



Processes of Legitimation: 10 Years of Mobile Images (2005-2015)

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École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales

ARTS ET LANGAGES

Gaby David

Processes of Legitimation: 10 Years of Mobile Images

Thèse de doctorat

Sous la direction de Giovanni Careri & André Gunthert

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Processus de légitimation : 10 années d'images mobiles

Résumé en version française

Table de matières

Résumé.....	ii
Introduction	
État de l'art : Images mobiles, études et taxonomies	iii
Contexte et chronologie de la recherche	xvii
Résumé de la thèse, études de cas et méthodologie.....	xxix
Première partie : Le processus de légitimation des photos mobiles	
Les années expérimentales : émergence des artistes et journalistes citoyens	xxiv
Deuxième partie : Quand les images mobiles deviennent ordinaires - la prise de pouvoir des utilisateurs sur le processus d'auto-légitimation	
De la reconnaissance entre pairs à l'auto-validation	xxxiii
Conclusion générale	xxxix

Résumé

Comment la production et la consommation d'images mobiles privées, vernaculaires, passent-elles d'une relative confidentialité à une large exposition médiatique, voire à un habitus généralisé, véritable phénomène social ? Avec l'accroissement de l'utilisation de ces images mobiles dans la vie quotidienne, comment et où ces effets ont-ils été perçus ?

Afin de comprendre les mécanismes qui ont conduit à construire l'acceptation sociale de l'image mobile, la thèse de Gaby David explore les processus de légitimation et de validation que l'imagerie mobile a subis entre 2005 et 2015.

Processus de légitimation : 10 années d'images mobiles, tente de retracer l'histoire récente des processus de légitimation de ces images en la divisant en deux grandes périodes. La première partie, structurale, comporte une double étude des processus de construction et de légitimation de ce phénomène par le biais de diverses industries culturelles, artistiques ou médiatiques - notamment à travers une analyse ethnographique du festival Pocket Films, appuyée ensuite sur une série d'études de cas des images mobiles dans les circuits institutionnels de l'information.

La deuxième partie se concentre sur l'étude de la validation faite par les groupes de pairs, comme dans le cas des communautés de pratiques, ou quand les images mobiles deviennent ordinaires : y est mise en évidence la prise de pouvoir des utilisateurs sur le processus d'auto-légitimation. Enfin, une auto-ethnographie, réflexion sur les propres pratiques de l'auteure observées rétrospectivement, révèle comment la pratique des selfies a stimulé les échanges instantanés et

Mots clés : affects, culture visuelle, dispositifs, ethnographie, études culturelles, films de poche, images mobiles, légitimation, mobile, pratiques, selfie, vernaculaire.

Introduction

État de l'art : Images mobiles, études et taxinomies

En 2010, tentant de démontrer que les choses n'avaient pas tellement changé, Villi, dans sa thèse de doctorat, cite les propos tenus par Goggin des années auparavant : « La culture mobile est considérée comme futile, vulgaire et relevant de la culture de masse. Elle est donc boudée par la recherche ».¹ Néanmoins, au cours des cinq dernières années, la recherche dans le domaine des Études Mobiles n'a cessé de se développer et diversifier. La raison en est l'indéniable augmentation du taux de pénétration et de la popularité de ce médium. Le *tournant mobile* a laissé place à une véritable discipline ayant son propre objet, et qui brasse des concepts comme l'identité, l'intimité, l'individualisme et le collectif. Le style de vie et les relations techno-sociétales en ligne et hors ligne sont devenus manifestes au quotidien, tout en étant en passe d'être reflétés et concrétisés pratiquement à chaque instant de nos vies.

Cet état de l'art fait le tour (de la première et deuxième génération) des chercheurs universitaires qui tentent de comprendre les pratiques visuelles qu'ont facilitées les téléphones portables. Mais le nombre de chercheurs qui s'intéressent aux Études Mobiles demeure bien plus restreint que celui des spécialistes en Études Internet, Études des médias ou encore en anthropologie numérique. Cinq foyers de recherche en Études Mobiles ont initié : un foyer japonais et coréen, autour de chercheurs dont la réputation n'est plus à faire, tels qu'Okabe, Okada et Lee ; un foyer finlandais, qui compte Battarbee, Koskinen, Kurvinen, Kindberg, Mäkela, Rantavuo, Sarvas, Spasojevic, Oksman et Villi ; un troisième foyer, en Amérique du Nord cette fois-ci, mené par Aakhus, Katz, Davis, Van House, Edwards, Miller, Lillie, Caron et Caronia, et Ito ; un foyer européen, comprenant des chercheurs français, espagnols, allemands, hongrois, anglais et italiens, dont les grands noms sont Allard, de Gournay,

¹ Villi, M. (2010). *Visual mobile communication: Camera phone photo messages as ritual communication and mediated presence*, (Thèse de Doctorat). Helsinki: Aalto University School of Art and Design, p. 25 cite Goggin, G. (2006). *Cell Phone Culture: Mobile Technology in Everyday Life*. London: Routledge, p. 206.

Frohlich, Fortunatti, Gomez-Cruz, Licoppe, Ling, Lasén, Martin, Rivière, Scifo, Nyíri et Von-Pape. Enfin, le dernier foyer, mais non le moindre, est l'école océanienne, dirigée par Goggin et Hjorth, et dans laquelle nous retrouvons Horst, Chesher, Grace, Gye, Burgess, Palmer et Richardson, et enfin Schleser.²

Il existe de fait des spécialistes qui n'appartiennent à aucun de ces pôles et qui se considèrent comme des ethnographes numériques ayant un intérêt pour les sujets mobiles. Mais les cinq foyers géographiques que je viens de citer englobent les chercheurs que je considère comme constituant la première et la deuxième génération d'universitaires travaillant dans le domaine de l'image mobile. Cet inventaire initial montre combien la recherche dans ce domaine est dépendante de l'influence géopolitique du développement industriel, des investissements économiques et de subventions industrielles ou de bourses et subventions de l'État. La conséquence est que la plupart des articles publiés par les chercheurs susmentionnés portent sur des analyses de données empiriques et ethnographiques de petite envergure (micro ethnographie). Cet état de fait confirme bien que les études à grande échelle sont majoritairement, sinon exclusivement, réalisées et financées par l'industrie des télécommunications, et ne peuvent être entreprises par des chercheurs disposant d'un modeste budget universitaire. Il n'empêche que, du fait que l'Internet mobile est en croissance constante, les budgets de recherche augmenteront peut-être, ce qui pourrait changer la donne et rendre la recherche elle-même plus mobile, moins locale, et plus globale.

Quelques travaux constituent le fondement de la réflexion sur les images mobiles. Ils ont dégagé les concepts structurants des Études Mobiles visuelles et de la création d'images mobiles avant de les développer plus profondément. La taxinomie de Frohlich,³ notamment, classe ce que font les gens avec leurs photos d'après deux paires d'opposés : *ici* ou *là* d'une part, et *maintenant* ou *plus tard* de l'autre. Il en tire ainsi quatre catégories : le « visionnage à distance », l'« envoi », le « stockage » et le « partage en coprésence ». L'opposition *ici/là* fait référence au fait de vouloir partager un même espace physique, de permettre à l'autre de voir ce que je vois et de lui permettre de visualiser l'endroit où je me trouve. Quant à l'opposition

² Je souhaite d'emblée présenter mes excuses à tout chercheur dont j'aurais omis de mentionner le nom.

³ Frohlich, D., Kuchinsky, A., Pering, C., Don, A. & Ariss, S. (2002). Requirements for Photoware, in ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work, Nov. 16-20, 2002, *ACM Press*, pp. 166-175.

maintenant/plus tard, elle se réfère au temps réel et à l'archivage, qui sont les deux perspectives principales du partage de données mobiles.

Les Finlandais Ilpo Koskinen et Esko Kurvinen font partie des premiers universitaires à avoir érigé l'étude des médias mobiles au rang de nouveau champ de recherche, grâce à leurs études de cas remarquables portant sur les images mobiles.⁴ L'article de Kurvinen, *Only when Miss Universe snatches me: Teasing in MMS messaging* (2003), a inspiré mon dernier chapitre – auto-ethnographique – et en constitue le cadre empirique et théorique : dans une perspective similaire, j'étudie comment les « images mobiles permettent d'entretenir la conversation »⁵, suivant une mécanique d'échange assez « intersubjective »⁶, informelle, très personnelle et relevant du cercle intime.⁷ L'article incontournable d'Okabe et Ito, *Camera phones changing the definition of picture-worthy*⁸, illustre bien le fait que la conception de ce qui vaut d'être photographié ou non évolue constamment depuis que les utilisateurs ont commencé à accorder de l'importance à des objets ou instants relevant de la vie quotidienne – et non plus seulement à des événements marquants, comme les anniversaires ou les vacances.

Pour mieux cerner ces pratiques d'utilisation, Kindberg et al. ont mis au point une taxonomie basée sur les raisons pour lesquelles on prend des photos avec un caméraphone.⁹ Ces chercheurs ont remarqué que le phénomène s'articule sur un axe double : un premier axe sur lequel l'« émotionnel » s'oppose au « fonctionnel », et un second axe sur lequel le « social » s'oppose à l'« individuel ».¹⁰ Van House et al. ont recours à une classification différente de

⁴ Koskinen, I. & Kurvinen, E. (2002). Messages visuels mobiles. Nouvelle technologie et interaction. *Réseaux: communication, technologie, société*, N° 112-113, pp. 107-138; Koskinen, I. & Kurvinen, E. (2005). Mobile Multimedia and Users: On the Domestication of Mobile Multimedia. *Teletronikk*, 3/4, pp. 60-68. Retrieved from <http://www.telenor.com/teletronikk/volumes/front.php>

⁵ Kurvinen, E. (2003). Only When Miss Universe Snatches Me. Teasing in MMS Messaging. *Proceeding of Designing Pleasurable Products and Interfaces DPPI03*, June 23–26, 2003, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA. p. 101.

⁶ Berger, P. L. & Luckmann, T. (1967). *The Social Construction of Reality, A Treatise in Sociology of Knowledge*. New York: A Doubleday Anchor book. (First published in 1996).

⁷ de Gournay, C. (2002). Pretense of Intimacy in France. In *Perpetual Contact: Mobile Communication, Private Talk, Public Performance*, J. E. Katz & M. Aakhus. (Eds.), (pp. 193–205), Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, p. 202.

⁸ Ito, M. & Okabe D. (2003). Camera phones changing the definition of picture-worthy. *Japan Media Review*. Retrieved from <http://www.ojr.org/japan/wireless/1062208524.php>, accessed May 17, 2005.

⁹ Kindberg, T., Spasojevic, M., Fleck, R., & Sellen, A. (2004). How and Why People Use Camera Phones. *Consumer Applications and Systems Laboratory, HP Laboratories Bristol*, HPL-2004-216 November 26, 2004. Retrieved from <http://www.hpl.hp.com/techreports/2004/HPL-2004-216.pdf>

¹⁰ Kindberg, T., Spasojevic, M., Fleck, R. & Sellen, A. (2005). I Saw This and Thought of You: Some Social Uses of Camera Phones. In *Extended Abstracts of the Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI*

l'utilisation de la photographie privée dans le cercle social : leurs critères sont la création et le maintien de relations sociales, la constitution d'une mémoire individuelle ou collective, et enfin la présentation de soi et l'expression personnelle.¹¹ Après cela, Van House a réalisé une autre étude avec Davis, cette fois-ci sur l'utilisation du téléphone portable, qui peut être outil de capture de souvenirs, outil de communication ou encore outil d'expression.¹²

D'autres travaux ethnographiques déterminants dans l'étude des mœurs liées aux caméraphones, tels ceux de Mizuko Ito et Daisuke Okabe¹³ au Japon, et Dong-Hoo Lee en Corée (2005), décrivent l'influence du sexe et de l'âge sur la façon dont nous organisons et partageons nos photos. Quant à Hjorth, elle s'est basée sur l'article de Dong-Hoo Lee¹⁴ à propos du pouvoir émancipateur que les caméraphones offrent aux femmes pour analyser le rôle du contexte au sens large.¹⁵ En 2006, Risto Sarvas a écrit sa thèse de doctorat sur la photographie mobile et les métadonnées.¹⁶ Il y fait référence aux travaux de 2005 d'Ulkuniemi sur les quatre fonctions traditionnelles du cliché instantané : fonction de renseignement, de création de lien, d'interaction ou de construction de l'image de soi. Il fait également remarquer que les appareils photo les plus vendus au monde sont ceux qui sont intégrés à un téléphone portable, puis propose d'élargir la définition de photographie instantanée, comme l'avait déjà fait Chalfen en 1987,¹⁷ afin d'y intégrer la notion de « *snapshot media* ». ¹⁸ Citant Sarvas et

2005), Portland, Oregon, April 2–7, 2005. New York: ACM Press, pp. 1545–1548.

¹¹ Van House, N., Davis, M., Ames, M., Finn, M. & Viswanathan, V. (2005). The Uses of Personal Networked Digital Imaging: An Empirical Study of Cameraphone Photos and Sharing. In *Extended abstracts of the Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI 2005)* in Portland, Oregon, April 2–7, 2005. New York: ACM Press, pp. 1853–1856.

¹² Van House, N. & Davis, M. (2005). *The Social Life of Camera phone Images*. Paper presented at Ubicomp 2005 workshop on Pervasive Image Capture and Sharing: New Social Practices and Implications for Technology. Tokyo, Japan, September 11, 2005. Retrieved from <http://people.ischool.berkeley.edu/~vanhouse/Van%20House,%20Davis%20-%20The%20Social%20Life%20of%20Cameraphone%20Images.pdf>

¹³ Ito, M. (2005). Intimate Visual Co-Presence. Paper presented at Ubicomp 2005 Workshop on Pervasive Image Capture and Sharing: New Social Practices and Implications for Technology. Tokyo, Japan; Ito, M. & Okabe D. (2003). Camera phones changing the definition of picture-worthy. Japan Media Review. Retrieved from <http://www.ojr.org/japan/wireless/1062208524.php>, accessed May 17, 2005.

¹⁴ Lee, D-H. (2005). Women's Creation of Cameraphone Culture, Fibreculture Journal, issue 6: mobility. Retrieved from <http://six.fibreculturejournal.org/fcj-038-womens-creation-of-camera-phone-culture/>

¹⁵ Hjorth, L. (2006). Playing at being mobile: Gaming, cute culture and mobile devices in South Korea, The Fibreculture Journal, issue 8, gaming networks. Retrieved from http://journal.fibreculture.org/issue8/issue8_hjorth.html

¹⁶ Sarvas, R. (2006). Designing User-Centric Metadata for Digital Snapshot Photography, (Thèse de doctorat). Helsinki: Helsinki University of Technology and Helsinki Institute for Information Technology HIIT, p. 26. Retrieved from <http://lib.tkk.fi/Diss/2006/isbn9512284448/>

¹⁷ Ma définition d'« instantané » est celle de photographie « faite maison » et « informelle », dont la fonction principale est de « conserver une trace des moments heureux ou agréables qui ponctuent notre vie et celle de nos

Vihavainen (2006), Sarvas lui-même appelle « *snapshot media* » les images, photographies, vidéos, enregistrements sonores et textes créés par des amateurs pour des usages non-commerciaux et des raisons non-artistiques. Il élargit également cette classification aux appareils de consommation lambda, ordinateurs et logiciels de traitement d'image. Parmi les recherches plus approfondies, c'est à Robinson et Robinson,¹⁹ ainsi qu'à Goggin,²⁰ que l'on doit l'analyse des notions indispensables à l'étude du rôle du téléphone portable aussi bien dans le journalisme citoyen que dans les médias de masse. C'est dans cette perspective que mon deuxième chapitre se concentre sur l'étude détaillée de la fonction des images mobiles dans le journalisme sérieux et sur les discours tenus – ou non – dans les médias traditionnels à propos des médias mobiles. Par discours, je souscris entièrement à la définition de Hall :

Un discours est un ensemble de déclarations constituant un langage (c'est-à-dire un moyen de représenter) qui permet de parler d'un certain type de connaissances sur un sujet donné. Lorsque les déclarations sur ce sujet sont faites au sein d'un discours particulier, ce discours influe sur la construction du sujet. Mais, ce faisant, il limite également les autres moyens par lesquels le sujet peut être construit. Un discours ne consiste pas en une seule déclaration, mais en plusieurs déclarations qui s'articulent entre elles pour former ce que le sociologue français Michel Foucault (1926-1984) appelle une « formation discursive ». ²¹

Miller et Edwards se sont demandé quels effets le passage au partage de photos sur Internet pouvait avoir sur les pratiques des utilisateurs. Ils se sont notamment interrogés sur la question

proches ». D'après Chalfen (1987), cité dans Cruz et Meyer (2012) page 7.

¹⁸ Chalfen, R. « La photo de famille et ses usages communicationnels », *Études photographiques*, 32, Printemps 2015, mis en ligne le 24 juillet 2015. URL : <http://etudesphotographiques.revues.org/3502>

¹⁹ Robinson, W. & Robinson, D. J. (2006). Tsunami Mobilizations: Considering the Role of Mobile and Digital Communication Devices, Citizen Journalism, and the Mass Media. In A. Kavoori & N. Arceneaux (Eds.). *The Cell Phone Reader: Essays in Social Transformation*, (pp. 85-103). New York: Peter Lang Publishers.

