrative.

14.2. Narrative knowledge and new technological discovery

Narratives often operate through a combination of words and emotions shaped by life's challenges. Current research on media narratives supports the long-standing principle that emotions affect a listener sometimes even more than rational facts (Cho, Cannon, Lopez, & Li, 2024). Jean-François Lyotard (1984), a researcher of postmodern culture, summarising the evolution of narrative, asserted "the pre-eminence of the narrative form in the formulation of traditional knowledge", arguing that "narration is the quintessential form of customary knowledge, in more ways than one." (Lyotard, 1984, p. 19). Narrative is rooted in an ancient tradition of mythmaking and transmission that continues up to our own time. The enduring value of a mythological narrative over time is guaranteed by listeners' ability to believe in the events told and how they unfold, without essentially questioning them. The paradox lies in the fact that the listener believes the story, and it can therefore continue to live on through word of mouth, generation after generation. Thus countries, peoples and institutions discover, consolidate and preserve their identity.

The evolution of society, according to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1980), takes the form of a vibrant *rhizome* stretching out in all

directions and multiplying human experiences, which, when separated, can grow and develop independently and autonomously. Scientific progress, by discovering and defining new laws and new particles in the universe, increasingly distances one area from another. There is certainly a danger not only of emotional confusion, but also of different groups of people being unable to understand each other. How, in this post-modern world, can traditional and conventional narrative knowledge help transmit knowledge from autonomous groups of people, such as scientists and researchers, not only to specialists in their own field or in a related field, but to society as a whole? We assume that it is necessary for scientists who are "locked up" in laboratories or research centres to create their own narratives by means of which they can approach or return to the part of society from which they have seemingly withdrawn because of their dedication.

All forms of narrative, both spoken and audiovisual, take place in real time and thus relate to the actual lived time. A storyteller is legitimised by his or her ability to ingeniously connect the past with the present and with the actual environment in which he or she lives (Deleuze, 1985). Storytellers of all times appeal to everyday human experiences and to knowledge of the world in which we live. What is distinctive about contemporary storytellers is that they create and communicate a story through contemporary digital technologies – media – and therefore, in theory, their audience can continually grow. In the context of this new development of communication, a new public discourse is emerging which, being open to all, can legitimise and define societal norms, values, aspirations and unacceptable stereotypes and templates of behaviour.

According to the philosopher Jean-François Lyotard (1984), our entire culture is based on two ways of knowing: narrative and scientific. We are concerned with the first one, the narrative, where the author identifies several meanings of what is told. First is positive or negative character education, legitimising the competences and efforts of heroes and the contribution of institutions to setting boundaries for society's actions in the face of good and evil. Second is linguistic playfulness, encompassing elements of all kinds, from living beings to astronomical bodies. A playful multi-component structure ensures the density of a narrative and the dynamic change of events that emerges from and sustains the perspective of the whole. Third is how the narrative is communicated. The transmission of experience and knowledge is based on three essential communicative components: the sender, the receiver

(addressee) and the message (the hero, the referent). Here, paradoxically, the storyteller must play all three roles:

> Thus, the speech acts (…) relevant to this form of knowledge are performed not only by the speaker, but also by the listener, as well as by the third party referred to. The knowledge arising from such an apparatus may seem "condensed" in comparison with what I call "developed" knowledge. Our example clearly illustrates that a narrative tradition is also the tradition of the criteria defining a threefold competence –"know-how," "knowing how to speak," and "knowing how to hear" [savoir-faire, savoir-dire, savoir-entendre] – through which the community's relationship to itself and its environment is played out. What is transmitted through these narratives is the set of pragmatic rules that constitutes the social bond. (Lyotard, 1984, p. 21)

As has been observed, behind the formal components of the narrative structure we discover the emotional dimension, the course, of the narrative, which masterfully provokes the emotions of the addressee. Recent research confirms that the greatest impact of narratives is precisely their emotional background, which opens up new experiences of meaning (Cho, Cannon, Lopez, & Li, 2024). We conclude that the most impactful consequence of narrative sequences is the emotional impact they induce, which paradoxically can hide not only the true facts of the story but also the objective obviousness itself of reality and scientific truth. However, this does not negate the fact that objective truth can be conveyed in a narrative through the emotions evoked.

