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Your Turn as an Example of Multi-Modal, Ethnographic and Collective Documentary

Erdinç YILMAZ¹,

¹ Asst. Prof. Dr., Gaziantep University, Gaziantep, Türkiye / ylmzrdnc@gmail.com.

Abstract: Documentary cinema is a film genre that aims to reproduce authentic reality and provide awareness to the audience by addressing real events, people or subjects with a claim of objectivity. Such films generally use a narrative language that is not based on fiction and reflect reality as it is. There are several standpoints a documentary film-maker may follow and adopt. These standpoints usually determine the formal characteristics of the film. A documentary may be ethnographic, journalistic, poetic, etc. Likewise, a documentary film-maker may seek to approach reality without any self-involvement and he/she may choose to observe rather than participate in the content or vice versa. Utilizing a number of methods, documentary cinema has flourished in both content and form in recent years. New ways of making documentaries are flourishing and minor realities as well as major ones are brought to the audience. One approach is the ethnographic documentary, where the filmmaker adopts a participant-observer role, immersing themselves in the socio-cultural phenomenon to authentically convey a particular truth. Taking ethnography as a starting point, a film-maker makes numerous stylistic choices and enrich his/her narrative following different patterns. This study aims to interrogate the prospects of documentary cinema in recent years and define the relationship between the film-maker's standpoint and the stylistic choices he/she makes, using the film *Your Turn* (Capai, 2019) as a case study. The sample film was chosen via purposive sampling method and a textual analysis was conducted. The results of the analysis shows that *Your Turn* (Capai, 2019) utilizes ethnography and turn the participant-observation method into a collective practice which contributes to the overall aesthetics of the film as well as its narrative foundation.

Keywords: Documentary Cinema, Multi-Modality, Ethnography, Collectivity.

ORCID¹: 0000-0003-1693-3481

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Çok Modlu, Etnografik ve Kolektif Bir Belgesel Olarak Sıra Sende

Erdinç YILMAZ¹,

¹ Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, Gaziantep Üniversitesi, Gaziantep, Türkiye / ylmzrdnc@gmail.com.

Özet: Belgesel sinema, gerçek olayları, insanları veya konuları nesnellik iddiasıyla ele alarak otantik gerçekliği yeniden üretmeyi ve izleyiciye farkındalık sağlamayı amaçlayan bir film türüdür. Bu tür filmler genellikle kurguya dayanmayan ve gerçeği olduğu gibi yansıtan bir anlatı dili kullanır. Bir belgesel film yapımcısının takip edebileceği ve benimseyebileceği birkaç bakış açısı vardır ve bu bakış açıları genellikle filmin biçimsel özelliklerini belirler. Bir belgesel, etnografik, deneysel, şiirsel vb. olabilir. Benzer şekilde, bir belgesel film yapımcısı konu ettiği gerçekliğe dâhil olmadan yaklaşmayı deneyebilir ve içeriğe katılmak yerine gözlemlemeyi veya tam tersini seçebilir. Belgesel sinema çok sayıda metot kullanarak hem içerik hem de biçim açısından gelişim göstermiştir. Belgesel yapmanın yeni yolları gelişmekte ve izleyiciye hem küçük hem de büyük gerçeklikler sunulmaktadır. Birçok yaklaşım içinde bir tanesi, film yapımcısının katılımcı-gözlemci rolünü benimsediği, belirli bir gerçeği otantik bir şekilde iletmek için sosyo-kültürel fenomene katıldığı etnografik yöntemdir. Etnografiyi başlangıç noktası olarak alan bir film yapımcısı, çok sayıda üslup tercihi yapar ve farklı örüntüler izleyerek anlatısını zenginleştirir. Bu çalışma, belgesel sinemanın son yıllardaki beklentilerini sorgulamayı ve film yapımcısının bakış açısı ile yaptığı üslup tercihleri arasındaki ilişkiyi, bir vaka çalışması olarak *Sıra Sende* (Capai, 2019) filmini kullanarak tanımlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Örnek film, amaçlı örnekleme yöntemi ile seçilmiştir ve çözümlemede metin analizi yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Analizin sonuçları, *Sıra Sende* (Capai, 2019) filminin etnografiden beslendiğini ve katılımcı gözlem yöntemini kolektif bir uygulamaya dönüştürdüğünü, bu durumun filmin genel estetiğine ve anlatı temeline katkıda bulunduğunu göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Belgesel Sinema, Çok-Modluluk, Etnografi, Kolektivite.

