



Methodology of Decentralized Curatorial Documentary Based on Multimodal Data Analysis (UGC)

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Abstract

This methodological guide presents a comprehensive framework for decentralized curatorial documentary filmmaking based on multimodal analysis of User Generated Content (UGC). The study investigates the transformation of documentary language in the era of digital data redundancy, proposing an open-source editing method that restructures the traditional relationship between filmmaker and subject, replacing direct interaction with the collection, verification, contextualization, and analysis of edited, publicly available digital traces. The object of the research is contemporary documentary content created from UGC sources; the subject is the methodology of constructing screen portraits and historical chronicles without direct contact between the filmmaker and the filmed subject. The purpose of this work is to articulate and exemplify the Guilt Free Montage method as a procedural framework for constructing documentary portraits and event chronicles from publicly available User Generated Content. The method is examined as a way to reduce selected forms of interpersonal reactivity associated with direct filming, interviewing, and prolonged contact between filmmaker and subject. Rather than claiming access to an unmediated truth, the guide defines authenticity as a verifiable relation between public self representation, external observation, social resonance, and documented source provenance. Drawing on case studies-including the rapper Husky portrait episode and the Yellow Vests protests in France (2018)-the guide systematizes principles of objective distancing, source polyphony, emotional reconstruction, and event mosaics. The guide further examines AI-powered content discovery tools, OSINT verification techniques, and the concept of "Open-Source Cinema," wherein every fragment is traceable to its publicly available original. This guide will be of interest to documentary filmmakers, investigative journalists, media scholars, digital archivists, and new media practitioners seeking data-driven approaches to non-fiction storytelling.

Keywords: User Generated Content, Decentralized Documentary, Curatorial Montage, OSINT Cinema, Multimodal Analysis, Observer Effect Elimination, Open-Source Verification, Digital Archives, Non-Invasive Filmmaking, Data-Driven Documentary.

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Citation: Ayala Roytman, "Methodology of Decentralized Curatorial Documentary Based on Multimodal Data Analysis (UGC)", Universal Library of Business and Economics, 2025; 2(4): 161-173. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70315/uloap.ulbec.2025.0204018>.

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary media landscape is undergoing a fundamental structural transformation driven by the exponential growth of user-generated video content. Cisco's earlier Visual Networking Index projected that global consumer Internet video traffic would reach 82% of all consumer Internet traffic by 2022, while the later Cisco Annual Internet Report covered the forecast period from 2018 to 2023 [1]. Because Cisco discontinued this forecast series, the 82% figure should be treated as a historical projection rather. More recent industry reports continue to describe video as a major driver of network traffic, including Sandvine's 2024 Global Internet Phenomena Report and Ericsson's 2024 Mobility Report, which reported that video accounted for 73% of mobile traffic by the end of 2023 [2]. This deluge of unstructured audiovisual data presents both an unprecedented challenge and an extraordinary opportunity for documentary practice.

Traditional documentary filmmaking has historically relied on the direct interaction between the director and the subject—a paradigm rooted in the observational cinema traditions established by pioneers such as Frederick Wiseman and the Maysles brothers, and later theorized within the frameworks of *cinéma vérité* and direct cinema. However, as Nichols [4] argued, every documentary mode involves inherent epistemological compromises: the presence of the camera alters behavior, the interview setting introduces power dynamics, and the editing room becomes a site of narrative construction that may distort the subject's authentic experience. This epistemological tension—what we term the “observer effect” in documentary practice—has been the subject of sustained critical debate within documentary studies [3, 5].

The scientific gap addressed by this guide lies at the intersection of documentary methodology and computational media studies. While individual studies have examined UGC as a supplementary source for journalism [6] and historians have explored social media archives as primary documents [7], no comprehensive methodology has been articulated for constructing full-length documentary works exclusively from open-source digital materials without any direct contact between the author and the filmed subjects. Furthermore, the rapid development of AI-powered multimodal search technologies—including semantic video retrieval, cross-modal alignment, and automated transcription—has created technical capabilities that were unavailable even five years ago, yet these tools have not been systematically integrated into documentary production workflows [8].

The purpose of this methodological guide is to articulate, systematize, and exemplify the Guilt Free Montage method, formally designated as the Decentralized Curatorial Documentary Method Based on UGC. The guide examines how documentary meaning can be constructed through

the collection, verification, comparison, and montage organization of public digital traces, without direct contact between the filmmaker and the filmed subject.

The scientific novelty of this work consists in the systematic description of a documentary method that replaces the traditional interview with the curatorial analysis of public digital traces. The guide introduces the concept of the protagonist's emotional legibility, understood as the viewer's capacity to interpret a subject through the juxtaposition of deliberate public self presentation, externally recorded situations, and spontaneous social reactions.

The author's research proposition is that a documentary constructed from publicly available UGC and open source materials can produce a distinct form of documentary authenticity when authenticity is operationalized through four criteria: source traceability, multiplicity of perspectives, preservation of original communicative context, and the visible tension between self representation and external observation. The guide does not claim empirical superiority over conventional documentary forms; rather, it proposes a method whose analytical value can be examined through case based application and future comparative viewer or expert evaluation.

The practical significance of the developed methodology extends beyond cinema into investigative journalism, educational historical projects (history visualization), and new media formats. The case studies presented—the rapper Husky portrait and the French Yellow Vests protests—demonstrate how disparate fragments from social networks can be transformed into a coherent artistic statement possessing historical value [9, 10].

Disclosure: the Husky portrait case discussed in this guide is the author's own documentary work. It is used here as a practice based case study, which means that the author analyzes a method that they also applied in production. This position provides access to production logic and editorial decision making, but it also requires reflexive acknowledgement of authorial involvement.

1. METHODOLOGY: THE GUILT-FREE MONTAGE METHOD (DECENTRALIZED CURATORIAL DOCUMENTARY METHOD BASED ON UGC)

The method proposed in this guide—formally designated as the Method of Decentralized Curatorial Documentary Based on User Generated Content—represents a paradigm shift in documentary production. Its essence lies in the creation of an audiovisual fabric exclusively from open sources and user-generated content. The author rejects direct interaction with the protagonist and assumes a composite methodological role: archival curator, verification analyst, and montage interpreter. The author does not disappear from the work and does not become ethically neutral in an absolute sense. Authorship is relocated from the act of filming and questioning

to the procedures of selection, verification, sequencing, and contextual framing [11]. This methodological reorientation is not merely a technical innovation but an epistemological one: it redefines the documentary filmmaker's relationship with truth, evidence, and narrative authority.