²⁰ Goggin, G. (2012). The iPhone and Communication. In L. Hjorth, J. Burgess & I. Richardson, (Eds.). *Studying mobile media: cultural technologies, mobile communication, and the iPhone*, pp. 11- 27. New York, NY: Routledge.

²¹ Hall, S. (1992). What is a "discourse"? The West and the Rest: Discourse and power. *The Indigenous Experience: Global Perspectives*, pp. 165-173. Retrieved from <https://analepsis.files.wordpress.com/2013/08/hall-west-the-rest.pdf>

suivante : « le fait de partager des photos avec des inconnus engendre-t-il l'apparition de nouveaux modes de socialisation ? »²² Ils concluent que le fait de partager ou non dépend fortement du degré d'intimité entre les utilisateurs. Aujourd'hui encore, de nombreux utilisateurs sont conscients de cet enjeu et peuvent être réticents à partager leurs photos du fait qu'ils ne maîtrisent pas les paramètres de confidentialité.

Dans son livre de 2007, *Mobile multimedia in action*, Koskinen évalue les retombées des MMS privés sur la vie quotidienne des utilisateurs. Dans mon quatrième chapitre, je me penche sur les malentendus qui peuvent survenir lors de l'envoi ou de la réception de MMS, même entre deux personnes très proches. Dans ce chapitre, je fais écho à l'excellent panorama des études mobiles visuelles qu'a dressé Heli Rantavuo dans sa thèse de doctorat en 2008.²³ D'après elle, pour les participants, plusieurs éléments rendent significatives les photos prises avec des caméraphones et leur utilisation : leur interprétation personnelle, les moyens de production et de partage des photos, mais aussi la possibilité d'établir des comparaisons et des liens avec d'autres formes de photographie ou d'autres moyens de communication.²⁴ Le Finlandais Mikko Villi, lui, est l'auteur d'une thèse très complète qui explore « quelles conventions et pratiques communicationnelles mobiles sous-tendent l'utilisation de photos dans les échanges interpersonnels par caméraphone ».²⁵ Il insiste notamment sur le concept de « *mediated presence* » et défend l'idée qu'il est pertinent « d'intégrer le téléphone portable en tant qu'outil de communication à l'étude des communications visuelles, notamment dans le contexte de la communication interpersonnelle ».²⁶ Je recommande également la lecture de l'état de l'art très complet qu'il a réalisé du champ d'étude de l'imagerie mobile.

Même depuis la multiplication des sites de partage de photos et de vidéos, on constate qu'au début les chercheurs se sont peu intéressés à l'étude de la photographie mobile en ligne, ou plutôt il faudrait dire que peu de chercheurs se sont sentis intéressés par la question de la

²² Miller, A. & Edwards, W. (2007). Give and take: a study of consumer photo-sharing culture and practice. In *proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, San Jose, California, USA, April 28 - May 03, 2007. ACM Press: New York, pp. 347-356.

²³ Rantavuo, H. (2008). *Connecting Photos: A Qualitative Study Of Cameraphone Photo Use*, (Thèse de doctorat). Helsinki: Taideteollinen korkeakoulu. Publication Series of the University of Art and Design, A, N°. 88, Helsinki, Finlande, pp. 19-21.

²⁴ Ibid. p. 23.

²⁵ Villi, M. (2010). *Visual mobile communication: Camera phone photo messages as ritual communication and mediated presence*, (Thèse de doctorat). Helsinki: Aalto University School of Art and Design.

²⁶ Ibid. p. 26.

composante affective des modes de partage, sauf dans le cadre des Affect Studies. Malheureusement, parmi les travaux que j'ai mentionnés, bien peu établissent un lien entre imagerie mobile et notions d'intimité et d'éphémère. Hormis la plupart des études de Kindberg et Van House (qui concernent effectivement les usages des téléphones portables, l'intimité et les enregistrements vidéo), la plupart des chercheurs mentionnés ci-dessus souhaitaient, à mon avis, rester aussi objectifs que possible. Cependant, les images mobiles sont très personnelles, et donc très subjectives. Par conséquent, elles sont au cœur d'enjeux trop complexes pour être correctement compris et catégorisés. Deux points ont particulièrement retenu l'attention des chercheurs en Études Mobiles, c'est pourquoi je les développe dans cet état de l'art : premièrement, le thème de *conversation* et *connexité*, et, deuxièmement, les concepts de *réseau* et d'*emplacement*. Je vais commencer par mentionner les articles et ouvrages incontournables, puis les études réalisées après le boom des applications et, enfin, j'espère aller plus loin en ajoutant ma propre contribution.

Les spécialistes des Etudes Mobiles qui ont tenté de théoriser certains des thèmes essentiels de ce champ – comme les notions de connecté/non-connecté, de sphère privée/publique et de présence/absence – se sont heurtés à un grand nombre de dichotomies conceptuelles difficiles à démêler les unes des autres. Avec le temps, ces dichotomies se sont avérées être plutôt des dualités. En 2003, le sociologue français Christian Licoppe s'est attaqué à la conceptualisation des principaux types d'interaction mobile en réseau. Il a défini deux notions essentielles autour desquelles tournent les habitudes téléphoniques des utilisateurs avec leurs proches : le mode « connecté » et les pratiques « conversationnelles ».²⁷ Il décrit cette « présence connectée »²⁸ comme constituée d'échanges SMS courts, mais fréquents et très phatiques. Ces échanges, du fait qu'ils sont réalisables « n'importe où, n'importe quand »²⁹, ont un caractère rassurant pour les utilisateurs. D'autre part, il définit le « mode conversationnel »³⁰ comme un type d'échange plus développé, qui ne se conclut jamais et qui est également plus profond et plus personnel.

²⁷ Licoppe, C. (2003). Two modes of maintaining interpersonal relations through telephone: From the domestic to the mobile phone. In J. Katz (Ed.). *Machines that become us: The social context of communication technology* (pp. 171–186). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

Les échanges sont occasionnels, mais procurent eux aussi ce sentiment de « présence en ligne ».³¹

Le début des pratiques conversationnelles sur téléphone portable remonte à l'apparition des communications médiées par ordinateur, en temps réel ou non. Elles peuvent être réalisées sur des réseaux d'utilisateurs, des plateformes d'échange, des forums ou encore par courriel et messagerie instantanée. L'histoire de ces pratiques est essentiellement le fruit des travaux de chercheurs américains en communication, notamment des spécialistes des Communications Médiées par Ordinateur pionniers dans le domaine. Il en découle que les comportements relatifs aux conversations et à la connexité mobile sur lesquels Licoppe fonde sa démonstration théorique sont ceux liés aux textos et aux appels vocaux, pratiques qui, comme le fait remarquer Campbell, demeurent les plus répandues en 2015.³² Autre spécialiste française, Valérie Beaudouin n'a pas manqué de faire remarquer que la pratique du *chat*, qui était jusqu'alors considérée comme relevant exclusivement de l'oralité, pouvait à présent également se produire en ligne et à l'écrit grâce aux nouveaux supports numériques. Elle ajoute que la publication et les messages de *chat* en ligne sont devenus visibles simultanément.³³ Selon elle cela « conduit à un rapprochement inédit entre des activités autrefois fortement distinctes : la publication du message et la réponse ».

En ce qui concerne les images, selon Bescart et al., la notion d'« image conversationnelle »³⁴ fait référence au fait que, sur des sites tels que Flickr ou Facebook, il est possible de partager des photos, de les commenter et d'en discuter. La linguiste Naomi Baron pose la question suivante : « Est-ce que la technologie mobile redéfinit la parole, l'écriture ou la lecture ? »³⁵ Elle ne parle que de trois des compétences linguistiques de base, sans se demander ce qu'il en est des moyens de communication *audiovisuels*. *A contrario*, la sociologue italienne Barbara Scifo a été l'une des premières à affirmer que les MMS « ... signalent très clairement

³¹ Ibid.

³² Campbell, S.W. (2015). Mobile communication and network privatism: A literature review of the implications for diverse, weak, and new ties. *Review of Communication Research*, 3(1): pp. 1-21.

³³ Beaudouin, V. (2002). De la publication à la conversation. Lecture et écriture électroniques. *Réseaux* 6/2002, (n°116), pp. 199-225. Retrieved from <http://www.cairn.info/revue-reseaux-2002-6-page-199.htm>

³⁴ Bescart, S. et al. (2009). Pourquoi partager mes photos de vacances avec des inconnus? Les usages de Flickr. *Réseaux* (n° 154). Retrieved from <http://www.liafa.univ-paris-diderot.fr/~prieur/Publis/beuscart-et-al-flickr-reseaux-2009.pdf>

³⁵ Baron, N. S. (2013). Do mobile technologies reshape speaking, writing, or reading?. *Mobile Media & Communication*, 1(1), pp. 134-140.

l'avènement d'une culture de communication bien précise et la naissance d'un nouveau langage ».³⁶ C'est bien ce que Daniel Rubinstein avait également pressenti dans son article *Cellphone photography ; the death of the camera and the arrival of visible speech*.³⁷ Pour remettre en perspective les propos des deux chercheurs par rapport à ces nouveaux motifs culturels, il aura fallu dix ans de progrès technologiques avant que nous ne puissions aujourd'hui finalement constater que le « discours visible »³⁸ de Rubinstein est bien devenu une réalité. Il est même (parfois) en train de se faire *invisible*, comme je vais tenter de le démontrer. Gunthert affirme que « la photographie est *en ce moment même* en train d'accéder au rang de langage universel, sous nos propres yeux ». ³⁹ Les images mobiles deviennent de surcroît des éléments appartenant au registre du bavardage. En ce qui me concerne, j'irais même jusqu'à dire que Baron a oublié de prendre en compte l'un des plus saillants changements d'ordre socio-technologique et culturel qui sont actuellement en train de restructurer les modes de communication linguistique élémentaires : elle a laissé de côté la communication iconique ; c'est pourquoi je m'inscris plus dans la lignée de Scifo, Gunthert et Bescart. De plus, je ferais figurer parmi les nouveaux canaux de communication *toutes* les formes de communication mobile audiovisuelle : non seulement les photos et vidéos, mais encore les gifs, emojis et autres émoticônes, etc. Tous ces éléments qui, finalement, sont en train de constituer la matrice de ce nouveau type de communication visuelle, que l'on peut aussi qualifier de langage.

Des études comme celles de Sarvas et Frohlich ont aussi mis en lumière les multiples façons dont la *conversation* transite vers une forme de *connexité*. Dans leur livre *From snapshots to social media : The changing picture of domestic photography*, ces deux chercheurs établissent la chronologie du phénomène, qu'ils font débiter aux albums photo imprimés, lesquels avaient une fonction sociale et interactive. Ils nous rappellent aussi que ces albums servaient de divertissement et permettaient d'alimenter les conversations.⁴⁰ Je reprends aussi deux articles clés : celui de Palmer, *Mediating Visions of Social Space*, et celui de Chesher, *Between image and information : the iPhone camera in the history of photography*. Pour Palmer, il y a deux raisons

³⁶ Scifo, B. (2005). The domestication of camera-phone and MMS communication: The early experiences of young Italians. In: Nyíri K. (Ed.). *A Sense of Place: The Global and the Local in Mobile Communication*. Vienna: Passagen Verlag, pp. 363–374.

³⁷ Rubinstein, D. (2005). Cellphone photography; The death of the camera and the arrival of visible speech. *The Issues in Contemporary Culture and Aesthetics*, 1, pp. 113–118.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Gunthert, A. (2015). *L'Image partagée. La photographie numérique*. Paris: Textuel. Je souligne.

⁴⁰ Sarvas, R., & Frohlich, D. (2011). *From snapshots to social media: The changing picture of domestic photography*. R. Harper (Ed.). Springer-Verlag.

principales au succès de l'appareil photo de l'iPhone et de ses spécificités, phénomène d'ailleurs essentiel à la compréhension de cette notion d'*image connectée*. La première explication porte sur la qualité de l'écran tactile haute résolution couleur de l'iPhone et de *l'expérience* photographique qui lui est liée. Palmer décrit tout le processus : l'animation imitant un obturateur avec le bruit qui l'accompagne et l'effet « pellicule », mais ce sont surtout les dernières étapes du processus qui doivent retenir notre attention. Elles comprennent l'envoi de la photo par courriel ou MMS, son association à un contact précis, sa modification, son utilisation comme fond d'écran, son partage sur Twitter et son impression. Ces actions relevant de l'iPhotographie sont exécutées comme des jeux, et, d'après Palmer, donnent à l'utilisateur « l'impression saisissante que le monde est là, à portée de consommation visuelle ».⁴¹ Par conséquent, ce qui est très radical dans ce concept développé avec l'iPhone, c'est que la photographie est plus envisagée comme relevant de l'information que de la représentation. Le capteur photographique de l'iPhone n'est qu'une de ses nombreuses « options de collecte d'information ».⁴²

Chesher, qui reprend les théories initiales du théoricien des médias Lev Manovich, fait en outre remarquer que l'« Univers iPhone » relève plus de la tradition informatique (information, bases de données et transformations algorithmiques) que de celle de la photographie argentique ou numérique et des caméraphones. D'après lui, la photo amateur devient immédiatement transformable, transmissible, *transcodable* et *indexable* au moyen de *tags* en temps réel.⁴³ De ce fait, l'iPhone réalise pour lui bien plus qu'une simple réinvention de la photo amateur : il le décrit comme un objet technologique perturbateur, qui crée un tout nouveau marché ainsi qu'un réseau de valeurs, et qui finit par remplacer les appareils photo traditionnels. Dans ce cas précis, l'iPhonéographie – ou, pour employer un terme moins lié à la marque, la photographie mobile en général – a contribué à enrichir le genre photographique de manière imprévue : en concevant le produit pour une autre catégorie de

⁴¹ Palmer, D. (2012). iPhone photography: Mediating visions of social space. In L. Hjorth, J. Burgess & I. Richardson (Eds.). *Studying mobile media: cultural technologies, mobile communication, and the iPhone* (pp. 85–97). New York, NY: Routledge, p. 87.

⁴² Ibid., p. 90.

⁴³ Chesher, C. (2012). Between image and information: the iPhone camera in the history of photography. In L. Hjorth, J. Burgess, I. Richardson (Eds.). *Studying Mobile Media: Cultural Technologies, Mobile Communication, and the iPhone* (pp. 98–117). New York, NY: Routledge, p. 99.

consommateurs dans un premier temps, puis en provoquant une baisse des prix sur le marché existant.⁴⁴

En 2005, l'ouvrage incontournable *Personal, Portable and Pedestrian*⁴⁵ proposait la triade « partager, enregistrer, conserver » pour résumer les complexes activités de coprésence qui s'agencent à travers les images mobiles. En 2012, pleine ère du smartphone, Chesher a proposé une nouvelle triade : « transformer, traduire, transmettre ». ⁴⁶ Je souhaite à présent, grâce à cette thèse, en proposer une troisième, pour aller encore plus loin. Dernièrement, le monde de l'imagerie mobile peut être caractérisé par la triade « expérimentation, exaltation et pratiques éphémères ». ⁴⁷ L'expérimentation est la motivation derrière tous les gestes qui font intervenir les sens, notamment parler, voir, regarder, envoyer, toucher, entendre, *liker*, commenter, pincer l'écran ou faire glisser son doigt dessus, etc. L'exaltation fait référence au sentiment provoqué par l'attente, qui nourrit le désir de prendre des photos et vidéos, donc d'enregistrer notre vie à mesure qu'elle se déroule, mais aussi d'être hyper-connecté en temps réel et d'obtenir, d'exiger et même d'avoir besoin de réponses instantanées. Les pratiques éphémères,⁴⁸ enfin, représentent tout ce qui ne dure qu'un court instant – tous ces échanges sont transitoires, très brefs et possiblement terre-à-terre ou banal – comme un échange oral, finalement, avant d'être emportés dans le flux de nouveaux contenus.

⁴⁴ Gunthert, A. (Nov. 2009). Shared Images: How the Internet Has Transformed the Image Economy. *Études photographiques*, N°24, pp. 182-209. En ligne <http://etudesphotographiques.revues.org/2832>; Chesher, C. (2012). Op. cit.

⁴⁵ Ito, M., Okabe, D., & Matsuda, M. (Eds.). (2005). *Personal, portable, pedestrian: Mobile phones in Japanese life*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

⁴⁶ Chesher, C., Op. cit.

⁴⁷ Je suis consciente que ce concept de « partage des expériences » n'est pas nouveau, puisqu'il a été esquissé en 2005 par le Centre de Recherche de Palo Alto (PARC), qui affirmait alors que la sensation de « partage des expériences » pourrait provenir du fait de faire intervenir le partage de photo dans un cadre conversationnel explicite, ce à quoi ne se prête pas forcément très bien le mode de conversation synchrone. Le PARC suggérait alors « un mode de partage qui incite les utilisateurs à s'exprimer au moyen d'images et non pas à propos d'elles ». (In Aoki, P., Szymanski, M. & Woodruff, A. (2005). Turning from image sharing to experience sharing. In First Workshop on "Pervasive Image Capture and Sharing: New Social Practices and Implications for Technology" (PICS), Ubicomp.).