ORCID¹: 0000-0003-1693-3481

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INTRODUCTION

Documentary cinema is a genre deeply intertwined with reality and has a history that traces back to the origins of the medium. When the first films such as *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory* (Lumière, 1895) and *The Arrival of a Train* (Lumière & Lumière, 1896) are taken into consideration, it becomes clear that cinema initially existed in close proximity to reality. These films captured real-life events, using the camera as an impartial observer of reality (Aitken, 2006: xxxv). Therefore, it can be confidently asserted that cinema is grounded in reality and documentary cinema is a strong way to reflect it. However, documentary cinema was not regarded as a distinctive way of filmmaking until the first attempt towards its identification by John Grierson in the 1920s. Grierson coined the phrase to draw attention to Robert Flaherty's 1926 film *Moana* highlighting the movie's capacity to capture reality and present it in an imaginative and captivating way. The foundation for the emergence of documentary filmmaking as a separate genre was established by Grierson's work and theories. As such, a clear-cut distinction between fictional cinema and documentary had not been drawn before Grierson's identification of the term documentary. Grierson (1933: 8) defined documentary as "the creative treatment of actuality" emphasizing that documentary is about real life but it is not merely a window to life or an objective observer. Instead, it accommodates a creative manipulation of truth within its own apparatus. In other words, documentary films are depictions of actual life, created by artists and technicians who choose which story to tell and for what reason. Real life serves as the inspiration for these works of art (Aufderheide, 2007: 2).

While various definitions like the ones mentioned above exist in the literature, they should not be regarded as definitive. It has always been difficult to define documentary cinema because there is no specific element or a combination of elements that all documentaries follow, nor is there a unique aesthetic trait that defines them (Juhasz & Lebow, 2015: 1). However, it might be suggested that the fundamental goal of a documentary film is to portray actual people, places, and events (Dormehl, 2012: 12). Authenticity and truthfulness are frequently sought after in documentary films. Furthermore, documentaries have the power to alter and transform viewers' perceptions of reality. By drawing attention to historical occurrences, social issues, and cultural phenomena, they provide viewers fresh ideas and viewpoints. These films provide a concrete depiction of the facets of the world the individuals currently live in and share. A filmmaker's acts of selection and arrangement determine how they uniquely make the elements of social reality visible and audible. They provide an impression of what reality might develop into in the individuals' understanding of it (Nichols, 2001: 1-2). As can be seen, documentary cinema has an intense relationship with reality and it is an opportunity for people to interrogate reality.

Documentary cinema has developed a number of strategies and methods to trace social reality and it has benefited from other cultural disciplines as well as some fields of science one of which is ethnography. Documentary cinema and ethnography have a mutual target of getting to know a community in their own social context and define their ways and circumstances of life. While ethnography offers a range of approaches, participant observation remains one of the most prevalent methods. Likewise, documentary cinema also utilizes the same method for the purpose of capturing social reality in a subjective manner as much as possible. Moving on from the cooperation between documentary cinema and ethnography, this research aims to exemplify and describe the ways a documentary film makes use of the ethnographic method, particularly participant observation. For this aim in mind, Eliza Capai's highly acclaimed documentary *Your Turn* (2019) was chosen purposefully based on its relevance to the research

topic. Purposive sampling method involves choosing cases that offer rich data regarding an intended topic for detailed analysis (Friday & Leah, 2024: 94). Accordingly, *Your Turn* (Capai, 2019) stands out as a proper example for this paper because it embodies an ethnographic method of tracing a certain group of young people in the process of collective youth revolts against some regulations implemented by the government in Brasil. In order to illustrate these ways, Bill Nichols' categorization of documentary sub-genres and a thorough description of the participant observation as a method of ethnographic research have been employed in a qualitative textual analysis. Textual analysis as a research method in social sciences in general involves a meticulous data-gathering process to explore how individuals within different cultures and subcultures perceive their identities and their place in the world. The word *text* immediately extends to a wide variety of mediums from language to media products. Researchers analyze texts to hypothesize about the possible interpretations that the texts might embody (McKee, 2001: 140). Textual analysis in the fields of literary criticism and art history is typically interpretive, focusing on uncovering underlying meanings. It seeks to answer qualitative questions like, "What is the true meaning of the text, and how are these meanings structured?". In contrast, other forms of media research using textual analysis tend to focus on identifying common patterns, recurring elements, and features that appear across large numbers of texts (As cited in Fathoni, 2014: 17 from Larson, 2002: 117). When it comes to cinema, textual analysis can be defined merely as a skill rooted in carefully "looking and listening" to what is physically and clearly present in individual films (Dyer, 2016). Dyer's approach to analyzing "filmic text" emphasizes beginning with the image and sound to uncover the variety of meanings, emotions, and impacts that a film offers to its viewers (Bateman & Wildfeuer, 2017: 1). In this study, textual analysis method is used in order to analyze the stylistic and narrative choices the director Eliza Capai made and how these choices contribute to the ethnographic outlook of the film. With this concentration, a literature review about documentary cinema and ethnographic research was conducted. Then, the documentary film *Your Turn* (Capai, 2019) was analyzed in terms of narrative structure and aesthetics reflecting on the literature.