The theoretical foundations of this approach draw upon several convergent intellectual traditions. First, the concept of the "author as curator" aligns with Bourriaud's [12] postproduction aesthetics, wherein the artist's primary creative act consists not in original production but in the selection, combination, and recontextualization of existing cultural materials. Second, the method operationalizes principles from open-source intelligence (OSINT) research, applying systematic data collection, verification, and cross-referencing protocols developed in the intelligence and investigative journalism communities to the domain of creative audiovisual production [13]. Third, the elimination of the director-subject relationship addresses longstanding concerns articulated within documentary ethics scholarship, particularly the "loyalty contract" problem identified by Winston [14] and the power asymmetries analyzed by Aufderheide et al. [15].

The method suspends the classical interview based right of reply, but it does not abolish ethical responsibility toward the subject. The author does not seek direct testimony from the protagonist; instead, the work is limited to materials that already exist within public circulation. This procedural distance reduces the interpersonal obligation created by prolonged contact, while preserving the author's responsibility to contextualize sources, avoid defamatory montage, and assess potential harm. This is not an act of indifference but a deliberate methodological choice: by eliminating the interpersonal dynamic, the filmmaker gains freedom to present material with what may be termed "surgical precision"-showing reality that the subject has already made public, thus earning the right to maximal honesty that would be impossible under conditions of personal contact [14].

The method employs the full spectrum of digital traces: from official interviews and press conferences to incidental stories, streams, operative footage from courtrooms, and comments from opponents and supporters alike. This polyphonic approach ensures that no single perspective dominates the narrative, creating a multi-dimensional representation that resists reductive interpretation [16].

Exemplified by the rapper Husky episode [9], this principle demonstrates how a portrait is assembled from the protagonist's self-presentation and external impressions. The viewer encounters the subject in multiple states, including concerts, interviews, detention footage, and court related documentation. This produces a layered and unembellished representation of the artist, while making the authorial act of selection visible rather than concealing it as neutral observation. The montage operates through contrast: the protagonist's pathos during an interview may collide with their bewilderment in court, and the absence of voice-over commentary compels the viewer to perform independent analytical work.

Illustrated through the Yellow Vests case study [10], this principle enables the reconstruction of the scale of an event through the "eyes" of thousands of participants. Chaotic streams are juxtaposed with official addresses by President Macron, creating the effect of presence and historical authenticity without the mediation of a reporter [17].

There is no voice-over narration. The narrative is constructed at the juncture of actually existing utterances, granting the viewer freedom of conclusions. The author functions as a curator of the archive, not as a guide leading the audience by the hand toward a predetermined verdict. This structural openness aligns with what Rancière [18] termed the "emancipated spectator"-a viewer who is an active interpreter rather than a passive recipient of directorial authority.

The following table provides a systematic comparison of traditional documentary methods and the proposed UGC curatorial approach across key methodological dimensions (Table 1).

Table 1. Comparative Analysis of Documentary Methods (compiled by the author based on [3, 4, 14, 15])

Dimension	Traditional Documentary	UGC Curatorial Method
Source of footage	Crew-filmed material	Publicly available UGC and open data
Director-subject relation	Direct interaction (interview, observation)	No contact; digital trace curation
Narrator presence	Voice-over / on-screen host	Absent; titles and intertitles only
Reactivity risk	Present through direct filming, interview staging, and prolonged contact	Reduced in externally recorded Layers B and C; retained as deliberate self presentation in Layer A
Ethical framework	Interpersonal duty toward filmed subject	Procedural distance combined with source contextualization, harm assessment, and public interest justification
Verification	Director's editorial judgment	Metadata, geotags, cross-referencing
Scalability	Limited by crew logistics	Virtually unlimited (global UGC pool)
Access constraints	Physical presence required	Remote; conflict zones accessible

Having established the theoretical and methodological foundations of the Guilt-Free Montage method, the subsequent section examines its application to the construction of individual portraits-the “Subject Without Mediator” paradigm-through detailed analysis of the Husky case study.

2. PORTRAIT: THE CONCEPT OF “SUBJECT WITHOUT MEDIATOR”

The traditional documentary portrait is built upon the interaction dyad “director–protagonist.” Within this dyad, distortion is inevitable: the subject subconsciously (or consciously) attempts to conform to the author’s expectations, while the author feels ethical responsibility toward the protagonist-the so-called “guilt” that Winston [14] identified as a structural feature of documentary filmmaking. In the Guilt-Free Montage method, this distortion is eliminated: the filmmaker does not film the subject but rather investigates their digital presence. The fundamental reconceptualization

lies in treating the filmed subject not as a person to be documented but as a data field to be analyzed [19].

This approach employs two complementary analytical vectors. First, the subject is understood as the architect of their own image: their interviews, social media posts, and livestreams constitute a deliberate self-presentation-a “facade” through which they project their desired public identity. Second, the social environment serves as a mirror: external testimonies-incidental footage by passersby, courtroom recordings, comments from detractors and supporters-are overlaid upon the subject’s self-presentation, revealing the gap between performance and reality [20, 21].

The typology of visual data sources used for constructing a volumetric portrait is systematized using the Husky case study [9] as a demonstration. The following diagram illustrates the three-layer architecture that underpins the portrait construction methodology (Figure 1).