⁴⁸ Murray définit la photographie instantanée comme « une pratique qui regarde le monde d'un œil urbain et qui explore notamment sa relation à la décadence, à l'aliénation, au kitsch, mais aussi à sa capacité à voir la beauté dans la trivialité. Certains affirment même qu'elle constitue un nouveau genre photographique, intitulé « éphémère ». Murray, S. (2008). Digital Images, Photo-Sharing, and Our Shifting Notions of Everyday Aesthetics. *Journal of Visual Culture*, 7(2), 147–163. Dans ces termes, l'imagerie mobile ne peut que continuer à se développer.

Aujourd'hui, les utilisateurs de téléphones portables oscillent entre des conversations visuelles et une connexité visuelle sans même réaliser qu'il s'agit de deux concepts distincts et clairement définis par Licoppe il y a dix ans déjà. L'Internet mobile et les pratiques qui lui sont liées sont constamment en train de redéfinir les canaux de communication, lesquels étaient auparavant bien cloisonnés. Je tiens donc à souligner que les pratiques de communication mobile comprennent les échanges réalisés non seulement via la communication orale ou par texto, mais encore via la photographie et les échanges vidéo (sur Skype ou FaceTime, par exemple). Elle pourrait même englober toute forme de visioconférence telle que la permettent applications et technologies mobiles.

Reste que la communication mobile possède encore aujourd'hui quelques caractéristiques bien définies. Par exemple, on sait qu'elle peut être synchrone ou asynchrone, géolocalisée, assortie de hashtags ou encore constituée uniquement d'emojis⁴⁹ ou même d'animations gif. Ces échanges peuvent de surcroît n'avoir qu'un destinataire qui s'adresse à un ou plusieurs destinataires, ou au contraire avoir plusieurs destinataires qui s'adressent à un ou plusieurs destinataires. Mais, qui plus est, tous ces modes de communication peuvent être mélangés pour créer des modes hybrides de conversation-connectée qui engendrent à leur tour de nouveaux codes et usages. Ainsi, tous les canaux de communication visuelle et mobile amateurs et leurs caractéristiques doivent être obligatoirement pris en compte si l'on veut étudier le duo conversation-connexité.

Ces échanges sont souvent purement *phatiques*. Les éléments phatiques sont des constituants, verbaux ou non, d'un échange, et dont la fonction est avant tout d'entretenir le lien social. Ils ne véhiculent aucun élément informatif, mais ils servent à amorcer une conversation, saluer quelqu'un, simplement dire au revoir ou encore indiquer que l'émetteur écoute attentivement. Il s'agit donc de tout ce qui rend la conversation fluide : la conversation pour elle-même. Le terme « communication phatique » a été inventé par Malinowski en 1923 dans son article *The problem of meaning in primitive languages*. Il fait référence aux énoncés qui se concentrent sur l'échange plutôt que sur la transmission d'un message informatif. Ces énoncés renforcent les liens sociaux et aident à établir et maintenir la communication. Jakobson, connu pour avoir

⁴⁹ Gray, K. (2015, Mai 29). Emoj(il)literacy: toward a grammar of pictographs, presentation given at the Technoloteracies In(terv)entions symposium, Technoloteracies session.

repris ce terme, explique qu'on parle de communication phatique lorsque, par exemple, quelqu'un commente la météo (« quel beau temps ! »), s'enquiert de la santé d'un interlocuteur (« comment allez-vous ? ») ou encore énonce une évidence (« nous avons gagné ! »). Le but de la fonction phatique est de conserver les canaux de communication ouverts et de maintenir le contact physique, psychologique ou social. Les échanges phatiques confirment la réalité d'une conversation en cours (par exemple, grâce au contact visuel, aux hochements de tête ou au bavardage) et confirment la connexité.⁵⁰ Sont également dites phatiques les expressions qui ne veulent rien dire d'utile, mais qui servent à démarrer un échange et à exprimer la sociabilité de l'émetteur. C'est pourquoi certains chercheurs, comme Wang et al., ont décidé de parler de *technologies phatiques*. « Une technologie phatique est une technologie qui sert à établir, à développer et à maintenir les relations humaines [...] où la fonction de la communication est l'établissement de relations, pas l'échange d'informations ».⁵¹ Cela signifie que le fait d'envoyer des signaux certes modestes, mais fréquents, n'est pas sans importance. Dans la même veine, Rains et al. considèrent que « les énoncés superficiels ont le pouvoir d'entretenir les relations et même de contribuer à les développer. En outre, les nouvelles technologies de communication ont pour conséquence que les énoncés personnels d'ordre banal ou superficiel, mais sans contenu véritablement intime, deviennent un objet de plus en plus digne de considération ».⁵² Mes recherches m'ont amenée à des conclusions similaires.⁵³ Walker Rettberg déclare à juste titre que « la gestion de l'image de soi dans l'espace virtuel est de nature conversationnelle et permet à de nouvelles voix de se faire entendre ».⁵⁴ L'auteure passe en revue les différentes formes que peut prendre une conversation, par exemple une version très visuelle du *chat*, comme sur Twitter ou Instagram, au moyen de hashtags, et illustre en passant la diversité des types d'échanges en ligne.

⁵⁰ Vetere, F., Howard, S. & Gibbs, M. R. (2005). Phatic Technologies: Sustaining Sociability through Ubiquitous Computing, Workshop paper, Ubiquitous Society Workshop, ACM CHI 2005. Portland, Oregon, USA.

⁵¹ Wang, V., Tucker, J. V., Rihll, T. E. (2011). On phatic technologies for creating and maintaining human relationships. *Technology in Society*, 33, pp. 44-51. En ligne https://www.academia.edu/2005465/Phatic_technologies_in_modern_society

⁵² Rains, S. A., Brunner, S. R., & Oman, K. (2014). Self-disclosure and new communication technologies: The implications of receiving superficial self-disclosures from friends. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*.

⁵³ David, G. (2015). All What We Send is Selfie: Images in the Age of Immediate Reproduction. In Carvalheiro, J. R. & Tellería, A. S. (Ed.). (2015). *Public Private, Mobile and digital communication approaches to public and private*. Portugal, LabCom Books, University of Beira Interior. pp. 79-100. En ligne http://www.livroslabcom.ubi.pt/pdfs/20150707-2015_12_public_private.pdf

⁵⁴ Walker Rettberg, J. (2014). *Seeing Ourselves Through Technology: How We Use Selfies, Blogs and Wearable Devices to See and Shape Ourselves*. Palgrave Macmillan. En ligne <http://jilltxt.net/books/Seeing-Ourselves-Through-Technology-full-book.pdf>

Les chercheurs, universitaires ou autres spécialistes du domaine des études sur l'Internet mobile (et de ce fait aussi celui des Études Mobiles visuelles) ont récemment intégré à leurs réflexions sur le concept de conversation et connection, les deux symboles incontournables que sont le hashtag et l'arobase. En effet, la dynamique de communication qui est au cœur de ces deux symboles s'articule intrinsèquement autour des concepts de connexité et de conversation. Par exemple, Bruns fait remarquer que l'un des moyens de communication les plus durables et distinctifs de Twitter est bien l'utilisation du hashtag (#) et du symbole d'adresse (@).⁵⁵ Ce système est en train de se propager à de nombreux autres réseaux sociaux tels que Facebook et Instagram. Il offre la possibilité de connecter différents groupes d'utilisateurs avec des intérêts communs (logique du hashtag) puis d'ouvrir un nouvel espace de conversation (logique du symbole d'adresse). Sur Twitter, Facebook, Instagram et bien d'autres sites, les hashtags offrent la possibilité de suivre facilement les sujets qui nous intéressent. Préfixé par le symbole #, un hashtag peut consister en mot ou même une expression. Tous les messages qui possèdent le même hashtag s'ajoutent à un fil commun, on peut donc dire qu'ils fonctionnent comme des « tags ». Ils peuvent devenir : (a) une partie du message à transmettre, (b) des éléments « paradiscursifs »⁵⁶ (c'est-à-dire destinés à compenser l'absence de contexte en apportant des informations nécessaires à la bonne compréhension du message) accompagnant le propos énoncé, ou même (c) des commentaires qui font partie intégrante du discours en question et de ce fait sont « métadiscursifs ».⁵⁷ Ils peuvent aussi simplement être ajoutés à un message dans un but humoristique, souvent dans ce cas destinés à n'être compris « en contexte que par l'utilisateur lui-même », comme l'affirment Highfield et Leaver.⁵⁸

À titre d'exemple, pendant la révolution égyptienne, un des hashtags les plus populaires sur Twitter a été « #jan25 », tag créé par une femme de 21 ans et dont le pseudonyme est @alya1989262. Tout le monde s'est mis à tweeter les nouvelles en rapport avec l'Égypte et cette date importante en ajoutant le hashtag #jan25. L'autre hashtag le plus populaire était #Egypt, tout simplement. Ces deux hashtags montrent les deux fonctions de référence

⁵⁵ Bruns, A. (2014). Media Innovations, User Innovations, Societal Innovations. *The Journal of Media Innovations* 1, pp. 13-27.

⁵⁶ Cf. Moulin, C. (2012, janvier 8). Les hashtags, introduction, *La souris de bibliothèque*, <http://lasourisdebibliotheque.hautetfort.com/archive/2012/01/08/hashtags.html>

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Highfield, T., & Leaver, T. (2014). A methodology for mapping Instagram hashtags. *First Monday*, 20(1). En ligne <http://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/5563/4195>

principales⁵⁹ de ce symbole : situer (#Egypt) et dater (#jan25). Le hashtag de localisation sert à situer l'endroit où l'événement mentionné a eu lieu, pas l'endroit d'où l'utilisateur a mis en ligne l'information. De même, le hashtag de datation fait référence à l'événement réel et au moment où l'enregistrement est effectué, pas au moment où il est partagé en ligne. Par conséquent, Kennedy et al. ont très tôt établi que l'important, habituellement, ce sont les tags de lieu et d'événement.⁶⁰ Cela nous amène à la théorie que Hjorth et Pink défendent fortement, celle du « raisonnement spatial ».⁶¹

Contexte et chronologie de la recherche

En 2007, dans son mémorable discours liminaire prononcé le jour du lancement du premier iPhone, Steve Jobs a choisi de rendre un hommage à Kodak en disant : « Il n'y a qu'un seul bouton, ici, en bas ». Le concept était brillant : il s'agissait de repousser les limites de la simplicité et de rendre la photographie mobile populaire en mettant en exergue sa facilité de *prosomption*.⁶² Au même moment, Microsoft Windows Vista et Office 2007 arrivaient eux aussi sur le marché, ce qui constituait une innovation importante dans le domaine de la bureautique. Nicolas Sarkozy venait d'être élu président, et avec lui la France entrait dans une difficile période de crise financière mondiale. Cette époque connaissait de nombreux changements, souvent presque imperceptibles, et mon impression était que le web et les images numériques s'imposaient lentement mais sûrement à mesure que les gens intégraient l'Internet et les médias mobiles à leur quotidien. Cette année-là, le nombre de personnes connectées à Internet en France a atteint 32 millions, soit un taux de pénétration de 51,2 %.⁶³

⁵⁹ Notamment avec des utilisations au second degré, aujourd'hui, l'utilisation des hashtags est devenue beaucoup plus variée, mais, dans la création de nouveaux hashtags les références aux lieux et aux événements semblent encore être majoritairement utilisées.

⁶⁰ Kennedy, L., Naaman, M., Ahern, S., Nair, R., Rattenbury, T. (September 2007). How Flickr Helps us Make Sense of the World: Context and Content in Community-Contributed Media Collections. In proceedings Fifteenth ACM International Conference on Multimedia, (ACM MM 2007), Augsburg, Germany.

⁶¹ Hjorth, L. & Pink, S. (2014). New visualities and the digital wayfarer: Reconceptualizing camera phone photography and locative media. *Mobile Media & Communication*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 40-57.

⁶² Prosomption est le néologisme issu du terme anglais *prosumption*. Et prosommateur est un néologisme issu du terme anglais *prosumer* et qui cherche à décrire les tendances qu'ont les consommateurs à se professionnaliser et s'approcher de la figure de producteur. Notamment par le biais de connaissances acquises grâce à un accès à l'information considérable (ce qui est d'autant plus vrai à l'ère numérique), et poursuivant certaines convictions d'ordre plus politique.

⁶³ Anon. (2010, November 26). France, *Open Net Initiative*, <https://opennet.net/research/profiles/france>

En tant que chercheuse dans le domaine culturel qui recourait à l'observation participative, je percevais ces changements à mesure que j'y assistais, et je prenais note de tous ces événements au moment même où ils se déroulaient sous mes propres yeux. Mon intention était de commencer mes recherches sur les échanges privés contenant des images mobiles en sélectionnant certaines de ces images sur Internet. Mais toute recherche sur Google avec les mots clés « images de caméraphones » me renvoyait la plupart du temps, pour ne pas dire systématiquement, à des publicités pour des téléphones portables équipés d'un appareil photo. En outre, je ne pouvais constituer ce corpus en me contentant d'une recherche de vidéos mobiles en ligne, car le visionnage et la sélection étaient trop difficiles. De plus, cette méthode ne convenait pas car les images que je trouvais avaient été mises en ligne pêle-mêle et se retrouvaient donc présentées de façon désorganisée, voire chaotique. En 2007 et 2008, ce problème méthodologique pour constituer mon corpus iconographique mobile n'était pas la seule difficulté qui se présentait à moi : j'étais en effet également confrontée au fait que ces images étaient référencées sous une multitude de tags - images *camphone*, images de caméraphones, images de téléphones portables, etc. Ces contraintes matérielles m'ont conduite à trouver d'autres façons de procéder.

Je précise qu'à l'époque il n'existait pas de site ou de réseau social spécifiquement conçu pour organiser ou rassembler les images mobiles des particuliers. En d'autres termes, les créations d'amateurs sur caméraphone n'étaient partagées sur aucune plateforme vidéo, et Facebook n'en offrait pas encore la possibilité non plus. En fait, ce n'est qu'en décembre 2007 que le site Qik a lancé sa version alpha, et la version beta publique n'a pas été lancée avant juillet 2008. J'ai commencé à m'intéresser sérieusement à ce site en décembre 2008, mais il a été racheté par Skype en avril 2014 et les deux produits ont alors fusionné. Toujours en 2007, les réseaux sociaux mobiles tels que Socialcam (2011), Klip (2012), ou Vine (une application pour vidéos de six secondes ou moins lancée beaucoup plus tard, en 2013), n'existaient pas non plus. Il était possible de trouver des vidéos mobiles amateurs privées sur YouTube et sur quelques autres plateformes, mais malheureusement ces vidéos n'étaient aucunement indexées de façon claire et organisée. Il était donc impossible d'en faire une analyse contextuelle pertinente.

En raison du fait que ma recherche sur les processus de légitimation a évolué en même temps que les avancées techniques dans le domaine, comme le reflète ma thèse, j'ai divisé cette dernière en deux parties principales et quatre chapitres qui présentent les quatre études de terrain ayant déterminé non seulement mes choix de corpus au niveau chronologique et conceptuel, mais encore la diversité de mes choix méthodologiques. Chaque chapitre est donc inscrit dans un cadre chronologique différent et présente un jalon historique précis dans l'évolution et la réception des images mobiles. Cette organisation me permet de refléter les processus d'adoption généralisée et de normalisation qui caractérisent ces cultures mobiles. Les études de terrain réalisées amènent chacune des éclairages bien distincts qui forment les pièces d'un seul puzzle, celui du processus de normalisation.

Résumé de la thèse, études de cas et méthodologie

Pendant les années caméraphone, du fait que j'étais confrontée à une réelle difficulté pour trouver des vidéos mobiles sur Internet, j'ai pris la décision de choisir des vidéos mobiles amateurs parmi celles qui ont été présentées lors de la troisième édition du festival Pocket Films (FPF), à Paris, en 2007. Ainsi, mon premier chapitre se concentre sur le caméraphone en tant qu'outil personnel de création d'images intimes, et sur la manière dont les images ainsi produites peuvent passer d'une sphère privée à une sphère publique et artistique. Mais ce festival était plus qu'une simple présentation de films mobiles (pas exclusivement en lien avec l'art). Au contraire, je vais montrer qu'il constituait tout un *dispositif*.⁶⁴ Les festivals mobiles ont vu le jour au début des années 2000. C'est aussi dans ces années-là qu'ils ont connu leur apogée. Les utilisateurs de téléphones portables se rendaient alors doucement compte du fait que ces images qu'ils créaient eux-mêmes pouvaient se mettre à circuler au-delà de sphères strictement privées. Je me concentre donc sur les premières années (2005-2007) du festival Pocket Films de Paris et m'inspire de la méthodologie propre aux *Film Festival Studies* pour exposer les raisons et motivations derrière la création d'un tel dispositif. Cette démarche permet de mieux comprendre comment la perception générale des appareils photos de téléphones portables, au départ considérés comme des gadgets peu évolués et bons à produire des images de piètre qualité, a pu changer au point que ces appareils sont à présent considérés

⁶⁴ Pour une recherche détaillée sur les problèmes conceptuels liés à la traduction et à la réflexion sur le terme dispositif, voir Bussolini, J. (2010). What is a Dispositive?. *Foucault Studies*, N° 10, pp. 85-107. Retrieved from <http://rauli.cbs.dk/index.php/foucault-studies/article/view/3120>

comme ayant une valeur intellectuelle réelle, et même, comme des outils de création artistique et culturelle à part entière.