How did the introduction of the film camera into communication processes begin to change the way people communicate? The birth of cinema and its evolution enriched social communication through that media's ability to convey human body language, facial expressions, emotions, and the environment and atmosphere of story characters, including colour and aesthetic beauty. And cinema developed an ability to respond to the leisure needs of different people, sometimes helping bring together family members with different jobs or positions (McQuail, 2001, pp. 23-24).

The expansion of the range of communication through technology highlights not only the positive values of the new global communication, but also a number of new challenges. Throughout the 20th century, the mass media promoted various ideologies and consumerism and created advertisements, since the media needed to survive. On the one

hand, the consumerism propagated by the media is criticized by representatives of the Frankfurt School (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2002; Marcuse, 2002). On the other hand, as Walter Benjamin (1969) points out, a cinematic work can serve not only to spread ideology and propaganda but also to carry democracy, that is, to promote pluralism of thought. Moreover, influenced by the audiovisual media environment, each of us prepares a narrative that we can or want to share with those around us (Benjamin, 1969). From a psychological perspective, people want to be seen, loved and understood (Crete, 2020). Thus, filmed images or audio-visual storytelling can fulfil those essential human needs.

John Fiske (2011) has applied the structures of storytelling and mythic thought, discovered and analysed by semioticians, to the analysis of audiovisual narratives on TV. He observed that TV storytellers have only slightly modified the traditional narrative scheme (Fiske). The question is: how does an audiovisual narrative structure differ from the traditional story? Recall the essential schematic elements of the traditional narrative or myth. First, every story begins with the depiction of a harmonious environment; second, the apparent harmony is suddenly shattered by a villain (the antagonist); third, a positive hero (the protagonist) appears; fourth, the hero and the villain face off in a desperate struggle; fifth, harmony is re-established and rebuilt within the community (cfr. Fiske, pp. 131-149). As the narrative unfolds, the viewer recognises his or her own inner struggles, which take away peace, but once experienced and lived, the victory over evil empowers them to strive to restore peace, and the pursuit of such a victory becomes a motto for life. Thus, humanity's mythological narratives are constantly guided by the same paradigm – the victory of good over evil – and this dynamic is echoed time and again in new stories.

The fundamental question is this: why does humanity feel the need to re-articulate the same narrative logic over and over again? According to Algirdas Julius Greimas (1991), every human being is "inscribed" in the particular culture in which they live. And each culture is guided by its own value systems, which are articulated in the mythological narratives of that culture (Greimas, 1991, p. 45). For a society to function smoothly as a population of diverse people, it is inevitable that narratives are necessary, and as we have discussed, their functionality is multiple. The most important of these is that storytelling, as the cultural core of a society, is a key communication tool that, firstly, conveys information and, secondly, brings people together to

achieve their goals and enables them to share their experiences. James Carey (2009) defines these socio-cultural communication processes as transmission and ritual:

> The transmission view of communication is the commonest in our culture — perhaps in all industrial cultures — and dominates contemporary dictionary entries under the term. It is defined by terms such as "imparting," "sending," "transmitting," or "giving information to others." It is formed from a metaphor of geography or transportation. In the nineteenth century but to a lesser extent today, the movement of goods or people and the movement of information were seen as essentially identical processes and both were described by the common noun "communication." The center of this idea of communication is the transmission of signals or messages over distance for the purpose of control. It is a view of communication that derives from one of the most ancient of human dreams: the desire to increase the speed and effect of messages as they travel in space (Carey, 2009, p. 12).

Here, the transmission of information is not reduced to unidirectional and manipulative communication, but emphasises the existential human desire, from birth, to be seen and heard. It is the transmission of communication that goes beyond the visible space that brings new experiences and better locates the communicator in society. But at the same time, contradictions and opposition arise when one experiences and realises that other communicators have different and diverse needs. Thus, communication leads to self-awareness/self-perception in society.

The act of communication by one or another human subject inevitably involves the perception of another subject and the communicative activity arising from the other subject. Here two radical communicative perspectives emerge for us: an egoistic or altruistic relationship with the environment. Paradoxically, the great narratives of humanity co-existentially integrate opposing realities of life and thus help us to cope with contradictions. Hence, the semiotic approach argues that narratives help to resolve the contradictions that exist in society (Greimas, 1991, p. 47).