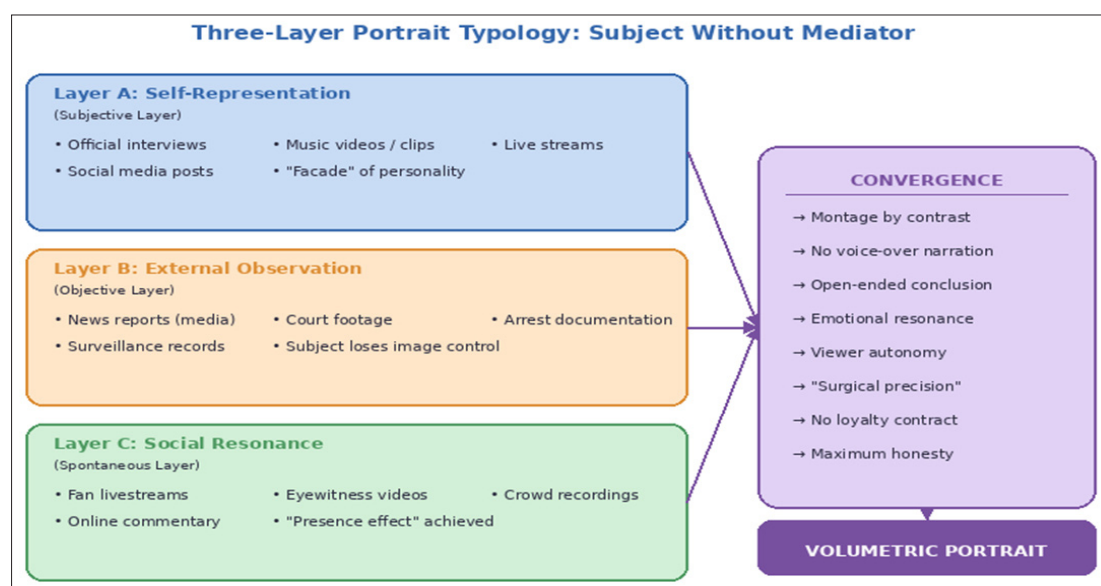


Figure 1. Three-Layer Portrait Typology: Subject Without Mediator (compiled by the author based on [9])

Layer A: Self Representation (Subjective Layer). This layer comprises the protagonist’s deliberate public self presentation: interviews, music videos, concert materials, posts, stories, and livestreams addressed to an audience. These materials cannot be interpreted as unguarded behavior, since they are produced under conditions of public address. Their analytical value lies elsewhere: they reveal the image the subject chooses to construct, the vocabulary through which the subject explains themselves, and the symbolic posture they offer to the public. These materials constitute the “facade” of the personality-its ideology, self-image, and consciously constructed public persona. In the Husky case, this layer includes his extensive interviews with journalists, concert footage, and Instagram stories in which he addresses his audience directly. The analytical value of this layer lies precisely in its constructed nature: it reveals what the subject wishes the world to see [9].

Layer B: External Observation (Objective Layer). This layer consists of materials over which the subject exercises no control: media reportage, operative footage from courtrooms, documentation of arrests and detentions. Here the protagonist is stripped of agency over their image. We observe their vulnerability, their physical response to systemic pressure, their unguarded reactions in moments of genuine stress. In the Husky case, courtroom footage and arrest documentation provide a stark counterpoint to the controlled charisma of the interview layer, revealing the human being behind the public persona [9, 21].

Layer C: Social Resonance (Spontaneous Layer). This layer encompasses incidental streams by fans, eyewitness videos from crowds, and spontaneous documentation by bystanders. These materials produce a presence effect and situate the protagonist within a broader social field. The analytical power of this layer derives from its partial unintentionality:

the participants may have known they were visible to a local or platform audience, but they did not necessarily organize their behavior for the specific documentary work in which the footage is later included. This distinction is essential, since the argument about reduced reactivity applies primarily to Layers B and C, while Layer A must be read as conscious self-representation. [22, 23].

The reduction of selected forms of reactivity constitutes an epistemological advantage of the proposed method, but

this advantage is not universal across all layers of material. In Layer A, the subject performs for an intended public and constructs a controlled image. In Layers B and C, the material is less dependent on the filmmaker's presence and therefore can reduce the distortions associated with direct documentary filming. Figure 2 below presents a systematic comparison of the traditional and UGC-based approaches with respect to the principal factors that introduce observational distortion.

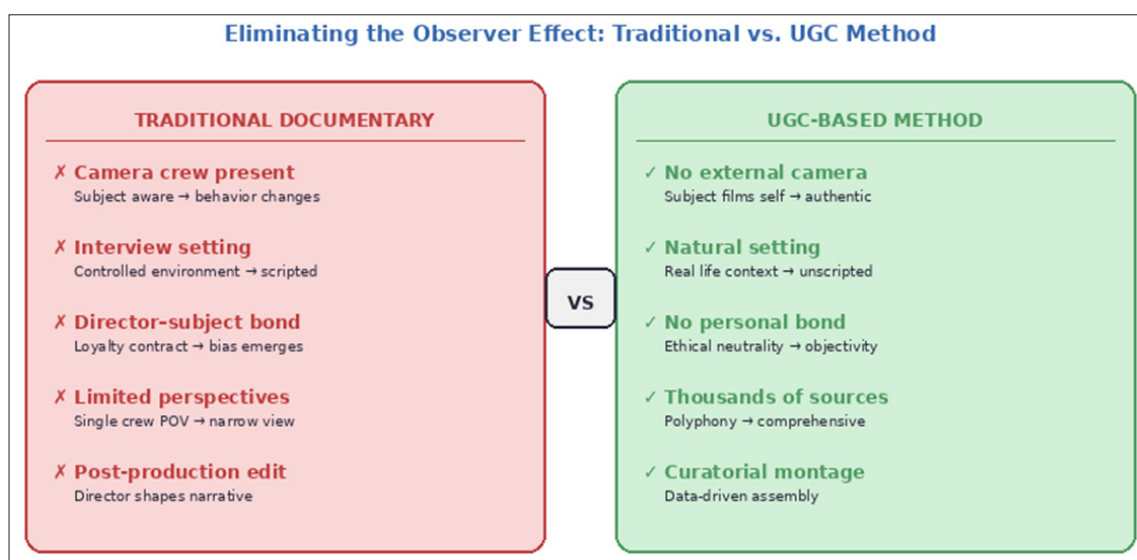


Figure 2. Eliminating the Observer Effect: Traditional vs. UGC Method (compiled by the author based on [3, 4, 14])

In traditional cinema, the director guides the viewer toward a specific conclusion. In this methodology, the author functions as an archive curator. Montage junctions operate through contrast: the protagonist's pathos in an interview may collide with their bewilderment in a courtroom. The absence of voice-over commentary forces the viewer to perform independent analytical work. By the film's conclusion, the viewer comprehends the protagonist not at the level of facts but at the level of emotional resonance-the way we "read" people we know in everyday life [14].

The filmmaker is liberated from the "loyalty contract." When a director has spent ten shooting days with a subject, they frequently begin to "pity" or "protect" that individual. Working with open sources preserves surgical precision. The material presented is reality that the subject has already made public. This confers the right to unflinching honesty-an honesty that is structurally impossible when personal contact exists between filmmaker and subject [15, 23]. The portrait video case study of the rapper Husky and serves as the primary empirical illustration of the methodological principles described in this section.

Table 2 systematizes the analytical categories employed in the portrait construction process, mapping each layer to its source types, analytical functions, and examples from the Husky case.