2. CONTEXTUALIZING DOCUMENTARY CINEMA

As mentioned before, making a definitive description of documentary cinema is difficult because documentaries articulate countless realities in many different ways. However, it might be possible to list a few common points and distinguish it from fictional cinema. Documentary cinema is different from fictional cinema in terms of "(1) subjects and ideologies; (2) purposes, viewpoints or approaches; (3) forms; (4) production methods and techniques; and (5) the sort of experiences they offer audiences, including actions that result from the films" (McLane, 2012: 1). To illustrate, documentary and fictional films may have similar aspects such as depicting reality or engaging the audience with some social problems. However, their methods are totally different in that documentaries depict real subjects and scrutinize certain ideologies following distinctive methods. On the other hand, fictional cinema pursues bending the reality and presenting a captivating make-believe narrative. The primary distinction between these two specific filmmaking approaches lies in the relationship they establish with reality. Documentaries focus on the real world rather than a fictional one created by the filmmaker, setting them apart significantly from fiction genres like science fiction, horror, adventure, and melodrama. They are based on different premises, establish a unique relationship between the filmmaker and the subject, and generate distinct expectations from the audience (Nichols, 2001: xi). For example, Flaherty's film *Nanook of the North* (1922), which is often regarded as the first documentary film, represents the ordinary events in the life of Inuit Eskimos. Moreover, Flaherty's next feature film *Moana* (1926)

was expected to have the same formula with his first film. The film followed the story of a family living in a Samoan village and according to Grierson (1933: 8) it had “documentary value”. Grierson added that the film had the ability to capture ordinary, everyday events and activities, reflecting generations of learning and experience. By focusing on and isolating a specific activity or event, the camera could uncover the inherent quality and complexity of that event (Aitken, 2014: 80).

What these two films had in common was their ability to treat actuality in a creative way. This ability of the documentary film has remained unchanged through this day. However, what constitutes actuality posits a problem. There are some questions around this topic such as “Which aspects are considered important and which are considered unnecessary? Whose viewpoint on that actuality will we be getting? What means will be used to express that viewpoint?” (Spence & Vinicius, 2011: 2). These questions evolve into an inquiry about the methods and approaches the documentary film employs to achieve its goal of depicting reality. Moreover, these questions also encompass the relationship the film-maker builds with reality and his/her film. In other words, the strategies and techniques used to present a truthful representation are important to ponder because they scrutinize how effectively the film conveys its intended message. From this standpoint, it might be suggested that there are numerous ways a documentary film director may follow to build an authentic relationship with reality.

Following several standpoints, documentaries may seem journalistic, literary or anthropological (Renov, 1993: 1). From a journalistic point of view, a documentary film-maker may trace the core truth in their own angle and they may interrogate truth the same pattern as a journalist would. In addition, a documentary film may adopt a lyrical or poetic way to build its relationship with truth and create an aesthetic sense. In other cases, a documentary film-maker may take a participant role in a community and record their daily lives to reach a descriptive conclusion about that group. These preferences are all about the target content that the film-maker pursues to capture and the most appropriate method they can follow to grasp reality. In a formal sense, a documentary can also adhere to several methods and pursue various outcomes. One of the most well-known documentary theorists to develop a formal approach to define and categorize different types of this film genre is Bill Nichols. Nichols conceptualizes documentaries by examining how their construction allows for classification, highlighting key elements such as narrative structure and stylistic choices. Nichols (1991: 32) calls these strategies modes of representation. He initially defined four representational modes which are *expository*, *observational*, *participatory* and *reflexive* as primary strategies that most directors follow. However, in his various works he utilizes two more modes, namely *poetic* and *performative*. The six modes form a flexible framework that guides filmmakers, establishing conventions a film might follow and shaping viewers' expectations. Each mode has prototypical examples that exemplify its unique qualities. While these examples can't be directly copied, they can inspire other filmmakers to represent historical realities from their unique viewpoints (Nichols, 2001: 99-100). At this point, it is crucial to define these six modes of representation in order to conceptualize the stylistic choices of documentary film-makers and move on to the participatory and ethnographic way of documentary film-making.

