

Hi everyone,

how can scientists be encouraged to not limit themselves to linear narrative structures? Let's learn from experts in Switzerland and in the Netherlands.

And what can be learned from the Online Journalism Awards 2019? Quite a lot, have a look!

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What's going on

Mostly explainers: FastForwardScience-Finalists 2019

On September 16, the German science communication organisation »Wissenschaft im Dialog« announced the finalists of its annual »FastForwardScience« web video competition.

The [Youtube list](#) contains 17 videos selected by a jury out of 120 submissions for the three categories »Substance«, »Scitainment« and »Vision«. The videos vary quite widely in topic, depth and originality. There is much less variation, however, in format and representation. Out of the 17 finalists, all but two can be described as explainer videos (as opposed to other formats like reportage, documentary, music clip etc.). Three are hosted on official university channels, the others are hosted and produced independently or by other organisations. Thirteen videos are *presenter formats* where facts, research projects, findings etc are presented by a host. Of these thirteen presenters, one is a women.

In addition to the three jury categories there is also the Community Award where viewers can support their favorites by commenting and liking the videos on Youtube. Voting is open until October 13, 2019. All winners will be announced on October 14, 2019. (kh)

Filmmaking courses for scientists help overcome linear narratives

As more scientists-as-filmmakers and other non-professional science filmmakers are emerging, the diversity in narrative structures and documentary modes has dropped significantly as can be seen for instance in the Fast Forward Science video selection 2019 (see previous article). Since the linear narrative of »Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion« (IMRAD) is predominant when communicating scientific work, scientists tend to apply this same narrative structure due to force of habit when making a video.

The same is true for the documentary modes poetic, expository, observational, participatory, reflexive and performative. Without training the expository mode which is closest to scientific narratives is chosen most often.

Two recent papers by Samer Angelone, Ramón C. Soriguer and Ana Melendo looked at whether filmmaking courses for scientist had any impact on the chosen narrative structure and the documentary mode for videos made by scientists. The answer is 'yes' in both cases, no matter what type of filmmaking course was attended as long as it entailed a lecture in narrative structures and documentary modes.

After the filmmaking course the documentary mode chosen for videos by the scientists shifted significantly. The expository mode fell by almost half, and surprisingly the poetic mode gained more than 70%.

For the narrative structure the authors write: »The filmmaking courses also dramatically increased the number of types of narratives that participants would consider using. Filmmaking courses for scientists help scientists-as-filmmakers make a clean break from linear narrative structures in favor of other more varied structures.«

The lead author of the studies, Samer Angelone, has affiliations with the University of Córdoba in Spain and the University of Zurich in Switzerland, and is the festival director of the [Global Science Film Festival](#). (sg)

Original sources:

Samer Angelone, Ramón C. Soriguer & Ana Melendo (2019):

»[Filmmaking courses for scientists help promote richer alternatives to chronological narratives](#)«, Studies in Higher Education, April 15, 2019

Samer Angelone, Ramón C. Soriguer & Ana Melendo (2019):

»[Modes of documentary films produced by the future generation of 'scientists-as-filmmakers'](#)«, International Journal of Science Education, Part B, August 24, 2019

Online Journalism Awards 2019: »Breathtaking« audiovisuals

In September, the [winners](#) of the international Online Journalism Awards 2019 were announced. And while we recommend taking a closer look around on the impressive field of all the winners and finalists, there is some very interesting audiovisual science journalism that we would like to point out to you.

»[Breathtaking](#)« by Undark Magazine won The AI Neuharth Innovation in Investigative Journalism Award, Small Newsroom. (Newsletter editors Kerstin and Sibylle worked with Undark for another project.) This web documentary series about air pollution comes with photographs and video by Larry C. Price. It's reported from around the globe, in cooperation with journalists from Bangladesh, Chile, China, India, Macedonia, Nigeria, and the US.

This is how the producers explain the project in their [nomination letter](#): »Doubters may still consider the impact of fossil fuels on the global climate to be abstract, diffuse, and uncertain, but these impacts are clear and present: People are dying.«

»It was our goal from the beginning to make this often-invisible topic impossible to ignore,« says Undark editor in chief Tom Zeller Jr. »By our reckoning, the best way to do that was to assemble some of the best visual documentarians working today, pair them with ambitious, deep-digging reporters on the ground in each country, and deliver to our visitors a data-rich, visually innovative, and narratively compelling series of investigations that could live on the web as a resource for years to come.«

I very much like and appreciate the long term view they are taking with this project. This is not intended as some visually attractive fodder for the 24hour news cycle, and it shows.