Table 2. Portrait Layer Analytical Framework (compiled by the author based on [9])

Layer	Source Type	Analytical Function	Husky Case Example
A: Self-Representation	Interviews, music videos, streams, social posts	Reveals desired public persona; ideology	Extended interviews, concert footage, Instagram stories
B: External Observation	Media reports, court footage, arrest docs	Strips subject of image control; shows vulnerability	Courtroom recordings, arrest documentation, news reports
C: Social Resonance	Fan streams, eyewitness video, crowd footage	Produces presence effect; social context	Fan livestreams from concerts, street-level videos

The portrait methodology, while focused on the depth of individual personality, represents only one axis of the decentralized curatorial approach. The subsequent section shifts from the vertical dimension of personal depth to the horizontal dimension of collective experience, examining how the method reconstructs large-scale events through the prism of decentralized observation.

3. EVENT: RECONSTRUCTION OF A GLOBAL EVENT THROUGH THE PRISM OF DECENTRALIZED OBSERVATION

If the portrait section explored the depth of individual personality, this section examines the horizontal structure of reality-the reconstruction of large-scale social events through the aggregation of thousands of simultaneous testimonies. The core premise is that a global event can be understood not through the lens of a single authoritative reporter but through the convergence of innumerable individual perspectives, each partial and subjective, yet collectively constituting a comprehensive historical document [17].

Traditional reportage is constrained by the point of view of the camera operator. In the Guilt-Free Montage method, an event is treated as the sum of thousands of simultaneous testimonies. The result is the elimination of “dead zones”: thanks to UGC content, the author gains access to locations where no official camera was present. Furthermore, the method utilizes long segments of livestreams without internal editorial cuts, preserving what may be termed “raw reality”-the temporal texture of lived experience that conventional editing typically excises [24].

The Architecture of Chaos: The Yellow Vests Case (2018). The montage is constructed according to the principle of “synchronous mosaic.” At any given moment, the viewer may encounter multiple simultaneous perspectives: the aerial view from police helicopters or civilian drones provides spatial context and scale; the internal view from a participant’s shaking camera in a tear gas cloud delivers visceral emotional co-participation; the bystander view-a

tourist filming from a café window-introduces an element of everyday surrealism; and the official view from presidential addresses establishes the institutional counter-narrative. The juxtaposition of Macron’s official address with the living reactions of people on the barricades creates cognitive dissonance without a single word from the author [10].

The Technology of the “Chronotope of Open Data.” The practical implementation of the synchronous mosaic relies on three technical operations: searching for video by geotags and timecodes; verifying metadata to confirm authenticity; and polyphonic montage-combining sound and video from different sources at a single point in space. For the Yellow Vests episode, this meant systematically collecting footage from within a 500-meter radius of the Arc de Triomphe on December 1, 2018, between 14:00 and 16:00, then synchronizing audio tracks from multiple phones by matching the sound signatures of specific detonations [25].

The filmmaker neither provokes events nor requests re-enactments. Every event was documented by participants voluntarily. The task is not to render judgment but to reconstruct the energy of the moment. This ethical stance distinguishes the method from propaganda, which selects footage to serve a predetermined narrative, and from conventional reportage, which inevitably filters reality through the reporter’s interpretive framework [17].

The following table provides a structured overview of the observational modalities integrated within the synchronous mosaic approach, mapping each perspective to its technical source, perceptual function, and contribution to historical reconstruction (Table 3).

Table 3. Observational Modalities in Synchronous Mosaic Reconstruction (compiled by the author based on [10, 25])

Perspective	Technical Source	Perceptual Function	Historical Value
Aerial View	Drones, police helicopters	Spatial context, crowd scale	Geographic documentation
Inside View	Participant smartphones	Emotional co-participation	First-person testimony
Bystander View	Tourist / passerby cameras	Everyday surrealism, normalcy contrast	Civilian verification
Official View	Press conferences, broadcasts	Institutional counter-narrative	Official position record
Ambient Sound	Multi-source audio capture	Temporal synchronization	Acoustic authentication
Metadata Layer	Geotags, timestamps, user IDs	Verification infrastructure	Evidentiary chain of custody

The reconstruction of events from decentralized sources raises fundamental questions about the verifiability and provenance of the materials employed. The subsequent section addresses these concerns through a systematic examination of the verification pipeline and the concept of “Open-Source Cinema.”

4. VERIFIABILITY AND TECHNOLOGICAL NEUTRALITY OF THE METHOD

The principal distinction between the proposed methodology and propaganda lies in the transparency of primary sources. Every UGC fragment possesses its own metadata: upload time, geolocation tag, user identifier, and device information. In the scientific framework of this guide, this characteristic is designated as “Open-Source Cinema”-a documentary practice in which the viewer can obtain a complete list of links to all original materials used, and in which the author presents each fragment alongside its original network context without manipulative splicing [13].

The verification pipeline constitutes the methodological backbone that distinguishes data-driven documentary from mere compilation. Figure 3 presents the five-stage pipeline from initial OSINT collection through to the final Open-Source Cinema output.