The first mode of representation Nichols (2001: 102-103) defines is the poetic mode. This sub-genre shares a common terrain with the avant-garde cinema and it pursues an aesthetic form making use of temporal rhythms and spatial juxtapositions sacrificing traditional methods like continuity editing and a sense of location. The poetic mode excels at exploring alternative forms of knowledge beyond merely conveying information, arguing a point, or

proposing solutions. It emphasizes mood, tone, and emotion over displays of knowledge or persuasion, with its rhetorical aspect remaining minimal. The second mode of representation, the expository mode, organizes historical fragments within a rhetorical or argumentative framework rather than an aesthetic one like the poetic mode does. The expository mode communicates directly with the audience through titles or narration that present a viewpoint, make an argument, or recount historical events. It often uses a voice-of-God narration which can be defined with a narrator that is never seen or voice-of-authority commentary that is a narrator who can be seen and heard at the same time, similar to what is seen in television news broadcasts. The primary means of information transmission in expository documentaries is spoken commentary, with images serving as a supporting, auxiliary function. These visuals provide support to the spoken words. Usually separate from the photos, the commentary serves the same purpose of organizing and interpreting the images as a caption would for a still image. As a result, the commentary is valued higher than the accompanying visuals (Nichols, 2001: 106-107). What these two modes of documentary lack is recording subjects, the actual people featured in a film. However, the observational mode seems to cover this shortcoming. With the launch of small cameras like 16 mms in the 1960s, documentary grasped a technological freedom to get down to the streets and engage with people. In this way, documentary cinema could film a social reality without really intervening in it. Therefore, it wouldn't be wrong to state that observational mode aims to record a social phenomenon in its own context with the smallest inclusion of the film crew (Nichols, 2001: 109-110). Nichols' another category is the participatory mode which is closely related with social research especially anthropology and ethnology. In a participatory documentary, the film-maker and/or member(s) of the crew take active part in a social group and try to understand their culture and daily lives just like an anthropology researcher. However, most of the time the film-maker does not really become a native member of the community, he/she is more like a participant and an observer. That is to say, the film-maker participates in the experience only to observe, record, represent and reflect the actuality specific to the subject people (Nichols, 2001: 116). In certain participatory documentaries, the camera actively engages with the subject, provoking experiences and eliciting authentic reactions. Cinema Verite documentaries in the late 1950s and 1960s are good examples of this style of documentary making. In Rouch and Morin's 1961 verite documentary *Chronicle of a Summer*, a crew member point a microphone to random people she encounters on the streets and asks general questions to drag words out of them. In this way, the camera captures moments that would never have occurred had it not been present at that exact time (Nichols, 2001: 118). The next mode of representation Nichols conceptualizes is the reflexive mode. This style of documentary film-making builds a relationship between the film-maker and the viewer in a sense that expository and participatory modes never do. We now concentrate on the filmmaker's direct interaction with the audience, as he/she discusses not only the historical world but also the difficulties in portraying it, rather than on her interactions with other people (Nichols, 2001: 125). This sub-genre is always self-aware and it calls on the audience to engage with the processes of the documentary. The camera is not invisible. That is, the audience is always aware of the existence of the camera. The reflexive mode frequently shows the audience how the documentary was made, rather than keeping the behind-the-scenes work hidden. This could involve showcasing the filmmaker engaging with the subjects, talking about moral conundrums, or disclosing the decisions made during editing and framing. The last sub-genre is the performative mode. This type of documentary film stands on a subjective point of view and reflects the film-maker's subjective experience. It problematizes the concrete understanding of reality and knowledge by conveying different

perspectives. These films engage the audience more through their dynamic responsiveness than through persuasive techniques. The filmmaker's intent is to awaken the viewers' own reactions, encouraging them to emotionally connect with their portrayal of the historical world, allowing for indirect interaction (Nichols, 2001: 132).

These modes of documentary film-making expresses distinctive approaches to the representation of reality (Nichols, 1991: 32). However, this does not mean that every documentary film has to follow one single pattern. These modes can be abundantly benefitted in a co-existence in films. One film may be dominantly participant but it may have a poetic touch or another may adopt an expository approach leaving the floor to performative mode at times. These modes determine the relationship between the film-maker and the film itself, the film-maker and the subjects or the film-maker and the audience. Additionally, they establish a specific tone and aesthetic for the film while also revealing underlying ideological perspectives.

2.1. Ethnography And Documentary Cinema

The term ethnography originated in the 19th century Western anthropology, where an ethnography referred to a detailed description of a community or culture, typically one outside of the Western world (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007: 1). Due to the process of industrialization, urbanization and colonialism in the 19th century, ethnography originated as a research field which aims to observe the lives of distinctive people which are unknown to Western people. However, the ethnographic method has evolved a lot during its history, and since the end of colonial rule in many societies, researchers frequently use it in studies that do not focus on an entire social system (Ugwu, 2017: 65). Ethnography now refers to a blend of theoretical cultural interpretation and firsthand investigation conducted by anthropologists (Hammersley, 2009: 1479). However, it is important to point out that ethnography focuses on studying people as part of organized and enduring groups, such as communities or societies, rather than as individuals. It examines the distinctive cultures of these groups, which are defined by their shared and learned behaviors, customs, and beliefs. In essence, ethnography explores the collective ways of life that characterize these groups. In other words, "Ethnography literally means a description of a people" and it fosters collectivity in nature (Angrosino, 2007: 1). For a more detailed description of ethnography, it would be best to refer to Brewer's (2005: 6) account: "Ethnography is the study of people in naturally occurring settings or fields by methods of data collection which capture their social meanings and ordinary activities, involving the researcher participating directly in the setting, if not also the activities, in order to collect data in a systematic manner but without meaning being imposed on them externally".