»[Gone in a generation](#)« by the Washington Post is a finalist in the [Digital Video](#)

[Storytelling](#) category. In four chapters – »Forests«, »Floods«, »Fires«, and »Fisheries« – it documents the impact of climate change on the daily lives of four American families. You may think you have heard this story a hundred times by now, but maybe not with this intensity. Images and sound work together here very strongly and create intimacy and urgency at the same time.

For innovative storytelling with data and data visualization I can always point you to »[The Pudding](#)« who won the [General Excellence Award for Micro Newsrooms](#). The people behind this digital magazine explore any kind of matter with data. One of the more »sciencey« projects is »[Human Terrain](#)«, a 3D visualization of the world's population, which looks simple at first sight, but is quite instructive if you dig a little deeper.

And finally: »[Visual Investigations](#)« by the [New York Times](#). It's not science, mostly, but very innovative in its use of online video sources for explanatory journalism and well worth a look or two. Or three. (kh)

Upcoming events

[Global Science Film Festival](#), November 15 to 17, 2019. The festival is held simultaneously in Bern and Zurich, Switzerland. The full program will be announced on October 1.

[Fast Forward Science 2019](#). German webvideo competition. Submission deadlines are over. Next events: Online-Voting for the Community Award until October 13. Announcement of competition winners: October 14. Award Ceremony: November 14, 2019, at State Studio Berlin.

[Hands-on Workshop for film students and filmmakers to learn about digital medicine and train an AI](#), October 2019, Cologne, Germany. Workshops are organized by the Fraunhofer-Institute MEVIS, Bremen, Germany, in cooperation with the Internationale Filmschule Köln (International Film School Cologne). No exact date known to date.

[PariScience 2019](#), October 10 to 30, 2019, Paris, France. Find information about this 15th edition on the French part of the website (the English version is still not up to date).

[Imagine Science Films](#), October 18 to 25, 2019, New York, United States. The 2019 event's theme is »Emergence, ..., the ability of simple parts, acting together, to give rise to complicated properties unobserved in the parts alone.« Famous examples for emergence: life and consciousness. Imagine Science Films also organizes worldwide [satellite events](#).

[InScience](#), International science film festival, November 6 to 10, 2019, Nijmegen, The Netherlands. This edition will be »about genetically modified organisms: organisms created by methods that alter the DNA, including CRISPR gene editing«.

Videos only look good if you watch them

When the »voice of god« is missing, emotions engage and curiosity is sparked

As we were writing about alternative documentary modes (see above), we chose

two videos for you that have left the expository mode («voice of God« mode) behind and instead opted for poetic and observational. These videos make clear that commentary is not needed to convey information. Especially not when there is so much to see!



**»Becoming«
by Jan van IJken**

When we experience or observe something ourselves it is often easier for us to learn and remember it. This is the strength of this poetic observational video by Jan van IJken that has no commentary.

Thank god! When not talked to death we ourselves start to get emotionally involved and our curiosity is sparked as we wonder: These dividing cells I see, what are they? What will they turn into?

What a joy to actually experience the wonder of »becoming« and not just be told to experience the wonder!



**»The comet«
by Christian Stangl with a sound track by Wolfgang Stangl**

Video poetry as a means to spark interest in science at its best. But what about the information? Do we *know* everything about the comet after five minutes? No, much better, we are emotionally engaged and willing to dive into the links left for us in the text box and start exploring! (sg)

»Science & Video« is a newsletter for science communicators. In »Science & Video« [Thilo Körkel](#) (tk), [Kerstin Hoppenhaus](#) (kh) und [Sibylle Grunze](#) (sg) pool their long-standing expertise in the field of science communication and moving images. We joyfully welcome the effects of digital disruption, are committed to defending high quality standards, and hope to be part of a future in which science communication via digital media has an increasingly powerful impact on society. Contact us at thilo.koerkel@nature.com, hoppenhaus@hgmedien.com, grunze@hgmedien.com.

IMPRESSUM

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