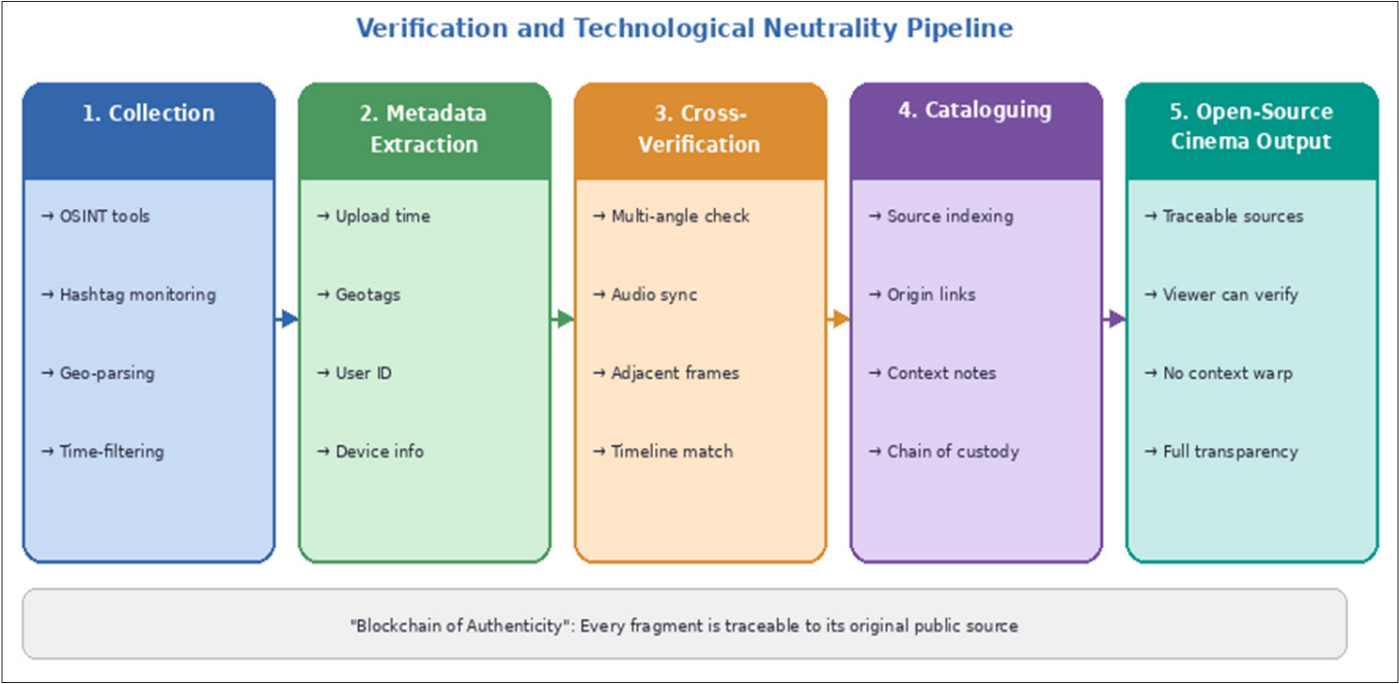


Figure 3. Verification and Technological Neutrality Pipeline (compiled by the author)

Metadata as a Conditional Provenance Trail. Metadata should not be described as a blockchain, since UGC metadata is neither cryptographically immutable nor consistently preserved across platforms. Social media services often transcode, recompress, or regenerate uploaded media files, which can remove or replace original device metadata. Therefore, metadata should be treated as one component of a conditional provenance trail, to be evaluated alongside upload context, account history, geolocation, chronolocation, visual landmarks, audio synchronization, platform timestamps, archival captures, and cross source comparison. Each video fragment carries information about when it was uploaded, from what geographic coordinates, by which user account, and on what device it was recorded. This metadata infrastructure enables a level of source verification that is, paradoxically, more rigorous than that available in traditional documentary production, where the provenance of footage is typically attested solely by the filmmaker’s word [26].

Reducing Reactivity and Observer Effects. In the context of documentary practice, the relevant concept is not the Heisenberg uncertainty principle, but social reactivity: people may alter their behavior when they know they are being observed, filmed, interviewed, or evaluated. In research methodology this problem is commonly discussed through the Hawthorne effect, observer effects, demand characteristics, and social desirability. The UGC curatorial method reduces the filmmaker’s direct contribution to such reactivity because the filmmaker is absent at the moment of recording. When a subject sees the camera of a film crew, they begin to perform a role. The UGC curatorial method employs footage created before the documentary project intervenes in the situation. In Layers B and C, individuals may be responding to an event, a crowd, a police

presence, a courtroom, or a platform audience, but not to the filmmaker’s request. The method therefore does not produce a pure reaction; it produces a reaction less shaped by the documentary apparatus itself. This is a narrower and more defensible claim [4].

The Technological Toolkit: OSINT in Cinema. The filmmaker’s “lens” in this methodology is not a physical optic but a set of search algorithms. The search methodology encompasses OSINT tools, hashtag monitoring, video parsing by geolocation and time (for example: the area around the Arc de Triomphe, December 1, 2018, 14:00–16:00). The author functions as a data analyst at the stages of search, preservation, verification, and classification, but as a documentary author at the stages of selection, sequencing, omission, and montage construction. The method therefore requires reflexive transparency: the guide should distinguish between technical verification, which evaluates source reliability, and authorial interpretation, which produces meaning through arrangement [13].

Safety and Independence: “The Safety Distance.” The method enables filmmaking in contexts where the subject is dangerous (law enforcement, criminal organizations) or the event is physically inaccessible (conflict zones, restricted areas). There is no need to request permission from authorities or to risk personal safety-individuals voluntarily publish everything on the internet. This renders the author invulnerable to censorship and institutional obstruction [27].

The following table systematizes the verification mechanisms employed at each stage of the production pipeline, linking technical procedures to their epistemological functions (Table 4).

Table 4. Verification Mechanisms in Open-Source Cinema (compiled by the author based on [13, 26])

Verification Mechanism	Technical Procedure	Epistemological Function
Fact-checking	Cross-referencing dozens of videos of the same moment	Excludes fabrications and deepfakes
Ethical neutrality	Rejection of personal relationships with subjects	Eliminates the loyalty effect
Archive democratization	Author curates publicly available footage; viewer can verify	Transfers verification authority to the audience
Metadata transparency	Preserving and publishing upload times, geotags, user IDs	Establishes provenance chain of custody
Audio synchronization	Matching audio signatures across multiple recordings	Confirms temporal co-location of sources

The verification infrastructure described in this section provides the epistemological foundation upon which the method's application to news deconstruction is built. The following section extends the analytical framework from documentary portrait and event reconstruction to the systematic deconstruction of the news production process itself.

5. NEWS: DECONSTRUCTION OF THE NEWS FLOW

Traditional news media operates through interpretation: journalists select, frame, and contextualize events according to editorial policies, audience expectations, and institutional constraints. The method proposed in this guide works with what may be termed “informational raw material”—the unprocessed, unedited testimonies of participants and witnesses. The task is not to produce a news report but to reconstruct a news event from hundreds of individual testimonies. This approach is designated as the Event Aggregation Method [28]. The term Event Aggregation Method is used here to avoid the semantic ambiguity of “eventuality,” which in standard English refers to a possible future outcome rather than to an event as already documented. The method concerns the aggregation of recorded event fragments, not the mapping of hypothetical outcomes

The structural mechanics of news deconstruction through the collision of official and UGC layers are visualized below (Figure 4).