Ethnography involves telling an authentic and rigorous story by giving voice to people in their local contexts. It interprets behaviors through a cultural lens focusing on the daily patterns of thought and behavior of the community (Fetterman, 2010: 1). Ethnography studies societies and cultures by examining their complex human, social, and cultural aspects. It is used in fields like medicine, psychology, sociology, and education, focusing on natural environments such as communities and organizations. Ethnography enables the study of behaviors, norms, beliefs, and values, providing insights into different life styles and systems of thought. It helps understand human behavior and interactions in various cultural and social contexts, offering comprehensive insights into reality and allowing for generalizations about human behavior (Shagrir, 2017: 9-10).

As a method of research, ethnography aims to understand cultural and social systems by observing people in their natural environment. Observing should be noted because it also indicates the researcher's position. The

researcher participates actively in the community or the social phenomenon he/she is trying to document. In participant observation, researchers integrate into a community as both a friend and a researcher, gaining acceptance from locals through personal interaction rather than just scientific reputation. This approach requires adaptability to local customs and a willingness to adjust research plans based on the community's goodwill. Participant observation itself isn't a research method but rather the context in which ethnographers employ specific techniques to gather data (Angrosino, 2007: 17). This involvement, which is called participant observation, can be seen in the development of ethnographic research. In the past, most anthropologists believed that ethnography involved living with a community for an extended period to document their unique way of life and associated beliefs and values. Today, however, sociology uses the term more broadly to encompass studies that involve participant observation and in-depth, less structured interviews (Hammersley, 2009: 1480). Therefore, it might be stated that the researcher is always present and in communication with his/her subjects in an ethnographic research. This notion of involvement defines the distance of the researcher to his/her subject. He/she is not a total observer but a participant as well. He/she becomes a part of the social phenomenon and record data to analyze in his/her research. Some characteristics of ethnographic research are as follows (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010: 1):

- It is scientific
- It is investigative
- It uses the researcher as the primary tool of data collection
- It uses rigorous research methods and data collection techniques to avoid bias and ensure accuracy of data
- It emphasizes and builds on the perspectives of the people in the research setting
- It uses both inductive and deductive approaches, so as to build more effective and socially and culturally valid local theories for testing and adapting them for use both locally and elsewhere.

Over the past two decades, ethnography has become increasingly diverse and fragmented, leading to the emergence of various perspectives. This diversification has resulted in a wide range of approaches under the ethnographic umbrella, shaped by both adherence to and departure from traditional analytic methods. The complexity of this diversity is influenced by movements such as poststructuralism, postmodernism, feminism, and postcolonialism. Central to these differing viewpoints is a focus on the complex and problematic relationships between language, knowledge, and power. While the early ethnographic studies focused primarily on "a series of standardised representations of societies", contemporary debates on ethnography now relies heavily on the "issues of representation and the textual construction of reality" (Dicks, Mason, Coffey, & Atkinson, 2005: 27-28).

As evident from the above, ethnography has now spanned into a large field of social research and also other cultural disciplines like cinema. Ethnography can be utilized to gain a deeper understanding of the significance of technology and the cultures that both shape and are shaped by it (Hine, 2001: 8). One of the most important mediums ethnography is employed is documentary cinema. Ethnography adopts a visual framework when viewed through the lens of cinema. Heider speculates on the features that make some films more ethnographic than others although he refuses to make a complete definition of ethnographic film. According to Heider (2006: 2-3), the core characteristic of ethnographic films is that these films are supposed to have an ethnographic quality which eventually leads to the superiority of ethnography over cinema. This notion may be problematic in some cases because ethnography is a science and it is based on words, whereas cinema is an art which is based on images. When science prevails art, the

cinematographic qualities of cinema are overlooked. However, there are some films that produce ethnographic data without even intending to be ethnographic. Therefore, it is not quite easy to define what makes a film ethnographic. The common ground between these two disciplines lies in their shared pursuit of truth. Especially documentary or non-fiction film seeks to reflect reality in its own artistic form. As mentioned before, a documentary reproduces reality in the process of captivating it in a distinctive form based on images. In order to be ethnographic in scientific terms, a documentary must follow a rational and explicit methodology (Heider, 2006: 50). Following an ethnographic strategy may enhance the ethnographic quality of a film. However, this approach downgrades film to a mere recording of reality. On the other hand, Ruby approaches ethnographic films as “texts” rather than “records” which points out films’ quality to convey ethnographic meaning through images just like a research does with words. Ruby’s concept of “filmic ethnography” challenges the traditional view of ethnographic films as mere illustrations. Instead, it suggests that these films should be rigorously analyzed and critiqued, just like any other ethnographic work, emphasizing the potential of images to convey complex ideas similarly to written texts (Ruby, 1975: 104).