In contemporary society, anyone who knows how to film and wants to share their videos and thoughts became able to post their audiovisual works on YouTube. People welcomed this opportunity, even if professionals in the field viewed the arrangement sceptically, as un-

systematic and abounding in low-quality videos. Despite the criticism, the platform expanded and grew. Pelle Snickars and Patrick Vonderau (2009) described this transformative situation as follows:

> Turning from an interpersonal video-sharing service into 'the world's leading video community on the Internet', YouTube has transformed not only the very notion of 'platform' but also the character of its 'community', and will continue to do so in a neat competition for industrializing "usage" (Snickars & Vonderau, 2009, p. 10).

Audiovisual works are continuously uploaded to the YouTube platform, and their abundance has transformed the user audience into a global community. This environment facilitates not only the acquisition of experience but also its dissemination. Before the internet, media users were much less able to potentially participate in the public media discourse than they are now. When it came to publicly presented information, users had nowhere near the possibilities of professional media content creators to actively question, criticise or oppose it. To address this weakness, underground media were founded as a counterbalance to ideological communicative influences. Therefore, according to Sandra Gaudenzi:

> The role of the filmmaker as a subjective observer, and the opening of video production to amateurs, does not have its roots in YouTube or Web 2.0, but rather is the result of a cultural, scientific and technological context that has repeatedly questioned the authority of the author/filmmaker/scientist throughout the whole of the 20th and 21st century (Gaudenzi, 2013, p. 180).

In time, the need to communicate freely through images and words, and not only authoritative intermediaries, led to a new platform for audiovisual communication: YouTube. This platform has a significance equivalent to that of writing or printing and is suited to the conduct of both personal and corporate communication.

14.3. Aims and methods

The main objective of this practical study is to reveal how short-format (three to four-minute) audiovisual narratives can effectively communicate complex research in a language that is understandable to the public while maintaining its scientific relevance and enhancing the self-esteem of the researchers themselves as empowered public com-

municators. From a philosophical perspective, the need to communicate is an inherent and existential phenomenon (Buber, 2010), but the means of communication used to express needs constantly evolve and change. Based on the assumption that people's attention is increasingly shifting towards new digital visual communication tools, we aim to find out whether traditional narratives and stories based on a classical dramaturgical principle can help the scholars of Vilnius University (1579) and the institution as a whole to strengthen their sense of community and rediscover their identity. We will discuss and evaluate the impact and function of audiovisual narrative as an instrument of corporate communication for the postmodern university. We will try to answer these and the following questions by analysing the structure of eight audiovisual narratives that are 3-4 minutes in length, the methods of work, and the experiences of the participants. The video narratives were created as part of the project "Promotion Entrepreneurship Culture at Vilnius University" financed by the EU Structural Funds (2021-2023). They represent the most relevant and innovative scientific areas of Vilnius University. The videos created during the project were originally intended to be used for the representation of Vilnius University, e.g. at major international fairs, summits, and exhibitions.

The title of each video narrative introduces a research area:

Nr.	Title	Year
1	Laser technologies at Vilnius University	2022
2	Photonic technologies at Vilnius University	2022
3	Technologies for clinical application at Vilnius University	2022
4	Molecular biology and biotechnology solutions at Vilnius University	2022
5	Advanced material solutions at Vilnius University	2022
6	Artificial intelligence solutions at Vilnius University	2022
7	Hardware and software solutions for life sciences at Vilnius University	2022
8	Social science and humanities at Vilnius University	2023

We will address the following questions: What can contemporary audiovisual narratives, disseminated through different channels in VU corporate communication, bring to the educational institution, and what new changes could they bring to the educational institution in general?

For the sake of objectivity, it should be noted that the concepts for all eight audiovisual works were discussed by the communication team with the author of this text, who has experience both as a researcher and a television practitioner. What is innovative is that this time the audiovisual research has been created for the public relying on the university's own internal human and intellectual resources.

To gain deeper insights into the creative process and its impact, semi-structured interviews were carried out with the three researchers involved in these audiovisual stories as main characters, as well as with the three administrative specialists from the University. The interviews were aimed at exploring the participants' experiences of the project, their perceptions of the aims and impact of the communication process, changes in their personal and professional visibility after the project, and their perceptions of the format of stories in science communication. The semi-structured interviews with project and communication specialists and three scientists examined the role of audiovisual narratives in conveying scientific innovations and research results as part of Vilnius University's corporate heritage and social impact strategy.