Je soutiens en cela les théories de Manovich sur les objets culturels en tant qu'outils de représentation et de construction de référents, qu'il s'agisse d'objets, d'informations, de catégories ou autres.⁶⁵ En tant qu'objet culturel ou dispositif, ce festival Pocket Films, à Paris, en 2007) offrait un panorama unique de ce qui se faisait alors en matière de vidéo mobile à l'époque, car il présentait des films tant français qu'internationaux, mais également des conférences et des débats, tandis que des personnalités incontournables de la scène mobile étaient présentes.

Tout en étant limitée par les contraintes matérielles et la piètre qualité des productions audiovisuelles, la seconde partie de ce chapitre se concentre sur le phénomène du *partage public des images mobiles privées*. Pour cela, je m'appuie sur une étude de cas exhaustive. J'ai choisi d'étudier l'herméneutique d'un pocket-film primé, *Porte de Choisy*, réalisé par Antonin Verrier, en analysant non seulement ses aspects formels, mais aussi la manière dont il a été reçu, ainsi que les controverses et critiques qu'il a suscitées. Du fait que ce film est très personnel, il se prête parfaitement à une exploration de la relation entre imagerie mobile amateur et intimité. Quel impact le festival Pocket Films et *Porte de Choisy* ont-ils eu, à quel point ont-ils influencé la « construction du goût »⁶⁶ des amateurs et leur contrôle (ou absence de contrôle) par rapport à la divulgation de leurs images privées ?

Tout en réalisant ce travail, je surveillais l'évolution des pratiques visuelles mobiles : la nouveauté de l'appareil en lui-même, tant à l'intérieur qu'à l'extérieur du champ des médias traditionnels, et le fait que les utilisateurs se retrouvaient en mesure de participer (ou non) à l'élaboration de l'actualité, commençaient à faire des vagues. Ce sujet a fini par constituer mon deuxième corpus de recherche. Que se passe-t-il lorsque des événements imprévus arrivent et que quelqu'un peut filmer l'événement avec un caméraphone ?

⁶⁵ Manovich, L. (2001). *The language of new media*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, p. 15.

⁶⁶ Bourdieu, P. (1979). *La distinction: Critique sociale du jugement*. Paris: Éditions de Minuit.

Le second chapitre de cette partie aborde le débat suscité par les images mobiles amateurs et analyse en détail le processus qui a conduit à faire de l'image mobile un instrument de production de scoops (de 2005 à 2011). Les cas analysés montrent que les données visuelles mobiles sont structurées de façon multiforme, ce qui permet d'évaluer l'impact potentiel de ces images sur la façon dont se construit l'actualité, et donc l'Histoire. Ce chapitre présente une analyse chronologique des plus importantes nouvelles qui ont été relayées grâce à des mobiles, comment certains événements imprévus ont pu être enregistrés de cette manière et comment ces médias ont été intégrés au flot de création de l'actualité, et ainsi d'une historialisation de ces événements. Les séquences d'actualité obtenues grâce à des portables que j'ai sélectionnées sont représentatives de ce qui était alors utilisé dans les médias de masse traditionnels. La narration événementielle se construisait autour de ces images privées.

Je propose une analyse chronologique des étapes par lesquelles les institutions artistiques, les médias de presse traditionnels et les réseaux sociaux ont été intégrés au développement de ce type de production mobile et à sa légitimation. Pour schématiser le processus de diffusion du caméraphone ou du smartphone au sein de différents groupes de population, ainsi que le développement de leur utilisation au niveau visuel, notamment à travers l'utilisation de vidéos brutes dans le domaine de l'actualité, je m'appuie sur le modèle d'adoption et de diffusion d'une innovation du sociologue américain Everett Rogers.⁶⁷ Afin de comprendre pourquoi une innovation peut prendre du temps avant de percer sur un marché quand bien même elle serait révolutionnaire, le modèle de Rogers explique le cycle de vie d'un produit innovant sur un marché.

Ma deuxième partie comporte également deux chapitres. Au fil du temps, les images mobiles amateurs sont devenues de plus en plus faciles à obtenir, à la fois sur Internet et dans le monde. C'est pourquoi mon troisième chapitre n'est plus consacré à l'étude du processus de légitimation au niveau institutionnel, mais analyse en profondeur les mécanismes de légitimation des pratiques par les pairs et les utilisateurs eux-mêmes. Les normes qui

⁶⁷ E. Rogers a catégorisé les adoptants suivant cinq profils en fonction de leur rapidité à adopter l'innovation comprise comme leur position face au changement. Il différencie les innovateurs : 2,5% ; les adopteurs précoces ou premiers utilisateurs : 13,5% ; la première majorité ou la majorité précoce : 34% ; la seconde majorité ou la majorité tardive : 34% ; les retardataires ; et enfin les réfractaires : 16%. Cf. Rogers, E. M. (1983). *Diffusion of Innovations*, 3rd ed. New York: Free Press.

caractérisent l'utilisation des images mobiles commencent par se développer au sein de communautés restreintes avant d'atteindre le stade de l'auto-validation totale. Jusqu'à récemment, les images mobiles étaient encore perçues comme des objets à échanger, donc j'explore l'engouement qu'a suscité l'arrivée du mode de partage éphémère d'images mobiles. Je commence par décrire l'exposition *Eyephonography*, puis, afin de comprendre le principe des communautés de pratique, je propose une entrevue avec le collectif d'art *Regards de Femmes*. Enfin, j'étudie deux groupes d'adolescents français et la façon dont ils utilisent le site Snapchat et les modes de partage éphémères. Ces entretiens avec les groupes de discussion seront l'occasion de comprendre pourquoi il importe d'analyser les pratiques des usagers dans ces interactions.

Mon quatrième chapitre se veut plus réflexif : j'y analyse mes propres pratiques, que j'ai volontairement observées après coup. J'ai donc essayé de saisir la relation entre l'évolution de ma propre utilisation des images mobiles, mon expérience participative en tant que chercheuse et les évolutions techniques qui métamorphosaient la culture mobile à l'époque. Je tente de déterminer si, oui ou non, une intimité ou une connivence tacite peuvent être considérées comme des caractéristiques inhérentes à ce type de partage d'images privées. En analysant un échantillon de huit MMS, je cherche à déterminer le type de « codage et de décodage »⁶⁸ qui est à l'œuvre dans ces images mobiles privées. Ces MMS, que j'ai échangés avec des amis très proches, ont posé certains problèmes que j'étudie *a posteriori* sous un angle auto-ethnographique. Cet ultime chapitre se conclut sur une exploration des pratiques de séduction et d'attirance par le biais de téléphones portables, caractérisées par ce que j'appelle la « logique du défilement »⁶⁹. Ainsi, j'espère ajouter ma pierre à l'édifice de la recherche sur les visages des *hook up apps*,⁷⁰ recherche qui est en pleine expansion.

Je tiens à préciser que le contenu de ce chapitre final est basé sur mes expériences personnelles et ne peut donc être considéré comme représentatif de ce qui se passe à grande échelle. En outre, du fait que mon échantillon est personnel, les observations, explications et analyses que

⁶⁸ Hall, S. (1980). Codificar y Decodificar. *CULTURE, MEDIA & LENGUAJE*. (Silvia Delfino, Trans.). London, Hutchinson, pp. 129–139. Retrieved from http://perio.unlp.edu.ar/catedras/system/files/hall._codificar-decodificar.pdf

⁶⁹ Cambre, C. et David, G. (à paraître, 2016). Screened intimacies: Tinder and the swipe logic, *SM+S Special Issue*.

⁷⁰ Les *hook up apps* sont des applications mobiles qui, par le biais de la technologie mobile, permettent de faire des rencontres.

j'en tire sont subjectives. Par conséquent, aucune de ces données n'est censée servir à énoncer des tendances généralisées à propos de la manière dont les gens utilisent les portables dans la sphère privée ; mon étude est réalisée à très petite échelle et je suis consciente de ses limites. Malgré tout, cet exercice a pour mérite de me permettre de sonder plus profondément les problématiques abordées dans ce chapitre. J'espère que cette étude auto-ethnographique incitera d'autres chercheurs à explorer plus avant ce sujet. Parmi les pistes de recherche possible, il serait intéressant de mener d'autres études auto- ethnographiques similaires permettant de faire des études comparatives, de mettre en lumière l'évolution des pratiques au fil du temps ou encore d'étudier le phénomène sur des échantillons plus conséquents. Comme c'est le cas dans la plupart des études qualitatives, les recherches en Études Mobiles se font généralement à l'échelle locale et sur le court terme. Sans faire de compromis sur l'aspect qualitatif de la recherche, comment pouvons-nous affiner notre compréhension générale et globale de l'utilisation mobile ?

Première partie : Le processus de légitimation des photos mobiles

Les années expérimentales : émergence des artistes et journalistes citoyens

Les smartphones ont un impact mondial sur les modes de communication, notamment sur les communications visuelles au quotidien. En 2015, ceci est une évidence, car l'augmentation du nombre de photos et de vidéos mobiles a été entérinée petit à petit d'abord par les industries de la culture et de l'art tout comme par les médias, dans une dynamique qui est toujours d'actualité. Ces institutions artistiques et médias de masse se sont ouverts au phénomène mobile et ont eu à payer le prix de cette appropriation visuelle. Dans cette perspective, que pouvons-nous comprendre des processus culturels collectifs ? Comment évoluent-ils ? Dans la première partie de cette thèse, je m'interroge notamment sur la manière dont les images mobiles privées des amateurs ont été perçues au fil du temps, jusqu'à être considérées comme culturellement légitime par le grand public. Quels types de narrations individuelles et discours collectifs publics ont soutenu et validé ce changement social ?

Cette première partie porte sur la période 2005-2010. À cette époque, la culture populaire, les médias et l'ensemble de la population s'accordaient en général pour considérer que n'importe qui pouvait produire du contenu visuel mobile, diffuser des images et gagner en visibilité. Pour reprendre le fameux terme de Barthes, c'est dans cette période-là que s'est développé le *mythe* et même, par conséquent, la *croyance*, que chacun avait une chance de devenir non seulement photographe, grâce au caméraphone, mais encore son propre éditeur de contenu. C'est avec ce type de discours en toile de fond qu'ont été posées les bases de la photographie mobile amateur. Et, certes, on a effectivement constaté une augmentation de l'activité créative en matière d'images mobiles à cette époque, mais je vais tenter de démontrer qu'il est erroné d'affirmer que tout le monde a gagné le statut d'artiste visuel mobile bénéficiant d'une réelle

visibilité sur la scène publique. En raison du fait que mes recherches - et donc, ma thèse - sur les processus de légitimation culturelle des images mobiles ont été menées parallèlement à de constantes innovations technologiques, j'ai choisi de diviser cette première partie en deux chapitres très différents, mais complémentaires. Le premier traite de l'adoption par le milieu artistique français du caméraphone et de la validation et légitimation de ses potentiels créatifs. Le second se veut plus global. Axé sur l'industrie du journalisme, il analyse chronologiquement l'intégration des images mobiles dans les médias de presse. Notons que ces chapitres offrent tous deux une réflexion sur des processus de légitimation distincts, mais relativement similaires et simultanés, puisqu'ils ont eu lieu entre 2005 et 2010.

En 2007, soit au tout début de mes recherches, j'ai été confrontée à des difficultés pour constituer mon corpus d'étude. Puisque mon idée était d'étudier l'utilisation des images mobiles amateurs dans la sphère privée, notamment au moyen d'un corpus de vidéos mobiles, j'ai commencé par chercher des « images de caméraphones privées » sur Internet. Malheureusement, il n'existait encore *aucune* plateforme de partage d'images mobiles grand public, et toutes mes tentatives pour trouver ce type d'image en ligne se soldaient par des échecs, car je tombais sur des *publicités* vantant des téléphones portables équipés d'appareils photos, pas des *photos* ou *vidéos* prises avec des caméraphones. J'ai donc dû m'adapter et trouver un autre moyen de constituer mon corpus et chercher ailleurs que sur Internet. Mais il se trouve que, cette année-là, le festival Pocket Films de Paris était en train de gagner en notoriété. Il était idéal pour entamer ma première étude de cas, car il constituait l'endroit rêvé pour en apprendre davantage sur les dernières tendances générales en matière d'images mobiles amateurs. En plus de cela, à ce moment-là, la recherche universitaire francophone, y compris les études Internet, ne se préoccupait que très peu d'analyser le binôme constitué par les relations entre vie quotidienne et images mobiles amateurs. C'est donc pour combler cette lacune que j'ai décidé d'orienter mes recherches sur le passage des photos et vidéos mobiles privées à la sphère.

Le but de mon premier chapitre est de montrer, en m'appuyant sur le Pocket Films Festival, comment, grâce à un outil de production d'images *personnel* comme le téléphone portable, une création visuelle peut passer d'un environnement *privé* au monde *artistique public*. Ce festival est bien plus qu'un rassemblement de films mobiles : il constitue un véritable *dispositif*. En

effet, le festival présentait des films français et internationaux, mais son programme proposait également tout un cycle de conférences et de débats, sans compter que des personnalités en vue dans le milieu mobile étaient présentes. De ce fait, il n'était pas de meilleur endroit pour avoir une vue d'ensemble sur l'actualité de la création visuelle mobile amateur. Les festivals mobiles sont nés au début des années 2000 et ont connu leur apogée dans la foulée. Les utilisateurs de caméraphones découvraient alors tout juste qu'ils pouvaient faire circuler leurs propres images mobiles et les diffuser à grande échelle. Ils commençaient même à réaliser qu'elles pouvaient avoir une valeur artistique. Je commence donc par étudier les raisons et les motivations qui ont conduit à la création d'un dispositif de films mobiles, en m'inspirant de la méthodologie propre aux Film Festival Studies et en me concentrant particulièrement sur l'avènement du phénomène (2005-2007). Ce que je cherche à appréhender, c'est la manière dont le caméraphone – initialement considéré comme un simple gadget bon à produire de piètres images – a pu en arriver à être perçu comme un objet précieux et luxueux, puis comme un objet possédant un potentiel artistique et, enfin, comme un objet essentiellement quotidien et donc culturel.

À quel moment les images mobiles ont-elles été validées et légitimées dans la sphère artistique, et comment ? Je voudrais ici préciser ce que j'entends par « dispositif ». Je m'appuie sur l'article d'Agamben, *Che cos'è un dispositivo?*, qui élargit et revisite le concept au-delà de la définition de Foucault. Dans plusieurs versions anglaises de cet article, *dispositivo* est traduit par « *apparatus* », mais, dans les traductions espagnole et française, le terme *dispositif* est repris tel quel, comme dans la terminologie originale de Foucault.⁷¹ Dans tous les cas, Agamben définit le dispositif comme « tout ce qui a, d'une manière ou d'une autre, la capacité de capturer, d'orienter, de déterminer, d'intercepter, de modeler, de contrôler, et d'assurer les gestes, les conduites, les opinions et les discours des êtres vivants ».

Points de convergence de tendances et de thèmes bien précis, les festivals sont des miroirs de l'identité culturelle.⁷² Dans le cas précis du FPF, c'était tout un terreau culturel qui se rassemblait autour des défenseurs parisiens et français du téléphone portable. Résolus à

⁷¹ Pour une étude détaillée des problèmes liés à la traduction en différentes langues du concept de *dispositif*, ainsi que sur son évolution, voir Bussolini, J. (2010). What is a Dispositive?. *Foucault Studies*, 0(10), 85-107. Retrieved from <http://rauli.cbs.dk/index.php/foucault-studies/article/view/3120>

⁷² Dayan, D. (2000). Looking for Sundance; The social construction of a film festival. In I. Bondebjerg (Ed.). *Moving images, culture, and the mind* (pp. 43-52). Luton: University of Luton Press.

donner une image positive des adeptes du mobile, les organisateurs du FPF ont proposé des ateliers créatifs et présenté une grande majorité de films produits par des amateurs. Du fait que ce festival n'a duré que quelques jours, je n'ai pas pu voir tous les films qui y étaient présentés, et encore moins tous les analyser. Par conséquent, je me suis attachée à consulter les archives du FPF, non seulement pour me faire une idée générale de tout ce qui y avait été présenté, mais encore pour en constituer un catalogue et une taxonomie organisés.