The history of ethnography and ethnographic film can be divided into two key periods. The first, from 1913 to 1922, marked by Malinowski’s attempts in changing the field of ethnography from 19th century natural science to a 20th century humanistic science and Flaherty’s documentary films, established the traditional subjects and methods of the field, as seen in Flaherty’s *Nanook of the North* (1922). The second period, during the 1960s and 1970s, introduced a shift towards postmodernism, characterized by a growing skepticism of traditional anthropology. This transition is exemplified by Timothy Asch’s *The Ax Fight*, which bridges the legacy of early ethnographic film with the more self-aware and experimental approaches that followed (Marks, 1995: 339).

3. FINDINGS

Your Turn (Capai, 2019) is a compelling documentary film that chronicles the Brazilian youth activism between 2013 and 2018 through the eyes of three student rights activists, Marcela Jesus, Lucas “Koka” Penteado, and Nayara Souza. The film highlights key movements such as the school occupations against education budget cuts and the protests against rising bus fares during Dilma Rousseff’s presidency. With Jair Bolsonaro’s rise to power and his harsh stance against activism, the fight for the right to education has intensified. Using powerful footage and interviews with those directly involved, *Your Turn* (Capai, 2019) offers a detailed and passionate account of the struggles and triumphs of Brazil’s young activists, serving as a thorough observation of this 6 year-long experience. In this part of the study, Capai’s highly-acclaimed documentary film *Your Turn* (2019) has been analyzed in terms of the narrative and aesthetic choices that the director made. With this assessment, it is intended to reveal how narrative, stylistic choices, and production elements (such as multi-modality and collectivity in this case) contribute to the meaning-building process focusing on how the film relates to ethnographic research methods.

3.1. Structural Features

The film presents real-life footage of student activist movements in Brasil from 2013 to 2018 following mainly the experiences of 3 students. The film has a runtime of 93 minutes and the footage captures significant experiences of these young people each year over a span of six years, except for the year 2014. The sequences focusing on 2013 and 2015 are the longest and cover the majority of the narrative, while those for 2016, 2017, and 2018 are shorter and take up less time in the film. Therefore, it is possible to identify the years 2013 and 2015 as the development part of the movie and the rest as the resolution part. The narrative follows a chronological order and record the activism

carried out by the students in an order parallel to the developments in the country.

The film is notable for its focus on themes such as equality, democracy, civil rights, youth activism, freedom of speech, and equal education for young people. It portrays crowds of young people protesting against government regulations, including increases in bus fares and the closure of high schools in the disadvantaged areas of São Paulo. With these themes, it is naturally expected from the film to foster equality in its stylistic, aesthetic and most importantly narrative structure. Accordingly, the film strictly maintains an equal representation for all the young characters and although it focuses mainly on the discourse of young activists, it creates space for the mainstream news which stands for a counter-narrative. If each sequence is divided into its components, it is clearly observed that equality is sought after. The film opens with Lucas “Koka” Penteadó’s narration and he introduces the topic with a vibrant flow of images from different sources illustrating the outburst of the student revolt. Approximately 5 minutes later, Nayara Souza takes over the narration emphasizing that the narration should not be left entirely to a man which actually reveals a feminist point of view. This shift of narrators shows that there is an equal share of images and spoken words among genders.

All the sequences portraying a certain period and experience follow the same pattern; they start with the narration and relevant images come into play. These images primarily consist of observational footage of the students, interviews and TV news coverage. In this way, the audience become acquainted with two different standpoints and delve into the real experiences of young people both from the subjects’ and the authority’s perspectives. However, it is obvious that the students’ perspective is always dominant. Another notable feature is how the film transitions between sequences. A blend of music and aesthetic image formation mark the transition from a micro-narrative to another. These parts portray some recordings of the vibrant city life, some extracts of the characters’ lives and random footage of city-spaces. These images resemble video clips and serve as both aesthetic elements and transitions within the film’s narrative.

One last structural feature the film offers is the characterization process and the people available in the film. There are three main characters but the film is essentially about the crowds. The characters represent Brazilian youth and it is possible to see a crowded group of young people throughout the film. This feature again promotes an equality of representation among the characters because the main characters never talk about personal issues, they always point out a reality that is the common problem of the youth community in general. Therefore, the film’s aesthetics aligns with the narrative and effectively brings large crowds of young people to the screen.