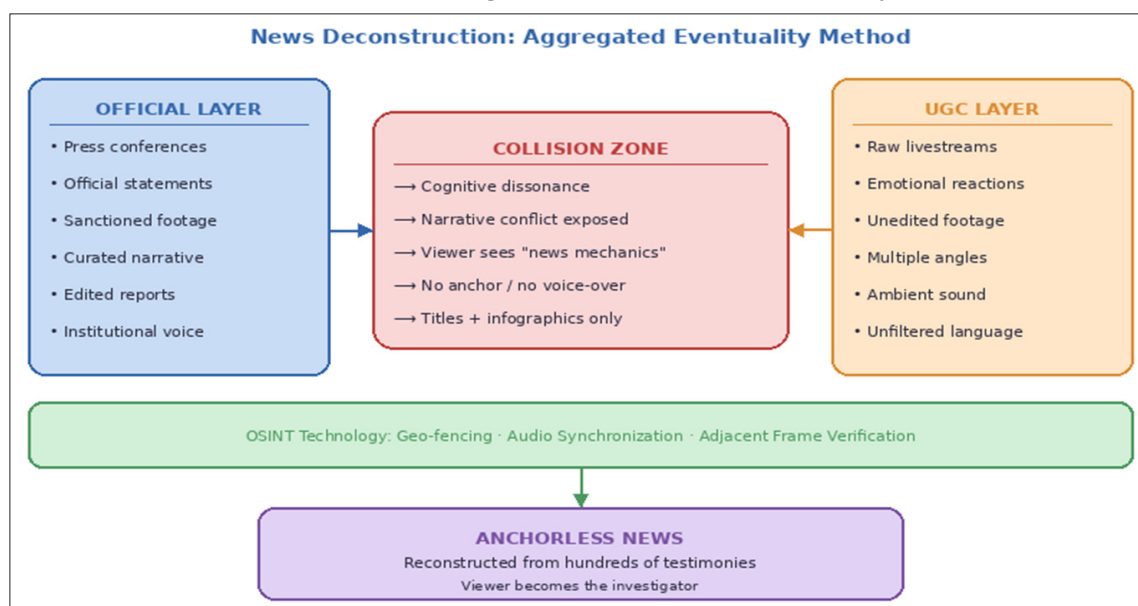


Figure 4. News Deconstruction: Aggregated Eventuality Method (compiled by the author)

The technical infrastructure for news deconstruction relies on three primary OSINT capabilities. Geo-fencing enables the delimitation of a geographic search area (e.g., within a 500-meter radius of a specific location). Audio synchronization—the alignment of video from five separate smartphones by matching the sound signature of an explosion or scream—enables the construction of a 360-degree overview of a single moment. Verification through “adjacent frames”—footage recorded at approximately the same time and location by different users—provides triangulated confirmation of events [25].

The montage deliberately juxtaposes the layer of official news channels—polished, scripted, institutionally sanctioned—against the layer of raw UGC: unedited, emotionally charged, linguistically unfiltered. The viewer witnesses the mechanics of news creation itself: how an event that was experienced as chaos by its participants becomes a structured, narrativized product in the hands of institutional media. This juxtaposition does not privilege one layer over the other; rather, it exposes the transformation process, enabling the viewer to draw independent conclusions about the relationship between experience and representation [28].

In this methodology, the explanatory function traditionally performed by the news anchor is transferred to on-screen titles presenting factual information, infographic overlays, and ambient sound. The human intermediary-the authoritative voice that tells the viewer what to think-is replaced by a system of visual and textual annotations that provide context without prescribing interpretation. This approach transforms the viewer from a passive consumer of pre-digested news into an active investigator of primary source material [29].

Table 5 presents a comparative analysis of the traditional news broadcast model and the Aggregated Eventuality approach across key structural parameters.

Table 5. Comparative Analysis: Traditional News vs. Aggregated Eventuality Method (compiled by the author based on [28, 29])

Parameter	Traditional News Broadcast	Aggregated Eventuality Method
Narrator	Anchor / presenter	Absent (titles + infographics)
Source material	Crew-filmed and agency footage	Raw UGC from multiple participants
Editorial process	Journalist selects and contextualizes	Curator aggregates and juxtaposes
Viewer role	Passive recipient	Active investigator
Temporal structure	Edited to broadcast schedule	Preserves real-time duration
Verification model	Editorial fact-checking	Metadata + cross-source triangulation

The news deconstruction methodology described in this section depends critically upon the ability to locate, retrieve, and process relevant content within the vast and constantly growing ocean of UGC. The following section examines the AI-powered technologies that make this content discovery possible at scale.

6. INNOVATIVE METHODS OF CONTENT DISCOVERY THROUGH AI

The practical applicability of the decentralized curatorial method at scale is contingent upon the capacity to discover relevant content within colossal data arrays. Contemporary AI-powered video search technologies have transformed this capacity fundamentally: it is now possible to search within video by meaning rather than merely by tags or textual descriptions. Moreover, AI-based transcription and translation tools render the filmmaker's linguistic limitations irrelevant-one need not speak French to systematically collect and analyze footage from French social networks [8].

The fundamental problem of social media video search lies in the fact that conventional tag-based search cannot "see inside" the frame. A video tagged "Paris" may contain anything from a tourist selfie to a protest barricade. Contemporary AI developments address this limitation through multimodal search-systems in which AI simultaneously understands text, image, and sound, performing cross-modal alignment to enable semantic retrieval [30].

The landscape of AI-powered video search technologies as of 2024–2026 encompasses three principal categories of actors, each contributing distinct capabilities to the filmmaker's toolkit. The technical pipeline is schematized in Figure 5.