Cependant, j'ai fait face à deux revers. Tout d'abord, un problème de diversité du matériel : les archives du FPF contenaient des films traitant d'une multitude de thèmes différents, allant de la vie quotidienne en général à des sujets très précis, des animaux de compagnie aux films pour enfants, de séquences en noir et blanc très travaillées à des films abstraits plus expérimentaux, etc. Ensuite, un problème de diversité des formats d'enregistrement : les images mobiles sont supportées par de multiples formats numériques (par exemple .flv, ou .avi, entre autres), mais les ordinateurs à ma disposition pour visionner ces films n'étaient pas configurés pour lire tous ces formats, ce qui compliquait considérablement ma tâche. En outre, ces vidéos étaient de longueur très variable, allant du court métrage de soixante secondes au long métrage. Autre problème, le Forum des Images, où sont conservées les archives du FPF, a subi en 2007 des travaux de rénovation. Les archives ont alors été dispersées à travers la ville et certains films se sont retrouvés inaccessibles. Aujourd'hui, il est vrai que certains pocket-films sont disponibles sur le site Web du FPF,⁷³ mais ce n'était pas le cas à l'époque. En outre, les pocket-films affichés sur la page officielle du FPF ne sont que ceux qui ont été primés, et, à ce jour, le site ne permet pas aux visiteurs de laisser des commentaires ou de donner leur avis sur ces films. Ceci est dû au fait que la conception du site est assez obsolète : il a été perçu comme une simple plateforme d'information, et pas d'échanges, comme c'est bien plus souvent le cas.

Voilà pourquoi j'ai finalement décidé de réaliser mon étude de cas sur le festival Pocket Films, et ensuite sur la vidéo qui a remporté le premier prix, en la considérant comme un exemple particulièrement représentatif. Ce choix peut sembler quelque peu pragmatique, mais le thème de ce film est tout à fait pertinent à étudier dans le cadre des Études Mobiles, puisqu'il est question du problème de l'opposition entre utilisations publique et privée des productions visuelles mobiles. Du fait que « je traite la question en partant du principe que les notions de

⁷³ Le site du festival Pocket Films, <http://www.festivalpocketfilms.fr/>

privé et de public ne sont pas objectives », ⁷⁴ cette opposition conceptuelle n'est pas sans poser de problème et ne fait pas l'unanimité. En outre, je dois prendre en compte le fait que ces concepts « sont constamment en train d'évoluer et d'être redessinés par les différentes communautés sociales ». C'est pourquoi je me sers de ce film, *Porte de Choisy*, ⁷⁵ pour étudier en profondeur la question du partage de contenu intime et analyser sa réception, les controverses et les critiques qu'il a suscitées. Du fait qu'il est très personnel, ce film se prête bien à l'analyse de la relation entre vidéos mobiles amateurs et intimité. À quel point les médias mobiles ont-ils gagné en visibilité grâce à des dispositifs tels que le FPF et son film primé *Porte de Choisy* ? Comment ont-ils influencé la constitution d'une éthique et d'une culture ouvertes aux images mobiles ? Après avoir fourni des éléments de réponse à toutes ces questions, la dernière partie de ce chapitre lève ensuite le voile sur les images mobiles en tant qu'art et donc en tant que créatrices de tendances.

Après cette incursion dans les premiers temps du monde du pocket-film artistique amateur qui me permet de mettre en lumière toutes les facettes du processus d'acceptation des images mobiles vernaculaires intimes, je consacre mon deuxième chapitre à une autre utilisation du caméraphone et m'interroge sur le concept de journalisme citoyen à l'aube de l'ère des smartphones : quand et comment les productions visuelles mobiles privées des particuliers ont-elles investi le domaine des médias de presse ?

Pour ce faire, je me penche sur les narrations et mythes qui se sont constitués – ou ont été fabriqués de toutes pièces – autour de la médiatisation des images mobiles amateurs lorsqu'elles ont commencé à être utilisées dans l'actualité journalistique. Quelles étaient les lignes éditoriales des médias traditionnels vis-à-vis des images mobiles de 2005 à 2009/2010 ? Pour répondre à ces questions, j'ai recours à un second corpus qui fait ressortir les aspects et motifs récurrents des situations et mécanismes ayant transformé les images mobiles privées et personnelles en sources de scoops acceptées. J'analyse ainsi les étapes par lesquelles les médias de presse traditionnels dans un premier temps, puis les réseaux sociaux (au sens de médias sociaux) dans un deuxième temps, ont contribué à produire ce contenu visuel mobile, puis à le

⁷⁴ de Souza e Silva, A. S. & Frith, J. (2012). *Mobile interfaces in public spaces: Locational privacy, control, and urban sociability*. New York: Routledge, p. 15.

⁷⁵ Antonin Verrier. (2007). "Porte de Choisy", 8 minutes.

<http://www.festivalpocketfilms.fr/spip.php?article648> et <https://vimeo.com/36400715>

légitimer. Pour cela, j'ai étudié le phénomène dans une perspective diachronique. Afin d'étudier la façon dont ces événements et périodes de temps ont été intégrés au flux de création de l'actualité, ce chapitre est construit autour d'une chronologie des plus importantes actualités à avoir été filmées avec des téléphones portables (qui permettent d'enregistrer des événements imprévus, mais importants) et relayées par les médias traditionnels à l'époque.

Le corpus que j'ai sélectionné comprend six des exemples les plus spectaculaires de l'époque des premières vidéos mobiles que les médias occidentaux traditionnels ont diffusées. J'ai choisi ces séquences non pas en procédant par élimination, mais pour leur nature métonymique : elles sont représentatives de la présence grandissante des images mobiles dans la construction de l'actualité à mesure que les médias les validaient et que l'approbation sociale se généralisait.

Cette sélection est subjective et n'est pas exclusivement constituée d'actualités de première importance : mon but est en effet de proposer une réflexion sur la manière dont nous réagissons vis-à-vis de la quantité extraordinaire d'informations visuelles mobiles qui est à notre disposition en ligne – comment accédons-nous à l'information, comment la découvrons-nous et qu'en apprenons-nous ? Plus important encore, ma sélection reflète les processus de légitimation et de validation au sein des cadres définis par les médias. Toutes les séquences que j'ai retenues sont représentatives du type d'images mobiles qui étaient alors utilisées dans l'industrie des médias traditionnels pour constituer des reportages sur l'actualité. C'est également autour de ces images qu'étaient construits les discours journalistiques sur la culture mobile, que j'analyse aussi.

Il convient de rappeler qu'après le tsunami qui a frappé l'Asie du Sud-Est en décembre 2004, « l'expression 'journalisme citoyen' s'est répandue pour de bon dans le vocabulaire journalistique. Dans la foulée, deux autres événements importants se sont produits et ont contribué à renforcer cette tendance : les attentats de Londres et l'ouragan Katrina », ⁷⁶ comme le remarque John D. H. Downing, spécialiste en communication. Lorsque ces événements ont été relayés par les médias journalistiques, le terme « journalisme citoyen » a été utilisé pour frapper les esprits et souligner l'origine amateur des images présentes dans les médias traditionnels. Le but était d'inciter les gens à mettre à contribution leurs propres images, ce

⁷⁶ Downing, J. D. H. (2011). (Ed.). *Encyclopedia of Social Movement Media*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications. p. 97.

qui s'est accompagné d'une croyance grandissante en la possibilité de faire de la création de l'actualité une entreprise de participation collective. Mais s'agissait-il vraiment d'une co-création ? D'où vient exactement l'expression « journalisme citoyen » et quand est-elle apparue ? Dan Gillmor, écrivain spécialisé dans les technologies, journaliste et membre du Berkman Center for Internet & Society, s'est donné pour tâche de retracer l'origine de ce terme devenu mythique. Il a décrit ses résultats dans un article de blogue où il annonce que c'est un journaliste du *Minneapolis Star Tribune*,⁷⁷ Jim Klobuchar, qui fut le premier à employer cette expression de « journalisme citoyen », en 1988. Médias de presse et journalistes étaient incontestablement conscients de la déferlante de plus en plus massive des images mobiles vernaculaires, prises par des gens ordinaires. Ils ont alors pris le parti d'en tirer profit en les utilisant pour créer leurs dépêches et reportages. Quant aux auteurs de ces images et de ces reportages, ils ont suscité l'apparition de toute une nouvelle terminologie. *Snaparazzi*⁷⁸ ou *waparazzi* sont tous deux des « nouveaux termes décrivant un photographe amateur présent lors d'un événement majeur ». Le *Guardian* nous informe que « waparazzi a été inventé en février 2006 par Orange ».⁷⁹ Cependant, aucun de ces deux termes n'a vraiment eu un grand écho dans les médias de presse.

Si les créateurs amateurs d'images de caméraphones étaient des « journalistes citoyens » ou des « journalistes participatifs »,⁸⁰ la question « Qui est journaliste ? » était, selon Gillmor, en quelque sorte mal posée. On ne devrait pas se le demander ni tenter de placer une étiquette sur ces personnes. Mieux vaudrait orienter la réflexion sur ce qu'est le journalisme.⁸¹ En mai 2006, à Londres, le terme « journaliste citoyen » a de même été l'objet d'une discussion lors de la conférence de presse *We Media*. Parmi les chercheurs et savants présents, ceux qui étaient les moins portés sur les nouvelles technologies et qui avaient un point de vue plus subjectif, culturellement parlant, ont déclaré que ce terme était problématique. Parmi eux, on retrouve

⁷⁷ Gillmor, D. (2004). Mediactive, 4.0 Chapter 4: Journalism's Evolving Ecosystem, *Mediactive - Creating a User's Guide to Democratized Media*, <http://mediactive.com/4-0-chapter-4-journalism%E2%80%99s-evolving-ecosystem/>

⁷⁸ Greenslade, R. (2005, août 8). Seen it, shot it, sold it, *The Guardian*, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2005/aug/08/media.pressandpublishing>; Cf. Anon., "Paparazzi", *English Wikipedia*, s/d, verified 2009, July 19 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snaparazzi>

⁷⁹ Media Monkey's Diary, (2006, February 20). *MediaGuardian*, <http://media.guardian.co.uk/site/story/0,,1713281,00.html>

⁸⁰ Bowman, S. & Willis, C. (2003). *We Media: How Audiences are Shaping the Future of News and Information*. The Media Center at the American Press Institute.

⁸¹ Gillmor, D. (2004). Op. cit.

Allan, Tilley et Cokley⁸² ou Gunthert⁸³. Ce dernier a d'ailleurs déclaré que, quitte à inventer un nouveau terme, au lieu de dire « tous journalistes », ⁸⁴ il vaudrait mieux dire « tous photographes », ⁸⁵ parce que le fait d'être capable de prendre une photo ne fait pas du photographe un journaliste. Je trouve qu'il faudrait de plus faire une distinction entre journaliste et *moment journalistique*. C'est la même sanction que dans le domaine artistique : afin de gagner en visibilité et être légitimés, les artistes mobiles doivent passer l'épreuve du feu en envoyant leur film à un festival, où il sera accepté ou non. Ils doivent se confronter aux conservateurs d'art et aux institutions artistiques, car tout le monde ne devient pas un artiste mobile. En d'autres termes, ma deuxième partie cherche à répondre à la question suivante : l'évolution constatée dans le domaine des médias de presse est-elle similaire à celle que nous avons constatée dans le milieu artistique, demeuré très sélectif malgré tout ? Ou bien l'accès à l'édition de l'actualité est-il devenu plus ouvert, plus démocratique ? En outre, suffit-il d'être *au bon endroit au bon moment* pour être considéré comme un photographe ou un caméraman ?

Si de nouvelles utilisations peuvent émerger plus facilement grâce aux progrès techniques, il reste important de déterminer comment ces évolutions technologiques interagissent avec les activités de la vie quotidienne, et comment ces nouvelles coutumes prennent forme à travers les discours artistiques et médiatiques qui se construisent autour d'elles, rendant ces derniers encore plus visibles. Cela n'a rien d'un hasard si, à l'instar de *Porte de Choisy*, tous les pocket-films que j'ai étudiés dans mon deuxième chapitre ont été tournés en plan-séquence et en format raw, puis livrés tels quels aux médias de presse. Cela s'explique par le fait qu'une séquence non éditée témoigne d'un talent inné pour la vidéo, sans compter que cela facilite le travail des éditeurs professionnels employés par l'industrie journalistique traditionnelle, qui peut alors tailler sur mesure les reportages. Il faut dire que la façon de filmer et de partager les images ne cesse d'évoluer à mesure que l'accès à la 3G et à la 4G se trouve facilité, notamment depuis l'arrivée de l'iPhone et autres tablettes. Mais il ne faut pas pour autant perdre de vue que, malgré le taux d'adoption de plus en plus élevé, tout le monde ne possédait pas un smartphone, un caméraphone ou une tablette en 2007. Techniquement parlant, ce n'est qu'à

⁸² Allan, S., Tilley, E. & Cokley, J. (2008), cité en Robinson, S. & DeShano, C. (2011). Citizen Journalism and Their Third Places? What makes people contribute information online (or not). *Journalism Studies* 12(5), pp. 1-16.

⁸³ Gunthert, A. (2015). *L'Image partagée. La photographie numérique*. Paris, Textuel.

⁸⁴ Gunthert, A. Op. cit. He makes reference to the front page of the French daily newspaper *Libération* of 20-21 August 2005, Cf. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/gunthert/3361760025/>

⁸⁵ Gunthert, A., Op. cit.

partir de 2011 que les smartphones ont commencé à être livrés avec des applications de retouche d'image préinstallées. Reste que l'édition d'images sur les mobiles n'était pas très aisée en raison de la taille des fichiers.

En résumé, mon choix de deux corpus d'une part, et le travail de terrain que j'ai réalisé d'autre part, me permettent de confirmer les grandes étapes par lesquelles sont passées les images mobiles au cours du processus de légitimation qui s'est joué entre 2005 et 2010. En outre, même si ces deux corpus peuvent sembler très différents l'un de l'autre, ils sont en réalité les deux facettes d'un même processus de hiérarchisation et de validation culturelle des *pratiques visuelles mobiles*⁸⁶ qui s'est joué durant les premières années mobiles (2005-2010).

Pour un pocket-film, le fait d'être retenu à un festival ou d'apparaître aux actualités est synonyme de forte reconnaissance et de légitimation culturelle. Les analyses que je présente tout au long de ces deux premiers chapitres démontrent combien notre point de vue s'est retrouvé ancré dans une certaine discursivité dont le point focal est la validation culturelle de notre *prosomption* d'images mobiles, ce que je ne peux que confirmer en tant qu'utilisatrice moyenne. C'est pour cette raison que les discours sur les processus de légitimation, lesquels étaient eux-mêmes intimement liés aux usages de l'époque et, par conséquent, étaient très souvent inconscients, ont joué un rôle central dans ce que Rogers appelle le « processus d'adoption ».

⁸⁶ Je fais particulièrement référence ici à la production, au partage et au commentaire d'images mobiles. Les *pratiques visuelles mobiles* englobent des modes textuels, mais aussi des échanges de photos et de vidéos, et je vais également parler plus loin des applications qui offrent la possibilité de communiquer en visioconférence.

Deuxième partie : Quand les images mobiles deviennent ordinaires - la prise de pouvoir des utilisateurs sur le processus d'auto-légitimation

De la reconnaissance entre pairs à l'auto-validation

Comme je l'ai précisé dans la première partie, les images mobiles sont devenues de plus en plus présentes dans la sphère publique à partir de 2007-2008 en raison du boom des médias et réseaux sociaux. Les images mobiles ont eu leurs festivals, elles ont commencé à investir le monde du journalisme lorsque cela était nécessaire, tandis que leur présence sur Internet ne cessait d'augmenter. Envoyées par MMS (c'est-à-dire par message privé de téléphone à téléphone), partagées au quotidien sur des sites comme Facebook et Twitter ou bien entre contacts privés grâce à Whatsapp, Pick, etc., les photos mobiles se sont intégrées à notre paysage quotidien. Quant aux applications mobiles, selon Hjorth et Pink elles ont commencé à jouer le rôle de « lubrifiant social ».⁸⁷ C'est tout un écosystème qui a investi la nouvelle génération de smartphones : ces derniers sont à présent livrés avec un appareil photo intégré, le Wi-Fi et le haut débit, fonctionnalités qui ne cessent de s'améliorer. Par conséquent, de nombreuses applications visuelles continuent à apparaître. C'est au sein de ce dispositif complet de fonctions étroitement liées les unes aux autres que la fluidité du partage d'images mobiles est devenue standardisée et normée.

Je poursuis donc mon analyse des pratiques en vigueur pendant cette période de transition. Mes deux questions principales sont : d'une part, comment le processus d'auto-validation des images mobiles personnelles – en symbiose avec la généralisation des réseaux sociaux mobiles,

⁸⁷ Hjorth, L., & Pink, S. (2014). New visualities and the digital wayfarer: Reconceptualizing camera phone photography and locative media. *Mobile Media & Communication*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 40-57.

mais aussi grâce à elle – a-t-il évolué ? D'autre part, comment s'est agencé le passage de la légitimation par les pairs à l'auto-validation ? On le voit, l'objectif de cette seconde partie est de décrire et analyser le phénomène d'acceptation de l'image mobile, à *l'échelle du groupe* et à *l'échelle de l'individu*, à mesure qu'il se développe. J'ai pour cela recours à deux chapitres. Le premier traite de la légitimation par les pairs, à la fois sur Internet et hors ligne. J'y réalise un bilan des applications mobiles existantes dans le domaine du social et du visuel. Je me penche notamment sur le cas de Qik, qui est l'une des toutes premières plateformes de partage de pocket-films amateurs : comment cette application a émergé, comment elle a évolué. Pour explorer les débuts du partage en ligne de ces vidéos mobiles d'amateurs et pouvoir ainsi en esquisser une typologie, je me suis appuyée sur un visionnage quotidien de la plateforme Qik entre 2010 et 2012 et y ai suivi quelques profils. Des années plus tard, dans les fameux *selfies* on retrouve bien tous les mêmes thèmes que j'avais repérés : les #foodselfies (photos de nourriture), les #petselfies ou #pelfies (photos d'animaux de compagnie), les #feetselfies (photos des pieds), etc.