Interviews were conducted in October 2024, either remotely via video call (Teams) or in-person, with each session lasting between 30 and 60 minutes. The interviews employed a semi-structured question format, asking about the process of creating the video narratives, the motivations behind them and their influence on universities' corporate communication strategies, as well as about the protagonists of the narratives. The participant group comprised individuals from diverse academic backgrounds, including three researchers and three administrative staff members.

The roles of the participants are as follows:

Nr.	Position	Field
1	Chief Researcher	Biotechnology
2	Senior Researcher	Biochemistry
3	Professor Doctor	Medicine
4	Doctor, Head of Department	University Administration
5	Innovation Manager	University Administration
6	Head of Unit	University Administration

This research adopts a multilevel methodological framework, integrating critical philosophy alongside discourse analysis techniques. These methodologies are applied to explore the persistence and evolution of Vilnius University's communication traditions in the realm of modern corporate communication. Within this framework, the examination of protagonists in audiovisual narratives gains new importance, as it is shaped and interpreted through the perspective of institutional narrative and representation.

The study also sought to explain why, at a university with such high regard for the traditional media of books—by the way, VU has and each year exhibits the very first Lithuanian book—, the most modern forms of audiovisual communication were nonetheless chosen to present a fundamental aspect of VU's identity, the scientific research conducted there, in the words of those doing it and in audiovisual format.

14.4. Scientific innovation and scientists in an audiovisual format on Vilnius University's YouTube TV channel

As we talk about the communication of organizations with a history going back centuries, it is useful to look back at the fundamental human needs from which everything starts. Humans have always had, and continue to have, an existential need to communicate and convey their personal beliefs and attitudes to others. As such, human beings and the institutions they have created have consistently sought to communicate what they consider most important and most useful for the survival of both humanity and its social structures. One can start with customs, traditions, beliefs, one's own history, political views, educational methods, and forms. In this case, the Universitas Vilnensis (1579), like most of the old universities, is first and foremost associated with developing science and transmitting knowledge to students. From a historical perspective, it is important to emphasize the strength of this University and its ability to preserve the spirit of free thought even during the long periods of occupation of the Lithuanian state. In short, the history of Lithuania testifies to the fact that the University has responded to the needs of its people for freedom. The University's communication over the centuries has been based on the two slogans "Alma Mater Vilnensis" and "Hinc itur ad astra", embodying the desire for freedom and self-expression. The fundamental human need for freedom, which has been reflected and communicated here over the centuries, has today led

the University to another need to develop a wider expression through modern audiovisual tools, the content of which, when posted on the VU YouTube channel, becomes accessible to the entire free Western world. Looking back at the last period of Soviet occupation from 1944 to 1990, this seems very significant.

As previously noted, the VU YouTube TV channel features an eight-video series from a project of the VU Science and Innovation Department aimed at promoting the commercialization of knowledge created at the university and technology transfer, including for laser technologies, photonics solutions, and artificial intelligence systems. Each video lasts 3 to 4 minutes and 29 scientists took part. The project aimed to create real incentives to increase the commercialisation of knowledge and technology transfer at Vilnius University, with a view to enhancing cooperation with business. The project activities created the preconditions for the integration of entrepreneurial activities as creative, effective organisation (and management) activities into R&D solution development processes, which would enable and incentivise the development of an entrepreneurial attitude and entrepreneurial culture at the university.

In the days before the internet was widely accessible, Vilnius University never launched a TV channel of its own, nor regularly produced TV shows. In 2010, however, it launched a YouTube channel, which developed rapidly and could be called the new Vilnius University (VU) digital television.

The perspective of philosopher François Lyotard (1984) was that only narrative knowledge, rather than scientific discourse, opens the way for researchers to broader socio-cultural recognition in a global and multidimensional society. In other words, it is not only scientific achievements themselves that generate social capital, but also their visibility in popular social media (Fraser, Dutta, 2009). The aim at Vilnius University was to motivate researchers to build and strengthen their communicative competences. Therefore, efforts began to co-create narratives with them about their research activities and discoveries. In this way, in 2021, a specific activity on communicating scientific knowledge was launched to make the university's discoveries more understandable and accessible to the general public. Recognised researchers and groups of researchers were given the opportunity to present the research and experimental development (R&D) work carried out at the university in a concise way in audiovisual narrative form. During the project, the re-

searchers, together with innovation and communication experts from the same university, explored ways in which they, the community members – the researchers – could present their rather complex research and the resulting findings in a language that is understandable not only to the academic community, but also to the public at large.