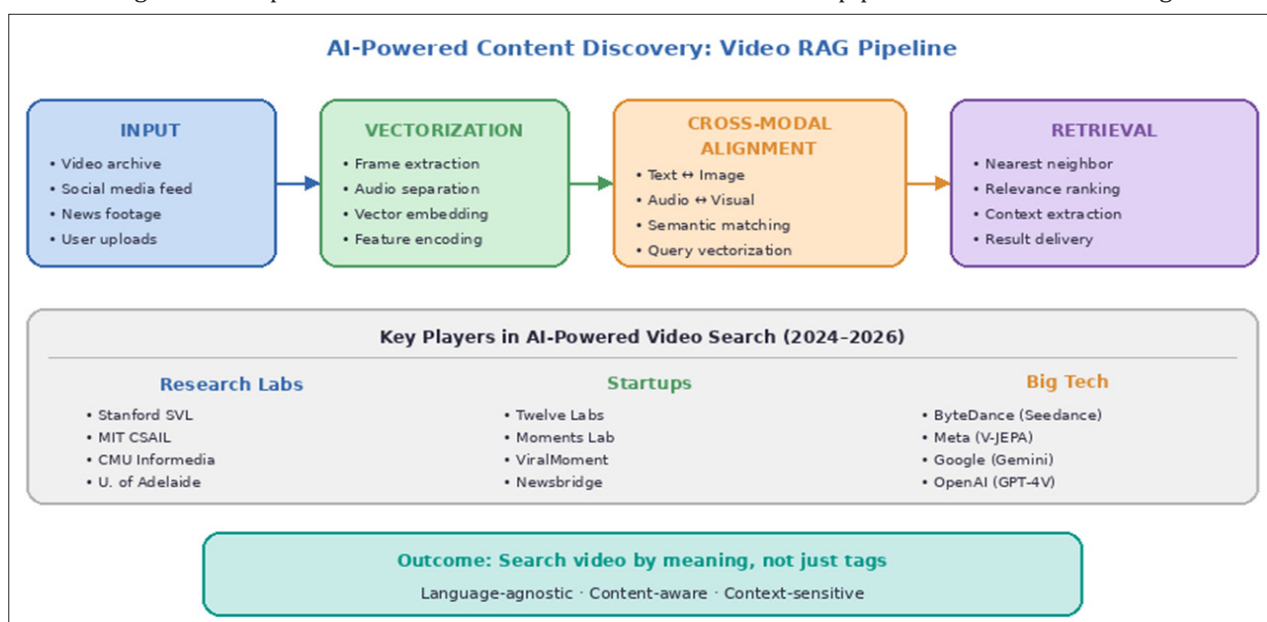


Figure 5. AI-Powered Content Discovery: Video RAG Pipeline (compiled by the author based on [8, 30])

Stanford Vision and Learning Lab (SVL) leads in computer vision research, working on systems that enable AI to understand “eventfulness”—not merely the presence of objects but the occurrence of actions and interactions. MIT CSAIL develops methods for analyzing low-resolution and “noisy” content characteristic of social media uploads. Carnegie Mellon University’s Informedia Project creates systems capable of scanning thousands of hours of video to identify specific social trends. The University of Adelaide (Australia) has published foundational work on Temporal Sentence Grounding—the localization of specific moments within video based on textual descriptions (e.g., “find the moment where the blogger opens the box”) [8].

Twelve Labs operates as a “Google for video,” enabling semantic search within video content—a user can find “a video with a pink sunset” even if no such description appears in the metadata. Moments Lab (Newsbridge) provides real-time recognition of faces, logos, and event contexts for journalists. ViralMoment, oriented toward TikTok, Reels, and Shorts, analyzes video pixel-by-pixel for trend prediction and visual meme identification [30].

ByteDance’s Seedance 2.0 model analyzes video and user

reactions by correlating audio and visual patterns. Meta’s V-JEPA model (developed by the Fundamental AI Research team) learns to understand the physics and logic of video in a manner analogous to human cognition, enabling content search by “action” rather than by static visual features [8].

The underlying technical architecture operates through three stages. First, vectorization: the video is segmented into frames and audio tracks, which are transformed into mathematical vector representations (embeddings). Second, cross-modal alignment: the text of the search query is converted into a vector in the same embedding space. Third, retrieval: the AI system identifies those vectors in the database that are maximally proximate in semantic space to the meaning of the query, returning the corresponding video segments. This pipeline enables the filmmaker to formulate queries in natural language (“find footage of a crowd confronting police near the Arc de Triomphe at dusk”) and receive semantically relevant results regardless of the language or metadata of the original content [30].

Table 6 provides a structured overview of the principal AI-powered video search technologies relevant to the decentralized curatorial documentary method.

Table 6. AI-Powered Video Search Technologies for Documentary Production (compiled by the author based on [8, 30])

Category	Organization	Key Technology	Application for UGC Documentary
Research	Stanford SVL	Event understanding in video	Identifying actions, not just objects
Research	MIT CSAIL	Noisy/low-res video analysis	Processing raw social media content
Research	CMU Informedia	Mass video trend scanning	Finding social trends across thousands of hours
Research	U. of Adelaide	Temporal Sentence Grounding	Locating specific moments by text query
Startup	Twelve Labs	Semantic video search	Finding content by meaning, not tags
Startup	Moments Lab	Real-time face/logo/context recognition	Journalist-grade content identification
Startup	ViralMoment	Pixel-level short-form analysis	TikTok/Reels trend and meme detection
Big Tech	ByteDance	Seedance 2.0 (audio-visual correlation)	Cross-modal content matching
Big Tech	Meta FAIR	V-JEPA (video physics understanding)	Action-based video retrieval

The AI technologies surveyed in this section provide the practical tools that make the decentralized curatorial method operational at the scale demanded by contemporary documentary production. The final section synthesizes the broader significance of the method, addressing its implications for combating disinformation, preserving historical memory, and innovating media consumption.

7. BROADER SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPLICATIONS

The methodology articulated in this guide effects a paradigmatic transition in documentary practice: from the domain of the “art of observation” to the domain of the “science of data” (Data-Driven Documentary). The case analyses presented across the preceding sections show that metadata, open sources, and cross source comparison can support a documentary form with a high degree of traceability and procedural transparency. The method does not automatically produce impartiality; rather, it creates

conditions under which the viewer and researcher can examine how the documentary argument was assembled. This claim rests not on theoretical speculation but on the concrete outcomes observed in the case studies analyzed: the Husky portrait and the Yellow Vests event reconstruction [9, 10].

In conditions of information warfare, the verification infrastructure embedded within the method provides a systematic framework for confirming or refuting claims. The cross-referencing of dozens of videos capturing the same moment from different angles, combined with metadata authentication, constitutes a robust defense against fabrications and deepfakes. Unlike traditional fact-checking, which operates post hoc on finished news products, the method integrates verification into the production process itself [26].

The method enables the creation of archives of events that

authorities may attempt to delete from the network. By aggregating and preserving dispersed UGC materials into structured documentary works, the filmmaker functions simultaneously as an artist and as an archivist, safeguarding collective memory against institutional erasure. This is particularly significant in authoritarian contexts, where state-controlled media provides the only “official” record and independent documentation faces systematic suppression [27].

The method anticipates a future media format in which the

viewer becomes an investigator rather than a consumer. By providing transparent access to all source materials and their metadata, the documentary becomes not merely a viewing experience but a research platform. This aligns with broader trends in interactive media, participatory journalism, and the emerging field of computational humanities [29].