Je poursuis ce chapitre avec une étude de deux expositions collectives de photos mobiles qui me permettent d'explorer le concept de « communautés de pratiques » de Wenger.⁸⁸ Ces expositions ont eu lieu après la sortie de l'iPhone et à un moment où le nombre d'applications dédiées au partage de photos commençait à se multiplier. La première s'est tenue à Madrid en 2010. Elle a été la toute première exposition d'EyePhoneographie. Quant à la seconde, elle a été présentée à Paris en 2012, et l'on pouvait y voir les œuvres d'un collectif d'Instagrammeuses françaises, *Regards de Femmes*. Ces deux expositions me permettent de démontrer qu'il est possible de trouver des exemples de photographie mobile institutionnalisée – avec la reconnaissance du public –, mais que le processus de légitimation des images mobiles était en train de changer : il ne dépendait plus seulement de la sanction ou validation des institutions traditionnelles, mais encore, et de plus en plus, de celle des autres artistes en exercice. En parallèle, de nouvelles applications donnant une plus grande place aux images mobiles ne cessaient d'apparaître : Instagram (2010), Grindr (2009), Tinder (2012), et Vine (2012) ne sont que quelques-unes des plus célèbres. En 2012, Snapchat a été ouvert au grand public, et

⁸⁸ Wenger, E. (1999). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

dans son sillage est apparue une nouvelle façon innovante de partager les images mobiles, plus légère et éphémère.

J'ai été entravée dans ma recherche par le fait que les *Snap*s (images partagées par le biais de Snapchat), sont des *images éphémères* : il m'était difficile de trouver une méthodologie adaptée à l'étude des pratiques des usagers de cette application. De fait, comme je ne savais pas comment rencontrer des utilisateurs de Snapchat, ni où, je détaille mes tentatives avortées d'étudier le phénomène d'adoption et de réception de cette application au sein du public parisien. Par exemple, j'avais commencé par me créer une alerte Google, mais ensuite j'ai appris qu'elle était limitée à une seule langue : les alertes que je recevais étaient uniquement en français et j'ai appris a posteriori que pour chaque alerte Google il faut configurer la langue. Ensuite, comme je souhaitais me pencher sur le problème de la réception, j'ai réagi en tentant ma chance sur la page Snapchat de Google Play, mais ce n'était pas une bonne idée non plus, à cause de la joie euphorique des commentaires sur cette page. J'ai alors essayé de contacter des utilisateurs de Snapchat que j'ai trouvés sur un groupe Facebook dédié à cette application, mais une seule personne a accepté d'être interrogée. Ces échecs successifs m'ont fait comprendre que la méthodologie la plus adaptée à l'étude des pratiques visuelles amateurs restait de m'en tenir à une approche globale du phénomène, et donc de m'intéresser aux dynamiques de groupe, ce qui confirmait d'ailleurs une fois de plus mon intuition première.

Du fait que Snapchat a été investi en priorité par les adolescents à une époque où la recherche d'attention immédiate bat son plein, je poursuis logiquement mon troisième chapitre avec deux entretiens réalisés auprès de groupes témoins constitués de jeunes Français. Je passe en revue leurs habitudes, que je considère comme emblématiques d'une certaine appropriation de l'image mobile que dénote un niveau semi-public – en d'autres termes, un peu moins public que ce que j'ai étudié auparavant. Aujourd'hui, en 2015, les *Snap*s se sont normalisés et constituent à présent la partie cachée – et pourtant incontournable – de cet iceberg qu'est le partage des images mobiles. Mais comment cela s'est-il produit ? Mes recherches sur cette application, où l'accès à l'image partagée se veut très éphémère, m'ont amenée à me pencher sur un type de photo égocentrique qui est devenue représentative de multiples constructions identitaires et vernaculaires, mais aussi d'un goût pour le jeu, d'une spontanéité, d'une certaine sens de l'éphémère et d'un intérêt pour la vie quotidienne.

Alors, après la validation entre membres d'une même communauté, est-ce une auto-validation qui a émergé comme fait socio-culturel ? La seule auto-validation individuelle est-elle même *possible* ? Cette revendication de ne ressentir *ni le besoin ni l'envie* d'être approuvé par le groupe est-elle sincère ? Je cherche également à comprendre les enjeux derrière ces échanges entre particuliers, la façon dont se nouent des liens sincères et intimes par le biais d'images mobiles et la question de l'espace personnel. Avec le boom du selfie, toutes ces problématiques sont devenues prépondérantes comme jamais auparavant.

Enfin, mon dernier chapitre, le quatrième, se veut auto-ethnographique, tout en poursuivant la quête des enjeux de la légitimation. C'est pourquoi il est construit autour d'une étude de terrain simple, mais sans conclusion définitive. À l'époque où j'ai mené cette étude, je voulais comprendre comment je pouvais être en mesure de voir chaque jour un nombre incroyable de photos privées sur Facebook, Instagram, etc., et en même temps ne jamais vraiment saisir ce qu'elles représentaient pour leurs auteurs, et donc pour les cercles sociaux élargis de ces derniers. Je me suis inspirée des théories du psychologue britannique Anthony J. Marcel pour ce qui est des problématiques de la lecture. Il a démontré que « si les lecteurs les moins habiles consacrent trop d'attention aux procédés d'encodage, ils risquent de perdre conscience du sens » (1983).⁸⁹ Effectivement, lorsque je faisais défiler les flux d'images quotidiennes sur mon « mur », je me retrouvais souvent – et même encore aujourd'hui – à essayer de comprendre le procédé d'encodage de ces photos ; appréciant leur esthétique et leur beauté tout en cherchant à saisir d'autres signes sur lesquels je n'avais pas encore mis le doigt. La plupart du temps, ma compréhension de l'histoire derrière les images, y compris celles de mes propres amis, demeurait incertaine. Autrement dit, les raisons pour lesquelles ces photos avaient été prises, qui étaient les gens qui figuraient dessus, etc., tout cela m'était très flou, voire inconnu. Souvent, pour le public à qui les images ne sont pas directement adressées, le contexte qui rend la photo ou vidéo signifiante, notamment les *motivations profondes* qui ont poussé l'utilisateur à la prendre, la poster ou la partager, demeure vague. Ce sont donc finalement des *pulsions scopiques* qui nous poussent à regarder brièvement ces images.

⁸⁹ Gallagher, S., & Marcel, A. J. (1999). The Self in Contextualized Action. *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 6(4), pp. 4-30.

Toutefois, je dois souligner que le fait que ces images soient dénuées de contexte explicatif ne constitue pas une nouveauté en soi. Ce phénomène existait déjà du temps de la photo argentique, lorsque les photos développées n'étaient pas correctement archivées, référencées ou indexées, ce qui rendait les circonstances de la prise du cliché incompréhensibles. En fait, dans n'importe quel contexte, lorsqu'un changement de production ou de réception se produit, le mode de codage et de décodage se renouvelle. Même avec les groupes de témoins, il était très difficile de comprendre les blagues privées que s'échangeaient mes volontaires, et les sous-entendus quant aux circonstances auxquelles elles faisaient référence.

C'est pour cette raison que mon quatrième chapitre est auto-ethnographique. Je commence par dresser la chronologie de mes années caméraphone, de 2002 à 2010, puis de mes années smartphone, de 2010 à ce jour. Cela me permet de faire la lumière sur certaines des pratiques privées les plus archétypiques et exemplaires (dans mon cas, j'étais la seule à en connaître les motivations sous-jacentes) qui m'ont posé problème lorsque j'ai conduit mes entretiens avec mes groupes témoins. C'est principalement cette raison qui m'a poussée à faire porter mon auto-ethnographie sur mes relations les plus intimes, à savoir les dyades amicales. Cette décision a soulevé de nombreux défis méthodologiques et épistémologiques. Néanmoins, je me sentais plus apte à envisager les pratiques concernant les photos mobiles privées dans toutes leurs nuances en étudiant le phénomène de l'intérieur et de façon réflexive. Bien sûr, il est toujours complexe d'étudier des données empiriques, car elles sont confuses et obscures. Cet exercice offre des avantages, mais il a aussi ses limites, et il est impossible de mener à bien ce type d'étude sans le reconnaître, notamment parce que, comme le dit Oksman, lorsqu'un chercheur se penche sur les utilisations du mobile dans notre société contemporaine, il vit lui-même au cœur de son sujet d'étude.⁹⁰

À mesure que les smartphones devenaient des objets de la vie quotidienne, des problématiques telles que l'absence et la présence, l'indexicalité, la subjectivité, l'instantanéité, les taquineries de couple, le selfie ou le *sexting* ont pris une ampleur globale et sont devenues le centre de l'attention de nombreux chercheurs en études visuelles, en anthropologie ou en sociologie visuelle. Objets de discours inévitables, elles occupent une place centrale dans ce chapitre.

⁹⁰ Cité par Villi, M. (2010). *Visual mobile communication: Camera phone photo messages as ritual communication and mediated presence*, (Doctoral thesis). Helsinki: Aalto University School of Art and Design, p. 39.

Comment négocie-t-on la compréhension de ces facteurs implicites lors d'échanges visuels mobiles, s'ils ne sont pas clairs et explicites alors qu'ils sont censés l'être à la vue de l'image ? Ces questions doivent être résolues, même lors d'échanges entre amis proches. Mon tout dernier chapitre aborde donc le thème des taquineries de couple, des photos coquines et du *sexting*, puis s'attarde sur les questions de la construction de l'image de soi avant d'analyser ce qu'est un selfie. Cette étude auto-ethnographique et réflexive a été réalisée de façon rétrospective. J'y énonce les facteurs qui ont déclenché le boom du selfie et sa mutation en procédé d'auto-légitimation. En résumé, mon quatrième chapitre analyse le problème de l'auto-légitimation et m'amène à repenser les concepts de validité, de fiabilité et d'objectivité, afin de déterminer si l'auto-validation par l'image mobile vernaculaire constitue un phénomène abouti ou pas.

Conclusion générale

Le résultat présenté ici ne peut être qu'une photographie partielle des processus de légitimation culturelle par lesquels sont passées les images mobiles au cours de la dernière décennie. Ces processus sont décrits et analysés, mais comment peut-on étudier un sujet qui se métamorphose sous l'œil de l'ethnographe historien et qui, par conséquent, ne peut être étudié en tant qu'objet permanent et immuable ? Comment décortiquer et disséquer un tel sujet afin de mieux l'appréhender, s'il comporte autant de facettes ? Je peux néanmoins tirer quelques conclusions.

Tout d'abord, la première observation, très simple, que l'on peut faire, est que le terme « culture mobile » englobe un nombre de pratiques aussi innombrables que variées et hétérogènes. Dans ce sens, le concept de culture mobile est en constante mutation, tant au niveau technologique que social, car ces changements, du fait qu'ils sont quotidiens, passent la plupart du temps inaperçus du grand public ou de la société qui les produit. Ces mutations surviennent au sein de *l'habitus mobile*, sur des sites Internet qui apparaissent et disparaissent ou sur de nouvelles applications qui deviennent populaires. Le concept de culture mobile englobe des activités de la vie quotidienne où se mêlent ludisme, bonheur et plaisir, mais également frustration. Par conséquent, je me suis proposé d'aborder le sujet en me concentrant sur l'étude des *pratiques visuelles mobiles des amateurs*. Pourtant, même en me restreignant à *cet aspect-là* du domaine, le champ à analyser demeure trop vaste. On y retrouve des pratiques telles que la production de vidéos personnelles, de MMS, de dépêches d'actualité ou d'œuvres d'art. Les *multiples* processus de *légitimation* culturelle deviennent donc très *complexes* à étudier. Cela m'a posé problème lorsque j'ai dû élaborer un plan et un corpus bien délimités, sans parler des multiples possibilités qui s'offraient à moi en termes de cadres de travail et d'approches méthodologiques.

D'autre part, je me suis rendu compte que la légitimation des discours culturels à propos du caractère public ou privé des images mobiles amateurs d'un côté, et leur valeur ou crédibilité de l'autre, se trouvent perpétuellement renégociées. Ces catégories sémantiques sont, encore

une fois, sans cesse reconfigurées au fil du temps pour expliquer la production, la circulation, l'appropriation de l'utilisation et les récits culturels. La discursivité à ce sujet est donc très active. Une des tâches principales de cette thèse était de comprendre comment s'agencent les multiples facettes de ce prisme opposant public (visible) et privé (invisible) ou encore ce qui est partageable et ce qui ne l'est pas. Car ces facettes brouillent constamment leurs propres frontières et se matérialisent sans cesse de façon intelligible dans les images mobiles des particuliers, le tout constituant un ensemble à étudier d'un point de vue visuel, ethnographique et sociologique. Le travail auquel je me suis attelée n'était pas ancré que dans une perspective technologique : je me suis en effet aussi questionnée sur les enjeux sociologiques, contextuels et subjectifs de ce sujet.

J'ai constitué les quatre chapitres de manière à mettre en avant le fait que le processus de légitimation, socialement fondamental, unifie des pratiques, des sens et des structures matérielles distincts en un seul ensemble de conventions structurées. Cela aura pris une décennie, mais le visage changeant du phénomène culturel qu'est la *culture mobile* nous montre qu'après avoir été entérinées et légitimées à *l'échelle des institutions* traditionnelles (du domaine artistique ou des médias de presse) et à *l'échelle individuelle* (par les utilisateurs eux-mêmes), les pratiques liées à l'image mobile amateur ont été adoptées de façon tellement massive que l'on peut considérer qu'elles font indiscutablement partie de nos mœurs contemporaines.

La première partie développe l'idée que, lorsque les images mobiles ont gagné en considération et ont accédé au rang d'objets de valeur et d'importance, elles ont dans la foulée été mises en valeur dans les infrastructures publiques populaires. En conséquence de quoi, le fait de voir ces images dans des espaces porteurs d'une certaine légitimité a conduit à leur accorder de l'attention et de la valeur. Par exemple, dans l'étude de cas du festival Pocket Films nous avons vu comment les institutions artistiques solidement établies bâtissent un dispositif favorable à la création de valeur et au développement des goûts. De même, l'intégration des images mobiles à l'actualité journalistique a eu un impact culturel conséquent, puisque c'est le concept même d'image mobile qui a été redéfini, ainsi que sa valeur aux yeux de la population en général. Aujourd'hui, les images mobiles sont bien plus que des outils pour entrepreneurs ou des gadgets pour adolescents, c'est indéniable. Elles donnent une voix à nos

désirs, à nos besoins et ouvrent de nouveaux espaces où se manifestent les représentations de notre culture populaire.

Ensuite, ma deuxième partie s'est centrée sur la manière dont nous appréhendons et construisons l'analyse des processus d'auto-légitimation des images mobiles par l'utilisateur lui-même, qu'il s'agisse des procédés de création ou de partage. C'est ainsi que, le premier chapitre de cette partie, je présente des groupes témoins et des entretiens réalisés en vis-à-vis ou en visioconférence qui m'ont servi à étudier les mécanismes de l'approbation entre pairs, laquelle aboutit à des communautés de pratiques homogènes. Je mets de fait en évidence la dernière tendance du phénomène, c'est-à-dire une transition vers une utilisation plus conversationnelle et en temps réel des images mobiles, ce qui me permet de démontrer l'influence du selfie et du phénomène de photo instantanée et éphémère sur la façon dont sont construits les échanges à l'heure actuelle. Il en découle que le fait de partager des selfies en ligne, ainsi que toutes sortes d'informations personnelles, ne répond pas à des normes figées. Au contraire, elles fluctuent en permanence à mesure qu'évoluent les notions d'acceptation et d'appropriation. Ce sont les actions réalisées avec ces médias qui, à force d'être reproduites, amènent ces fluctuations de ce soi connecté, entre émancipation, autonomisation et marchandisation de ce *mediated* soi.

Au vu des circonstances que je viens de décrire, une thèse comme la mienne doit impérativement adopter des méthodes de recherche très actuelles, afin de prendre en compte les variations constantes que son propre objet d'étude subit. La photographie et – dans une certaine mesure – la vidéo amateurs, telles que nous les concevions il y a quelques années, ont complètement changé. À présent, la création d'images mobiles relève plus de l'Internet mobile, de l'utilisation d'applications, des télécommunications (3G/4G/5G), des réseaux sociaux et des nouvelles technologies mobiles que de la photographie *en elle-même*. Les mobiles constituent un dispositif audiovisuel qui donne la possibilité d'exprimer une certaine créativité, de communiquer visuellement et de réaliser ou d'entreprendre bien d'autres activités de manière agréable. Ils permettent en outre de chercher et trouver des informations instantanément et autorisent une certaine influence des médias dans des espaces en ligne et hors ligne. Sans compter que, du fait que la dynamique des sites Internet se renouvelle et s'actualise en permanence au gré des nouveautés, les technologies des caméraphones et des

smartphones subissent une obsolescence quotidienne. En effet, dans un avenir peu éloigné, le mobile sera encore plus proche de l'ordinateur que du téléphone. De plus, il est indispensable de se souvenir que, dans cet écosystème dynamique, les opinions se forment en un instant, mais se construisent malgré tout graduellement, jour après jour et de manière stratifiée.