A transmission approach (Carey, 2009) was adopted, conveying the mission and activities of Vilnius University from a value perspective defined by openness, integrity, development, and sustainability as well as the mission of Vilnius University, which is: "arising from the past, encouraged by present challenges and passed on to future generations" (*Vilniaus universitetas*, 2020). In the audiovisual narratives created by the researchers, it is precisely the opening up to society that has followed the principle of integrity, which links the past, the present and the future.

The audiovisual narratives show how Vilnius University develops advanced scientific solutions in its research fields. They also include a popular presentation of the scientists themselves. The stories show how the researchers' innovations include organic optoelectronics, ultrafast lasers, biodegradable materials, deep learning models and bioinformatics methods, etc. The university is also developing advanced technologies for lighting, medical diagnostics, archaeological research and economic analysis. All these scientific activities not only promote technological progress but also contribute to the development of varied industrial and scientific fields. The communication activity has not only enabled an interesting and visually appealing presentation of the scientific achievements of Vilnius University, but has also opened up the scientific process and brought it closer to the public by involving specialists from different fields in the narratives.

The audiovisual series uses a visual solution with two key components: one is the scientists speaking against a black background in the TV studio, the other is repeated transitions to their scientific work environment. For filming in the TV studio, some of the scientists brought symbolic objects from their research field as props, for example, an old microscope for the pathology professor, and a model of a protein molecule for the biochemist. In the studio, the scientist's face, filmed in black and white, symbolically emerges from the darkness of ignorance, revealing knowledge and innovation. The narratives continue with playful transitions to the scientists' laboratories, where artefacts of scientific research, such as microscopic images, laser lights, etc.,

come to life in the spectrum of coloured light. The video camera penetrates the 'closed' field of scientific space and opens it up visually to the public. In other words, the cameras were used to visit researchers' workspaces and laboratories, which usually are not accessible to the public but only to a very limited circle of researchers. The audiovisual narratives created during the project acquaint the public with useful achievements of VU scientists that will be of great importance, for example, in the treatment of difficult-to-treat diseases.

14.5. Findings and discussion

The audiovisual narratives in the series elaborate on one main idea, which is the idea of the mission of Vilnius University. Thus, each story, considering the postulates of the university's mission, is based on three paradigmatic phases in the development of thought: what we are doing, what problem we are thus solving, and what change this could bring to the world in the (not too) distant future. In other words, the mission of the university is to connect the syntagmatic and horizontal axes of the narratives, thus encompassing all the narratives in one big narrative, which integrates the scientific and human diversity of the university. This narrative methodology refers to Fiske's (2011) theory of audiovisuality, which is based on the collision of bipolar oppositions. The protagonist of the stories in this series is a scientist who uses scientific methods to discover innovations that overcome human ignorance in order to solve a variety of problems. The hypothesis is: can the image of the anonymous, know-it-all 'geek' scientist be changed by adding value to the scientist's activity in the form of audiovisual storytelling? To test this, three scientists involved in the project and other participants were interviewed.

The semi-structured interviews with communication specialists and three scientists examined the role of audiovisual narratives in conveying scientific innovations and research results as part of Vilnius University's corporate heritage and social impact strategy.

A specialist in the Communication Department noted that initially, starting in 2010, the VU YouTube channel functioned as an audiovisual archive; later, it shifted more towards students' interests and needs; and finally, its focus turned to scientific creators. This has resulted in segments like "VU Experts Advise" and a podcast titled "Science Without Sermons" (Vilnius University, n. d.).

The most important aspect of the audiovisual narratives from the VU Science and Innovation Department's project is that they alter the stereotype in Lithuanian society that scientists are kind of "weird" people, or "anonymous researchers without a human face". All three of the main scientists featured in the audiovisual narratives confirmed this in separate interviews:

> The stereotype about scientists is that they are messy, eccentric people who shut themselves away in laboratories and do who knows what — projects like these should help to erase that image. (…) We work for the benefit of society and we're normal people, and through these audiovisual stories, we want people to see that scientists are simply professionals in their field, working to meet society's needs. (Senior Researcher)

> And if you look at it more broadly, that's recognition that we're not faceless, not nameless, but actual people (…), who are making sacrifices (…). And if you're able to show that dedication to a wider audience, to have it seen and appreciated by others, then that brings a kind of inner satisfaction. (Chief Researcher)