To situate the proposed method within the broader landscape of documentary approaches, Figure 6 presents a comparative ethical framework spanning the spectrum from propaganda to maximum objectivity.

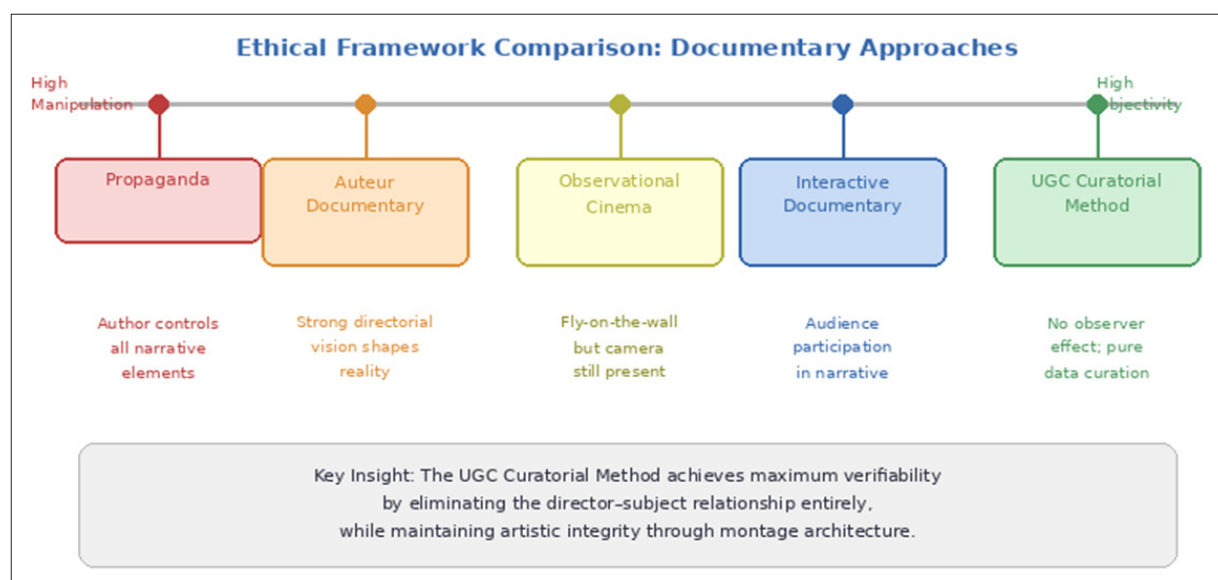


Figure 6. Ethical Framework Comparison: Documentary Approaches (compiled by the author based on [3, 4, 14, 15, 18])

The following table synthesizes the contributions of the proposed methodology across the three principal application domains (Table 7).

Table 7. Broader Contributions of the Decentralized Curatorial Method (compiled by the author)

Domain	Contribution of the Method	Key Mechanism
Anti-disinformation	Systematic verification integrated into production	Metadata authentication + multi-angle cross-referencing
Historical preservation	Archives resistant to institutional erasure	Aggregation of dispersed UGC into structured works
Media innovation	Viewer as investigator, not consumer	Transparent source access + open metadata
Documentary filmmaking	Higher authenticity without observer effect	Digital trace curation replaces direct contact
Investigative journalism	Safe access to dangerous / restricted contexts	Remote OSINT-based evidence collection
Education	Visual history from primary digital sources	AI-powered multilingual content discovery

CONCLUSION

This methodological guide has presented a framework for decentralized curatorial documentary filmmaking based on multimodal analysis of User Generated Content. The investigation has achieved its stated purpose by articulating and exemplifying the Guilt Free Montage method as a procedural model for constructing documentary portraits, event chronicles, and news flow analyses from publicly available digital traces. The method reduces selected risks associated with direct contact between filmmaker and subject, while preserving the need for ethical judgment, verification, and reflexive transparency.

The key findings of this guide may be summarized along four principal axes. First, the rejection of the traditional interview in favor of curating digital traces has been substantiated as a viable and epistemologically superior methodology for documentary portrait construction. The three-layer typology (self-representation, external observation, social resonance) provides a systematic analytical framework that produces volumetric, unlacquered representations of subjects while eliminating the observer effect that distorts conventional documentary interactions. Second, the synchronous mosaic approach to event reconstruction has been demonstrated to yield comprehensive historical documents that exceed the

coverage capacity of traditional reportage by aggregating thousands of simultaneous observational perspectives. Third, the verification pipeline-grounded in metadata transparency, cross-source triangulation, and the principle of Open-Source Cinema-establishes an evidentiary standard that paradoxically surpasses traditional documentary practice in its rigor and traceability. Fourth, the integration of AI-powered multimodal search technologies, including Video RAG pipelines and cross-modal alignment systems, has been shown to provide the practical infrastructure necessary for implementing the method at the scale demanded by contemporary media environments.

The author's research proposition has been illustrated through two primary case studies, but it has not been empirically proven in a comparative experimental sense. The Husky portrait and the Yellow Vests reconstruction demonstrate how the method can organize public digital traces into a coherent documentary structure. Further validation would require comparative analysis with conventionally produced films, expert review, audience reception studies, or a mixed methodology design measuring perceived authenticity, emotional legibility, source trust, and interpretive autonomy. The Husky portrait episode demonstrates how the convergence of self-representational, observational, and resonance layers produces a depth of character understanding that is unattainable through directed interview formats. The Yellow Vests event reconstruction illustrates how the aggregation of decentralized testimonies creates a historical record that is simultaneously more comprehensive and more verifiable than single-perspective reportage.

The practical significance of the methodology extends across multiple domains: documentary filmmaking, investigative journalism, educational historical projects, digital archiving, and new media formats. The method's applicability to contexts where subjects are dangerous or events are physically inaccessible-enabled by the "safety distance" principle-further broadens its utility in contemporary media production.

The limitations of this study should be acknowledged. The method's dependence on publicly available UGC introduces a selection bias toward events and subjects with significant digital footprints. Furthermore, the rapid evolution of platform policies regarding content access and metadata availability may affect the method's long-term viability. Future research should address the development of standardized protocols for UGC authentication in the context of advancing deepfake technologies, as well as the legal frameworks governing the use of public UGC in documentary works across different jurisdictions.

In its totality, the Decentralized Curatorial Documentary Method represents not merely a technical innovation but

an epistemological reorientation of documentary practice-a transition from the art of observation to the science of data, from the authority of the director to the agency of the viewer, and from the inevitability of manipulation to the possibility of transparent, verifiable truth.

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