3.2. Multi-Modality

Your Turn (Capai, 2019) presents a rich combination of image and sound design that incorporates various methods, reflecting all six of Nichols’s categories. Nichols’s modes of representation, namely expository, observational, participatory, performative, poetic and reflexive modes, can be found in various parts of the film in different levels. From the narrative and style, it is evident that the participatory, observational, and expository modes are the most dominant. However, other modes of representation are also present and play a role in the film’s aesthetic composition.

The film is predominantly participatory because the narrators play crucial roles in the social reality and experience all the process that is demonstrated throughout the film. Lukas, Nayara and Marcela interact with the other social agents; they even lead them in the challenging process of civil rights struggle. The audience witness their

story while they are experiencing it. Although they initially function as only characters in the narrative, they transform into a productive part of the film-making process. They even manage to steer the narrative according to their own willpower. The filmmakers' views are prominently reflected in the film through their narration. This allows the documentary to not only observe, but also present the filmmakers' perspectives and thoughts to the audience in a genuine way. *Your Turn* (Capai, 2019) also presents observatory elements throughout.

The camera records the young people in huge crowds, in the streets, in governmental buildings, in schools etc. At times, the camera captures reality up close, while at other times, it observes social phenomena from a distance. Close-up shots create a subjective feeling that leads the audience to identify with the characters on a personal level. On the other side, when camera makes wide shots, it functions as a fly on the wall. This means that it does not involve in the action, it only observes as an outsider. This kind of footage situates the camera in an objective place where it conveys an impartial meaning. In other words, this mode aims to present the documentary to the audience in a natural way and portray the events and situations in their own dynamics without any alteration.

As highlighted above, *Your Turn* (Capai, 2019) embodies participatory and observatory modes of representation quite largely. This quality of the film can be directly related to ethnographic research. Although there is no evidence that the director of the film, Eliza Capai, personally participated and observed the subject phenomenon, the main characters being the narrators give the impression that they participated actively in the student riots and they observed and analyzed the social reality. They comment on what happened after some time passed and it shows that they gained a firsthand insight. This inner vision is parallel to the ethnographic participant observation role of the researcher. There is a difference between the method of the film and ethnographic research, though. All three characters in the film are naturally members of the youth community and they are totally authentic and real whereas an ethnography researcher is always an outsider who is like a guest. He/she participates and observes, but the social group know he/she is not actually one of them. However, the method in *Your Turn* (Capai, 2019) can be correlated with the ethnographic participant observation in the way it utilizes the researcher's role. Even though the characters are insiders, the outcome does not differ much from the ethnographic results. For example, especially the school occupation scenes in *Your Turn* (Capai, 2019) present a great example to the ethnographic meanings that the film produces. The camera works in an observatory status and record the occupation process. On the other hand, the narrative declares that only the student community is allowed in the school building, so it is implied that the cameraman is an outsider who participates in the social phenomenon as a researcher and records it. In this recording, the audience witness the occupation process in which students establish a system to take care of the school building and educate themselves freely with no strings attached. This part of the movie seems more ethnographic than the other parts because in a way, it presents the life of a community and try to understand their motives.

Another mode of representation that is utilized largely in the film is the expository mode. The narrators in the expository mode are mostly outsiders who are professional voice-over artists. Being an outsider brings an impartial quality. In *Your Turn* (Capai, 2019) a different approach is chosen and the narrators who experienced the whole phenomenon take the expository responsibility. The main characters narrate a certain text which informs the audience about the events and enlighten them about the insights of the characters. However, their narration goes beyond just their personal experiences. It also provides objective explanations of issues, such as governmental regulations. This approach creates the impression that their narration serves as a mediator between objective facts and subjective

perspectives. This uncertain terrain also leads to the emergence of the performative mode of representation. The performative mode highlights the personal feelings, opinions, and experiences of the filmmakers or narrators. Such documentaries often emphasize the filmmaker's individual perspective and emotional experiences. Therefore, the narration in *Your Turn* (Capai, 2019) can be regarded as both expository and performative when looked from different angles.

Although not as prominently as other modes, the film also includes examples of poetic and reflexive modes. There is quite a lot of music in the sound design of the film. It is sometimes employed to point out how talented and self-expressive the students are. It shows that the music is a way for youngsters to freely find their voices. In addition, it is used as an aesthetic element in the transitions between sequences. These scenes contain rhythmic sounds accompanied by stylistic footage. The poetic mode emphasizes an aesthetic and artistic approach to documentary narration. Images, music, and sounds are carefully arranged to create a certain aesthetic feeling. These transitions function as an aesthetic relief from the harsh realities illustrated in the film. Last but not least, reflexive mode of representation is the least common category in the film. However, it is possible to spot it in a few instances. The narrators often implement a style of narration that emphasizes how the documentary is made. They remind the audience that this is actually a film. For example, Marcela states that it has been an hour since the film started. Moreover, there is a scene in which a policeman warns the cameraman. This scene implies how the film is made and highlights the difficulties the film crew encountered while filming.