Sur le plan affectif, nous avons vu que le désir et le besoin irrépressible de voir ou de partager du contenu visuel mobile sont indissociables du processus d'appropriation de l'objet téléphone portable et de ses possibilités. Ces appareils, emblématiques de la mondialisation, se prêtent à toujours plus de découvertes, de transformations et de recherche. Par conséquent, il convient de garder à l'esprit que la diversification des fonctions de ces appareils et leur grande facilité d'utilisation amènent également des changements sociaux dans les habitudes collectives, ce qui nécessite d'adapter continûment notre manière de les analyser. Malgré cela, il faut admettre qu'une majorité croissante d'universitaires semble prête à accepter ces changements culturels constants. La première génération de chercheurs à s'intéresser aux études visuelles mobiles comptait peu de représentants, au début. Mais, à mesure que la déferlante d'images mobiles prenait des proportions toujours plus grandes, les études sur le phénomène se sont aussi multipliées.

Le but de ma thèse était donc d'étudier la façon dont les images mobiles amateurs se sont trouvées légitimées sur la période de 2005 à 2015. Bien que la légitimation soit un processus dialectique, je soutiens que, pour théoriser sérieusement les pratiques visuelles mobiles quotidiennes et les changements de procédure, il est nécessaire de prendre en compte non seulement les mécanismes relationnels tels que les mettent en lumière les entretiens en vis-à-vis, mais encore le fonctionnement de la culture et des structures normatives qui fonctionnent en tant que dispositifs. Les mobiles, dont le statut est passé de celui de gadget à celui d'outil utilisé au quotidien, sont une bonne illustration de la manière dont divers processus de légitimation se déroulent et évoluent. La fructueuse recherche que j'ai réalisée pour les besoins de cette thèse m'a permis, je l'espère, d'ouvrir des pistes de réflexion valides et j'espère également que d'autres jeunes chercheurs y trouveront l'inspiration de développer eux aussi ces thématiques.

Faire cette thèse de doctorat m'a permis de confirmer ma volonté de poursuivre mon cheminement professionnel sur la voie de la recherche et de l'enseignement, en me spécialisant en culture visuelle et mobile. Mes intérêts principaux ont trait à la méthodologie de la recherche en études visuelles en ligne, en culture numérique, en pratiques vernaculaires et liées à la vie quotidienne. Afin d'enrichir mes recherches, je me considérerais comme très chanceuse d'avoir la possibilité de mettre mon savoir-faire artistique au service de projets créatifs globaux, en partenariat avec des collègues aussi bien français qu'internationaux.

Traduction de l'anglais par Céline Vergne.

Para Maia, Pol & Tiago

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Paris 2015,
gaby d

Table of Contents

General Introduction	10
Historical Situation and Background.....	12
a) Technical Chronology.....	12
b) The Smartphone Turn.....	16
State of the Art – Part One: Former Mobile Image Studies and Taxonomies.....	21
Research Context and Chronology.....	26
Thesis Outline, Case Studies, and Methodology.....	28
Adoption and Appropriation Patterns in Mobile Imaging.....	31
 Part I. Cameraphone Images, The Legitimation Years	36
 Introduction: The Amateur Years of Cameraphone Artists and Citizen Journalists	37
 Chapter 1. Cameraphone Images and the Genesis of their Artistic Legitimation. From the Pocket to the Screen	45
1.1. Film Festival Studies.....	48
1.2. The Early Years of the Pocket Films Festival (2005-2007).....	49
1.2.1. Creation and Motivations of a Pocket Film Dispositif.....	49
1.2.2. From Low-brow Gadget to High-brow Culture.....	51
1.2.3. Pocket Films Festival 2007, a Year in Detail: Logistics and Impact.....	57
1.3. Mysteries of an Exposed Intimacy, The Analysis of “Porte de Choisy”, a Pocket Film by Antonin Verrier.....	65
1.3.1 Rationale for Case Study.....	65
1.3.2. Hermeneutics of an Award-winning Pocket Film.....	67
1.3.3. The Reception of Porte de Choisy: Controversy and Critique.....	69
1.3.4. Cameraphone Images in the Dawn of a Mobile Habitus Era.....	79
1.3.5. Conditioned by the Equipment.....	81
1.4. Private, Personal, Intimate or Exposed Intimacy?	85
1.4.1. In the Bathroom: One of the Most Personal Intimate Places.....	88
1.4.2. Naked Raw Images to Share.....	91
1.5. The Raw Sound and the Kinesthetic Gazes.....	94

1.5.1. Haptically in Bed.....	96
1.6. Fragmentations of a Mobile Nudity.....	99
1.6.1 <i>Exposable</i> Versus <i>Non-exposable</i> , what is (a) public?	103
1.6.2. A Mobile Intimacy.....	105
1.6.3. From the Bedroom onto the Web 2.0.....	109
1.6.4. Porte de Choisy's Aperture and References.....	112
1.7. The Decision to Share and Screen.....	121
1.8. Conclusion.....	123
 Chapter 2. Discourses and myths around vernacular cameraphone image mediatization	125
 2.1. Methodology, Hypothesis and Theoretical Rationale.....	126
2.2. The Sensation of an Immediate Reality: The Live Myth.....	131
2.3. Cameraphone Images and Hard news construction, a Timeline.....	135
2.3.1. Forging the Innovation.....	136
2.3.2. Mobile Leak and the Politics of the (non)visual.....	148
2.3.2.1. Storytelling with Forbidden Footage.....	151
2.3.2.2. The Hunger for Vernacular Mobile Videos.....	157
2.4. When Mobiles Become Visible: Adolescence.....	163
2.4.1 Developing a Larger Adoption.....	175
2.4.2. Social Networks as Social Media Start Setting Mediation Pace.....	184
2.4.2.1. Her Name was Neda.....	193
2.4.2.2. Hierarchizing Neda.....	200
2.5. Conclusion.....	211

Part II. Mobile Images Become Ordinary: The Users' Self-Legitimation Takeover	215
Introduction: From Peer-legitimation to Self-validation	216
Chapter 3. Mobile Visualities and Value Creation Through Peer Legitimation	221
3.1. State of the Art – Part Two.....	221
3.1.1. On Conversations, Connectedness and Mobile Visualities.....	223
3.1.2. From Network to Emplacement.....	231
3.2. The Early Years of Online Amateur Mobile Videos: Qik (2008-2009)	234
3.2.1. Typology of Mobile Vernacular Videos.....	242
3.3. Communities of Practice as Mobile Playgrounds: From Artistic Venues to Mobile Apps.....	249
3.3.1. Offline: Eyephoneography, Madrid 2010.....	250
3.3.2. Online: Regards de Femmes, Paris 2012.....	252
3.4. Why and How to Study Snapchat?.....	263
Online	
3.4.1 The Google Alert as Research Methodology.....	264
3.4.2. The Happiness of the Forum.....	266
3.4.3 Chat Interview.....	269
Offline	
3.4.1. Theoretical Frame and Methodology.....	274
3.4.2. French Teens and Snapchat in an Age of Immediate Attention Seeking.....	275
3.4.3. Snapshot Everyday Life, Snapchat Fun.....	276
3.4.4. Funny Fleeting Selfies.....	280
3.4.5. Snapchat Versions of Life.....	290
3.5. Conclusion.....	294

Chapter 4. The Pursuit of Self-legitimation, the Selfie Moment and a First Person Perspective	298
4.1. Motivation and Rationale for an Autoethnographic Approach.....	298
4.2. From Cellphone to Camphone: Personal Timeline from 2002 until 2010.....	307
4.3. My Own Private Mobile World, from 2010 Onwards.....	315
4.3.1. Methodology.....	316
4.3.2. Strong Tie Friendship Dyads; Seven MMS Case Studies - Four Topics: Absence/Presence, Indexicality, Implicits, Instantaneity.....	318
4.3.3. Couple Teasing.....	333
Case N°1: Selfies of Tease.....	335
Case N°2: Hot Pics and Sexting-Circumvention.....	339
4.3.4. Sexting, a Scandalous Recurrent Narrative.....	346
4.4. Reflections on Selfie Reflexivity.....	350
4.5. The Swipe Logic.....	357
4.5.1. Thumbing Selfies.....	361
4.6. Conclusion.....	371
 General Conclusion	 374
 Index	 379
 Bibliography	 396
 Appendixes	 442

General Introduction

In 1965 French sociologists Pierre Bourdieu and Luc Boltanski wrote a thesis proposing that the power of photography was “extrinsic to photography”, and went beyond photography itself, and “communicated within a system of values”.¹ In this same vein, the aim of this thesis is to analyze, and explain how the apparatus within the cultural industries enforced the normatization, creation, circulation and sharing of *mobile images*² between the years 2005 and 2015. From being rare, to even becoming a compulsive practice. How did the evolution from search for cultural validation, to later exposed intimacy, to a habitual reflex - the selfie happen?³ From MMS, to more online and mobile apps, the objective is to define and understand how these mobile everyday visual practices influence, and are influenced by, social structures, institutions and norms, and also by individuals themselves, often dealing with their most intimate conversations.

¹ Bourdieu, P. (dir), Boltanski, L., Castel, R., & Chamboredon, J. C. (1965). *Un Art Moyen, essai sur les usages sociaux de la photographie*. Paris: Éditions de Minuit.

² All along this thesis I will use the term *mobile images* as the images (still or in motion) produced and/or shared through mobile telephone devices with an embedded camera.

³ According to the Oxford Dictionaries' definition a selfie is “A photograph that one has taken of oneself, typically one taken with a smartphone or webcam and shared via social media.” Selfies will be thoroughly discussed in the second part.

This thesis will shed light on the legitimization interrogations, and thus social validation that conditioned the cultural changes of vernacular⁴ mobile visual practices.

In order to study the story/ies and *discourses*⁵ of the legitimization and validation processes mobile visual practices underwent, some main questions guide my analysis: How did private mobile image prosumption (production and consumption) as a visual phenomenon become culturally validated and thus a legitimized global practice? What and where, were its main socio-cultural and visual effects in everyday life? How did these mechanisms facilitate, help, and embrace (or not) the pace of mobile image appropriation? What are the roles of opinion leaders (for instance, the Parisian Pocket Film Festival) in impacting the ways through which new ideas diffuse? How did this process occur?

But, following Von Pape, I completely understood that, the innovation under analysis, usually changes during the analysis, and therefore cannot be studied as if it were the same innovation.⁶ Therefore, my second enquiry refers to the period of time *after* that moment of mobile legitimization and validation processes. What happened once the practices were validated and legitimated by established institutions and cultural industries? Are we now experiencing what Alexandre Astruc dreamt of, the fact that everyone would be able to use a camera pen?⁷

⁴ On the conceptualization of “vernacular” I follow Burgess, J., understanding the term as related to the ordinary, the everyday, the amateurs, the banal, and even folk. Cf. Burgess, J. (2007). *Vernacular Creativity and new media* (Doctoral dissertation). Creative Industries Faculty Queensland University of Technology.

⁵ I follow Stuart Hall’s discourse definition: “A discourse is a group of statements which provide a language for talking about - i.e. a way of representing - a particular kind of knowledge about a topic. When statements about a topic are made within a particular discourse, the discourse makes it possible to construct the topic in a certain way. It also limits the other ways in which the topic can be constructed”. Hall, S. (1992). What is a “discourse”? The West and the Rest: Discourse and power. *The Indigenous Experience: Global Perspectives*, pp. 165-173. Retrieved from <https://analepsis.files.wordpress.com/2013/08/hall-west-the-rest.pdf>

⁶ Von Pape, T. (2006). Diffusion et appropriation du téléphone portable par les adolescents, évolution des usages et enjeux sociaux. In *Enjeux et usages des Tic: reliance sociale et insertion professionnelle*. Université Libre de Bruxelles, pp. 73-93.

⁷ Astruc, A. (1948, March 30). The Birth of a New Avant-Barde: La Camera-Stylo. Originally published in *L’Écran française* as an article entitled *Du Stylo à la caméra et de la caméra au stylo*. Retrieved from https://soma.sbccc.edu/users/davega/FILMST_113/FILMST_113_0ld/GENERALTHEORY/CameraStylo_Astruc_1928.pdf

To reply to all these aforementioned questions, I will divide my demonstration into two parts, each one being subdivided into two chapters. Beginning by the analysis of an artistic *dispositif*⁸ (the Pocket Films Festival) and the award winning pocket film of 2007, and then migrating onto a more media focused one: a global journalistic timeline of cameraphone images and the mediatization of those mobile images to create news. The first part consists therefore, of the study of the amateur grounding and formative years, and the legitimation and value given to them. The second part, which is also divided into two studies, looks into what happened once this practice became culturally more adopted and mainstream. The third chapter focuses on peer-centered validation, such as communities of practice, and will highlight the eventual passage to a more *conversationally connected* use of mobile images, where the snapshot dynamic influences ephemeral and transient mobile sharing. Moving onto the final chapter, an autoethnography, that deals with the analysis of my own practices, and which therefore, is a more reflexive way to touch upon mobile imaging and its affective and emotional meanings. In an empirical approach to cultural studies, focusing on practices as the everyday, on repeated dimensions of individual and collective human endeavor, I connect the analysis of cultural forms to social processes. Because to study social implications of the mobile images is to analyze how people make meaning of them.

Historical Situation and Background

a) Technical Chronology

The first iconic global company that brought photography to a middlebrow mass market was Kodak. Changing the course of the history of photography, the firm

⁸ The original definition of the sociological term *dispositif* was introduced in Michel Foucault, "Le jeu de Michel Foucault," in 1977. See Foucault, (1994). *Dits et écrits*, 2nd vol. Paris: Gallimard. Also See Michel Foucault, (1980), *Power/knowledge: selected interviews and other writings, 1972-1977*, (trans.) C. Gordon L. Marshall J. Mepham and K. Sober. New York: Pantheon Books. Chapter 11, "The Confession of the Flesh": "What I'm trying to pick out with this term is, firstly, a thoroughly heterogenous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions—in short, the said as much as the unsaid. Such are the elements of the apparatus. The apparatus itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements." I also relate to Agamben, G. (2007). *Qu'est-ce qu'un dispositif?* [2006]. (M. Rueff, Trans.). Paris: Payot & Rivages.

transformed photography into a large-scale popular hobby. Taking pictures also became a vernacular practice, and slowly but steadily, all through the 20th century, the pastime became an amateur affair, becoming much more commonplace. It united people of all ages and genders, and gained a vast array of socialization functions. Nevertheless, due to its cost, photography remained mainly, a middle to high class hobby. The middle class, alleged Bourdieu, wanted to purchase good photographic equipment, not to achieve a better photographic quality, but for status and positioning, as a social marker.

By the mid-1980's, the evolution of digital photographic companies such as Fuji led to fierce competition; Kodak's success started to waver, and the company's empire began to crumble. Additionally, there was further development of digital photography, and the telecom industry was also gaining ground in the home. By the early 2000s, the developments in the telephony, computing, and digital industries were ripe, enabling the evolution of a hybrid device: a cellular telephone with a point and shoot embedded camera. Some recognize Phillipe Kahn's story. He was a man, who in order to send images of his newborn baby, assembled a camera to a cellphone with wires, thus being the inventor of the first cameraphone. Yet, it was the J-SH04, also known as the J-Phone, the first commercially available cellphone to have an integrated CCD sensor and the Sha-Mail (Picture-Mail) infrastructure. Released only in Japan in November 2000, the first commercial cameraphone appeared: featuring a rudimentary built-in 0.1 megapixel camera. One year later, online sites such as the BBC news were relaying the news, and asking: "Is it a phone? Is it a camera?", as can be seen in the caption the photo of the device in figure 1 has.

In 2003, according to the ITU, the International Telecommunication Union, only 16 per cent of all phones that were being sold included a camera. They were still too big, too heavy or too expensive. That year cameraphones were forecasted to soon become standard in two of the most cutting-edge telecom countries, Finland and Korea. Executive VP Anssi Vanjoki, from Nokia Corp of Finland envisaged: "2003 will be the year that imaging is recognized as a major application for mobile phones."⁹ CEO Sung

⁹ Yomogita, H., & Tomonori, S. (2003). Next-Generation Technology Takes Off in Camera Phones, *Nikkei Electronics Asia*. Broken link <http://techon.nikkeibp.co.jp/NEA/archive/200306/249629/>

Jin Park, senior VP of Samsung Electronics Co, Ltd of Korea, also agreed and added: “almost all of the mobile phones manufactured from now on will have cameras.”¹⁰ He was absolutely right. One year later, in 2004, figures had already doubled to 38 per cent¹¹ and continued to soar.



