

Video-Observation: A Phenomenological Research Tool for International Relation?

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Abstract : International Relations is an academic discipline which is rarely in direct contact with its field. However, there has in recent years been a growing interest in the different agents within and beyond the state and their associated practices; yet some of the research tools with which to study them are not widely used. This paper introduces video-observation as a method for the study of IR and argues that it offers a unique way of studying the complexity of the everyday context of actors. The paper is divided into two main parts: First, the philosophical and methodological underpinnings of the kind of data that video-observation produces are discussed; primarily through a discussion of the phenomenology of Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty. Second, taking simulation of a WTO negotiation round as an example, the paper discusses how the data created can be analysed: in particular with regard to the structure of events, the temporal and spatial organization of activities, rhythm and periodicity, and the concrete role of artefacts and documents. The paper concludes with a discussion of the ontological, epistemological, and practical challenges and limitations that ought to be considered if video-observation is chosen as a method within the field of IR.

Keywords : video-observation, phenomenology, international relations

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