As noted, the audiovisual stories were created together with VU communication specialists. Crafting of the narratives took into account the insight of François Lotard (1984) that pure science cannot legitimize itself in the eyes of the pubic solely via scientific methods. Scientists who wish to be understood must step back from their scientific laws and develop a speculative narrative about their work. Speaking only in the language of their discoveries, they risk being misunderstood. Thus, an effort was made, together with the scientists of different ages, experiences and genders, to find a language that could connect everyone. The stories clarified aspects of the practical applicability of R&D and its potential impact on humanity's future. After viewing the audiovisual stories, the three interviewed scientists acknowledged that, thanks to this approach, their self-esteem rose and they found greater recognition when communicating with relatives, acquaintances and colleagues. Participating in the VU audiovisual narratives strengthened their identity as members of the university community and enlarged the understanding of the university as an interdisciplinary space. This can be illustrated with remarks by the scientists after viewing the audiovisual narratives: "Scientists are not another form of life"; "How different we are"; "We're not faceless or nameless".

Even more valuable about these audiovisual narratives, according to the administrative specialist of VU's Innovation Department, is that they have been showcased at international events. For example, they were presented at the Laser World of Photonics international science fair in Munich, Germany, in 2022; at the Three Seas Initiative Summit in Vilnius, Lithuania, in 2024; and at the Life Sciences Baltics International Exhibition in Vilnius in 2023. The videos are also periodically displayed on screens in the hallway of the VU Innovation Department. And they will continue to be showcased at international events where the activities of Vilnius University are presented.

Through this communicative approach, Vilnius University's top researchers and their work are being effectively presented not only to the community and society in general via the YouTube channel, but also to the participants of important international events. This is a unique source of pride for those featured in the stories, letting them know and see that they work at a prestigious study and research institution—Universitas Vilnensis.

14.6. Conclusions

According to modern storytelling scholars, people articulate stories as a natural way of expressing their thoughts, to communicate their experiences and knowledge to others (Greimas, 1991). This drive stems from an existential and psychological need to be recognised, useful, and needed.

However, the new digital narratives still follow the structures of classical traditional narratives, retaining the presentation of clashes of opposites. Today, the ever-expanding circle of audiovisual storytellers in digital media (YouTube) still use traditional TV narrative structures and playfully replicate classical narrative structures.

Semioticians A. J. Greimas (1991) and Roland Barthes (1992), among others, have explained that the basis of every logical narrative is the moral value structures it articulates, which ultimately take shape as binary oppositions. The most extreme examples would be light and darkness, heaven and earth; then there are more elusive oppositions such as science and art, university and school; and the list could go on endlessly. The narratives create dramatic tension by weaving together contrasting or even conflicting realities. And the narrator, guided by moral values, unwittingly leads us through the battlefield, showing a hopeful perspective that positive change is possible. The listener is captivated and per-

suaded by this posture. It is precisely based on this logic that audiovisual narrative analysis was developed and conducted.

This study is not without methodological limitations, which should be considered when interpreting the results. The sample size was restricted to the three administrative specialists at Vilnius University, which limits the findings' generalizability. The study did not include external audiences for whom the audiovisual narratives were intended, thus constraining findings to internal communication. The empirical material—eight short audiovisual narratives—was produced within a single project, making it representative of only one specific institutional discourse. The study used a qualitative methodology, without quantitative impact assessment criteria. The qualitative methods, including discourse analysis and interviews, are interpretative. Since participants were either narrative protagonists or project implementers, their responses may reflect personal experience and be affected by social desirability bias. Nevertheless, the study confirmed the validity of classical audiovisual narrative structure as an effective tool for communicating research, which opens a promising direction for further empirical verification. Future studies could test this narrative model across broader institutional contexts and diverse audience groups to validate its general applicability. These limitations define the study's validity while suggesting directions for future research, such as analysing broader samples, including audience perspectives, and using quantitative measures.

We come to the conclusion that, with the global spread of audiovisual communication on YouTube, anyone can become an author on this global television platform. So, by empowering scientists to present their scientific activities in an audiovisual form together with communication professionals, Vilnius University has opened up a promising avenue that reduces the marginalisation and isolation of scientists in society and alters the image of the scientist as a "freak". The narratives created by the researchers helped them express both their personal and their professional identities and increased their sense of belonging to the university community.

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