As indicated above, Bill Nichols' modes of representation offers an appropriate schema to describe the rich features of the documentary film. The director's stylistic and narrative choices shape the film's connection to the reality it explores and influence how the audience engages with it. *Your Turn* (Capai, 2019) exemplifies all six modes of representation, with particular emphasis on the participatory and expository modes, which enhance the film's ethnographic perspective.

3.3. Collectivity

Your Turn (Capai, 2019) can be seen as a collaborative effort, involving numerous individuals both in front of and behind the camera. Director Eliza Capai developed the narrative and filmed the project in collaboration with other directors from alternative media and numerous young people. Thus, it can be argued that the themes of equality and democracy are also reflected in the film's production principles. The end credits provide details about the production process and highlight its collaborative aspects. First of all, it is stated in the end notes that the "film is experienced, narrated and written together with Lucas "Koka" Penteado, Nayara Souza, Marcela Jesus". This info declares that this documentary is a democratic work and it has a horizontal structure that values collectivity. Another note says "This story exists thanks to documentaries from activist media who followed the student occupations and social struggles in São Paulo". As it is mentioned before, the project films a 6 years time span and it follows the student uprisings focusing on three particular students. Filming this large social movement requires a lot of people working together. Thus, a lot of footage is taken from different sources. For instance, documentarist Caio Castor filmed 30 minutes of the movie in 2015 and 2016. The scenes depicting the occupation at Joao Kopke School and those featuring Marcela Jesus in 2015 were captured by Henrique Cartaxo / Journalistas Livres. Additionally, footage from 2013 was sourced from Tiago Tambellis' documentary, 20 Centavos. On top all that, the content was reviewed with former high school students and it is stated that "the screenplay was inspired by interviews with students from

all over the country". The collective nature of this documentary is the result of the combined efforts of many contributors to the project and the combination of different perspectives. This type of production process increases the depth and diversity of the documentary, while also incorporating contributions from different experiences. Each person's own experience and perspective enriches the narrative of the documentary and provides a more comprehensive story.

CONCLUSION

Documentary cinema has undergone a significant transformation in the last few decades. Technologically, the proliferation of digital cameras and portable devices has made filming more accessible and cost-effective. With the influence of the internet and social media, documentaries have found the opportunity to reach a wider audience, and global reach has increased thanks to digital distribution platforms. Methodologically, documentarians adopt participatory approaches, actively engage with their subjects, and present a more personal narrative. Experimental techniques and forms have gone beyond traditional narrative structures, and greater awareness of transparency and impartiality has been achieved. In terms of content, documentary subjects have expanded to include a wider range of social and cultural phenomena, and personal and subjective narratives have come to the fore.

This study explores how documentary cinema engages with reality by leveraging its recent potential in terms of style and narrative. For this purpose, Brazilian documentary film *Your Turn* (Capai, 2019) has been chosen as an example because it offers a wide range of aesthetic choices as well as narrative ones. The sample film has been textually analyzed to uncover how its narrative is constructed and how various storytelling elements enhance its ethnographic and collective nature. Results of the textual analysis indicate that as an example of contemporary documentary cinema *Your Turn* (Capai, 2019) offers a rich texture of narrativity and aesthetics with its utilization of multi-modality, participant-observational research model, collectivity and subjectivity. Multi-modality has been analyzed through Bill Nichols' categorization of the modes of representation and it is observed that all six of his categories were employed in the film. Especially participatory and observatory modes can be found largely which contributes a lot to the ethnographic look of the film. It is recognized that the camera has a few functions. It sometimes remains in a distance and observes the social reality. At other times, it gets closer to the content giving more details about the characters and creates a subjective feeling. This variety of modes contribute to the film's rich texture and also meaning production. It allows the audience to approach reality from various perspectives, gaining unbiased insights into the social phenomenon. Moreover, it has been observed that one of the biggest strengths of this sample film is its collective production process. A lot of footage was taken from alternative documentary directors. This collaboration provides valuable insights into the social phenomenon and offers diverse perspectives. On top of all that, young people who first-handedly experienced the student revolts were consulted and included in the project throughout the production process. This fosters a collaborative and egalitarian work environment, leading to the creation of an authentic and genuine story. This approach empowers young people to raise their voices and gain visibility on a global scale, enabling them to make their perspectives known and recognized by a broader audience.

All in all, this documentary film is rich in depth and ethnographic features, with a combination of different narrative and aesthetic techniques. The various techniques used add richness to the visual and auditory levels while providing the viewer with an opportunity to better understand the cultural and social contexts. As a result, the documentary effectively reflects the complexity and multidimensionality of its subject utilizing the recent developments in documentary film-making.

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