Figure. 1. BBC News, U.K, Sci/Tech site as of 2001. (n.a.). Retrieved July 2015, from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/1550622.stm>

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

The development and adoption of the cellphone were also linked to many other technical improvements. For instance, one of the crucial pioneering factors that enabled cellphones to be carried around in our pockets and bags (i.e. to be really portable) depended on a particular technological advance: batteries. They became more powerful and smaller.¹² This factor also influenced later cameraphone, and smartphone design. In the first years of my research (between 2007 and 2010), most of the cellphones, at least those available on the French market, were just starting to have point-and-shoot embedded photo cameras. The device passed from being a cellphone to being interchangeably referred as cameraphone or camphone. Some of them had the technical possibility of being connected to the web, but rarely were: bundled offers were not yet possible. The mobile web - the possibility of having access to the World Wide Web from hand-held mobile devices such as smartphones connected to a mobile network - was still expensive, and image sharing was done either through computers, mainly through emails, or through well-known photo sharing sites such as Picassa or Flickr.

In fact, even if technically feasible, and already more common in Asia, the use of the cameraphone as a camera device between 2000 and 2006 was not yet a worldwide practice. This was almost certainly because of its aforesaid high costs, but also because it was depicted in the mass media (and thus perceived), either as a cool geeky gadget, almost especially conceived either for the well off or for business people.¹³ The adoption of the cameraphone was connected with the rise of emerging markets, especially China, India, and Eastern Europe, which were experiencing strong growth in exports of digital SLR cameras. It was also linked to the more global recession of the mid 2000s that hit the Japanese, and American photography market as well.

Attaining cheaper prices and more autonomy, over the last decade, the mobile market grew rapidly, and the global number of cellphone users in 2004 approached 1.2 billion

¹² Agar, J. (2004). *Constant touch: A global history of the mobile phone* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Icon Books, p. 10.

¹³ Rantavuo, H. (2008). *Connecting Photos: A Qualitative Study Of Cameraphone Photo Use*, (Doctoral dissertation). Helsinki: Taideteollinen korkeakoulu. Publication Series of the University of Art and Design, A; N°. 88, Helsinki, Finland. p. 13 and p. 75.

with around 500 thousand new subscribers being added each day.¹⁴ “In 2004 roughly 200 million digital cameras were sold in mobile phones”, and “Nokia became the largest digital camera manufacturer in the world, selling approximately 60-70 million camera phones.”¹⁵ Cameraphones were pushing cheap digital cameras out of the market. It should also be remembered that Nokia is a company exemplary in its creation of the mobile as an object of desire.¹⁶ For instance, in 2008, Nokia proclaimed they had already sold more camera phones than Kodak had sold film based simple cameras, and became the biggest manufacturer of any kind of camera.

The Internet World Stats of 2005 reported that twice as many people in the world had access to a cell phone than to the internet.¹⁷ By 2006, half of the world’s mobile phones had a built-in camera. As for video, the first video calls took place in Europe between 2002 and 2003, but were experimental.¹⁸ At a time when snapshot photography was shifting away from a print-oriented mode to a transmission-oriented and screen-mode,¹⁹ the first cameraphone made the move from still cameras to full motion video. By 2007, most mobile phones, even inexpensive ones, were being sold with an embedded camera, and then, the iPhone appeared in the market.

b) The Smartphone Turn

The cameraphone success led to a smartphone eruption. As cameraphones function with medium flow mobile networks, the smartphone’s birth and dissemination went hand-in-hand with mobile broadband market penetration. Approximately every ten years, a new generation of cellular standards appears; new frequency bands, higher data

¹⁴ Kalden, R. (2004). *Mobile internet traffic measurement and modeling based on data from commercial GPRS networks*, (Doctoral dissertation). University of Twente, Netherlands. p. 1.

¹⁵ Koskinen, I. (2007). *Mobile multimedia in action*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, p. 3.

¹⁶ Goggin, G. (2006). *Cell Phone Culture: Mobile Technology in Everyday Life*. London: Routledge, p. 42.

¹⁷ Gordon, J. (2006). The Cell Phone: An Artifact of Poplar Culture and a Tool of the Public Sphere. In A. P. Kavoori, A. and Arceneaux, N. (Eds.). *The Cell Phone Reader: Essays in Social Transformation*, (pp. 45-60), New York: Peter Lang Publishers, p. 48.

¹⁸ Goggin, G. (2006). Introduction: what do you mean ‘cell phone culture’?. *Cell Phone Culture: Mobile Technology in Everyday Life*. London: Routledge, pp. 1-16.

¹⁹ Rubinstein, D., & Sluis, K. (2008). A Life More Photographic. *Photographies*, 1(1), pp. 9-28. Retrieved from

https://www.academia.edu/181997/A_life_more_photographic_mapping_the_networked_image

rates and non-backward-compatible transmission technology characterize each generation. The first wireless internet²⁰ access became available in 1991 as part of the second generation (2G) of mobile phone technology. Higher speeds became available in 2001 and 2006 as part of the third (3G) and fourth (4G) generations. In 2011, 90% of the world's population lived in areas with 2G coverage, while 45% lived in areas with 2G and 3G coverage. Mobile broadband is also known as 3G, or third-generation mobile telecommunications technology. It is based on a set of standards used for mobile devices, telecommunications services and networks that comply with the International Mobile Telecommunications-2000 and ITU²¹ - which means that the device has wireless internet access and can connect to the internet through a mobile network. Smartphones also have the GPS capability and operating systems that can run apps to locate them.²² The first commercial 3G smartphone was launched on the 1st of October 2001, in Japan by NTT DoCoMo, the same company that had previously launched the Sharp J-SH04. It should be recalled that, nowadays, mobile devices entail not only smartphones, but also other portable devices such as laptops, tablets, phablets and wearable devices such as smart watches.

In 2007, joining a booming digital ecology of image making tools, one of the key devices to come into the arena was Apple's iPhone. Symbol of an affective capitalistic turn, where we are "transformed into assets, goods and services by appealing to our desires, needs and social relationships, or by making us act on a mere gut-feeling",²³ the iPhone became a composite cultural object. It represents an important moment, not only in the history of mobile media and photography, but also in the history of communication. It marks a juncture at which notions of identity, individualism, reflexivity, lifestyle and sociality, require re-articulation. In photography and video, the

²⁰ As for not capitalizing internet, Annette Markham and Nancy Baym (2009) state that since internet is neither a being nor a place it should be written with lower cases. Similarly, and following their approach, all along this thesis I have decided not to capitalize the word internet.

²¹ There are two basic technologies used to operate cell-phone networks: Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) and Code Division Multiple Access (CDMA). GSM is more popular in Europe and Asia and CDMA is more common in the United States. The major technical differences between the two systems have to do with the way each technology shares space on the radio spectrum.

²² de Souza e Silva, A. & Frith, J. (2012). *Mobile Interfaces in Public Spaces: Locational Privacy, Control, and Urban Sociability*. New York: Routledge, p. 6.

²³ Taken from the 'Affective Capitalism' Symposium description in which I participated, University of Turku, Turku, Finland, 5-6 Jun 2014. Retrieved from <https://affectivecapitalism.wordpress.com/>

iPhone functioned as a barometer for broader patterns of mobile image (ex)change. And, because it coupled with broadband developments, it became a symbol, and almost a synonym, of immediacy and globalization.²⁴

Apart from the advertising campaigns, a decisive factor in the iPhone's strategy is its ergonomic design. In order to be able to use online resources, the user-friendly finger-sensitive touchscreen interface of Apple's iOS mobile operating system became central, and made it stand out from competitor brands. Additionally, it is also necessary to add the social networks' boom to this timeline, especially the impact Facebook Mobile had for its users. For example, in September 2009, the growth of "Facebook's worldwide mobile audience had crossed 65 million active users. To put that in perspective, that's nearly 25% of all of Facebook's total worldwide reach – and four times as many people using Facebook Mobile than at that time in 2008."²⁵

The following five screenshots prove that the most popular camera in the Flickr community, between 2008 and 2011, was the iPhone; and for a site that is defined as a photography platform, the fact that the most used device came from the telecom family was quite unforeseen. Moreover, it is interesting to remark that in the last screenshot, there is already a differentiation between which iPhone model was being used more than another.

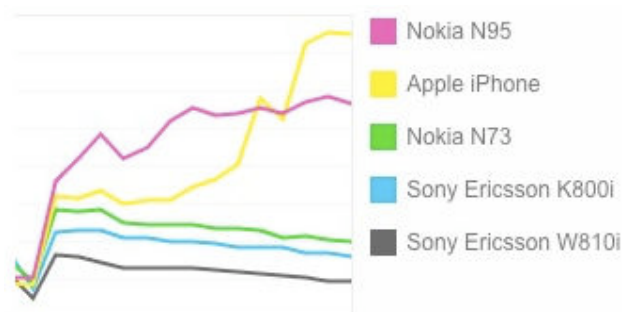


Figure 2. Flickr Statistics. (May 2008). Screenshot.

²⁴ Cf. Hjorth, L., Burgess, J., & Richardson, I. (2012). (Eds.). *Studying Mobile Media: Cultural Technologies, Mobile Communication, and the iPhone* (Routledge Research in Cultural and Media Studies). Routledge.

²⁵ Smith, J. (2009, September 3). Worldwide Facebook Mobile Usage Up 300% in Last 12 Months, *InsideFacebook*, <http://www.insidefacebook.com/2009/09/03/worldwide-facebook-mobile-usage-up-300-in-last-12-months/>

Most Popular Cameras in the Flickr Community

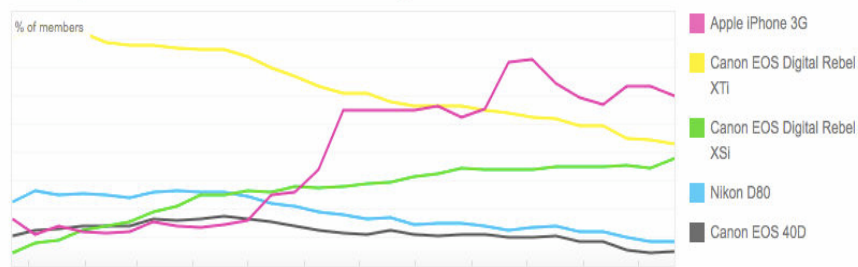


Figure 3. Flickr Statistics. (December 2009). Screenshot.

Appareils photos les plus populaires de la communauté Flickr

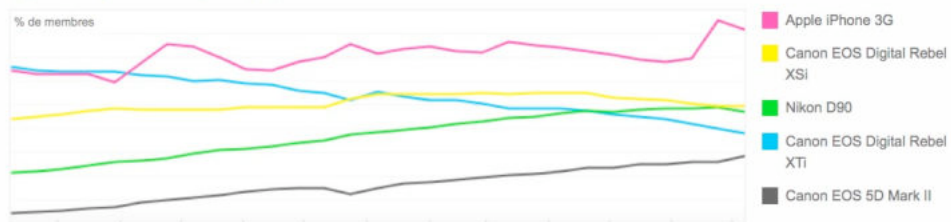


Figure 4. Flickr Statistics. (July 2010). Screenshot.

Téléphones portables les plus utilisés

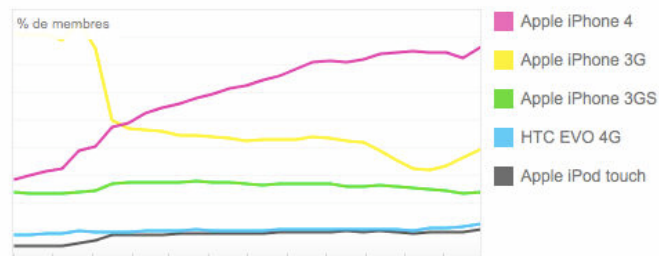
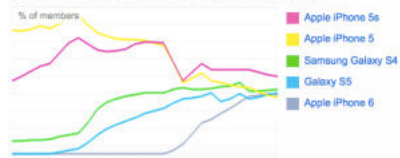
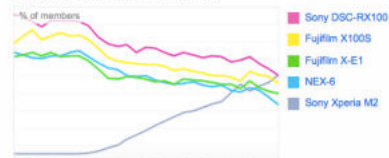


Figure 5. Flickr Statistics. (November 2011). Screenshot.

Most Popular Cameras in the Flickr Community



Popular Point & Shoot Cameras



Popular Cameraphones

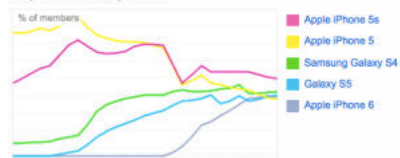


Figure 6. Flickr Statistics, (April 2015). Screenshot.

The About page of these graphs read

These graphs show the number of Flickr members who have uploaded at least one photo or video with a particular camera on a given day over the last year. The graphs are 'normalized', which is a fancy way of saying that they automatically corrected to compensate for the fact that more people join Flickr each day: the graph moving up or down indicates a change in the camera's popularity relative to all other cameras used by Flickr members. The graphs are only accurate to the extent that we can automatically detect the camera used to take the photo or shoot the video (about 2/3rds of the time). That is not usually possible with cameraphones, therefore they are under-represented.

In 2010, the worldwide number of cameraphones totaled more than a billion,²⁶ and sales of separate cameras (not connected ones) began to decline even more. 2010 was also the release year of the iPad, which came with several applications, including Safari, Mail, Photos, Video, iPod, iTunes, etc.; it was also a pivotal year in the improvement of mobile web browsers and sites. Because bigger, and thus easier for some people to manipulate, many users also started to take photos with tablets. Yet again, with a new market alternative, the option of image recording connected portable devices continued to grow.

To recap: the first generation was the camphone or cameraphone. One can take images with them but they were rarely connected. Then came the Smartphones. Which are cameraphones that can connect to the web through Wi-Fi, 3G, 4G, or 5G. Since smartphones have become mainstream and normatized, there is currently no need to differentiate them from the cameraphones. Thus, nowadays the term mobile is used interchangeably to refer to both.

²⁶ *The Economist*. (2010, April 8). Dotty but dashing, Nano-technology could improve the quality of mobile-phone cameras, <http://www.economist.com/node/15865270>

State of the Art - Part One: Former Mobile Image Studies and Taxonomies

The *mobile turn* came into the arena to conquer and take the place of a cultural object, where notions about identity, individualism and collectiveness were converging. Lifestyle and techno-societal online/offline relations were present, about to be rapidly reflected, and embodied into almost all-everyday life instances. But, in 2010, somehow demonstrating that things hadn't changed that much, in his doctoral thesis, Villi quoted Goggin, who years earlier had said: "The mobile phone culture is very much regarded as low, vulgar culture of the masses and therefore overlooked in research."²⁷ Nonetheless, over the last five years, in 2015 research in the mobile studies field is varied and growing. This is due to an undeniable increase in the adoption penetration and the popularity of this medium.

This first state of the art focuses on the first and second generation of scholars who have worked to try and understand the visual practices that the mobile facilitated. Yet, compared with the quantity of scholars doing Internet Studies, media studies, or digital anthropology, the number of those doing Mobile Studies, still remained much smaller. Principally divided into five geographical poles of research: Japanese-Korean, with well-known pillar scholars such as Okabe, Okada and Lee; Finnish, including: Battarbee, Koskinen, Kurvinen, Kindberg, Mäkela, Rantavuo, Sarvas, Spasojevic, Oksman and Villi; North American, with people such as Aakhus, Katz, Davis, van House, Edwards, Miller, Lillie, Caron and Caronia, and Ito; a European pole with French, Spanish, German, English, Dutch, Hungarian and Italian scholars, consolidated by people such as Allard, de Gournay, Frohlich, Fortunatti, Gómez Cruz, Nyíri, Licoppe, Ling, Lasén, Martin, Rivière, Scifo, Van Dijck, and, last but not least, the Oceania school led by Goggin and Hjorth, with scholars such as Horst, Chesher, Grace, Gye, Burgess, Palmer and Richardson and Schleser.²⁸

²⁷ Villi, M. (2010), *Visual mobile communication: Camera phone photo messages as ritual communication and mediated presence*, (Doctoral dissertation). Helsinki: Aalto University School of Art and Design, p. 25 quotes Goggin, G. (2006). *Cell Phone Culture: Mobile Technology in Everyday Life*. London: Routledge, p. 206.

²⁸ Might there be any forgotten name, I would like to apologize in advance.

While some scholars might be outside this cartography, and consider themselves to be digital ethnographers doing mobile topics, the aforementioned five poles, refer to the scholars I consider to be the first and second generation of academics doing research in the *mobile image* field. My academic inventory shows how much this type of research is linked to the geopolitical influence of industrial developments, economic investments, and industrial, or state grants. Consequently, most of the aforementioned scholars' papers deal with empirical, ethnographic small-scale data. This component confirms how larger-scale studies are mainly, if not only, being initiated and sponsored by the telecom industry, and remain impossible to be done on a larger scale on small academic budgets. Nevertheless, as mobile internet growth continues to increase, research endowments (may) expand, perhaps changing these facts, and making even research itself more mobile, less local and more global.

Some research has been particularly fundamental to thinking in regard to mobile images, initiating concepts of the mobile visual field, and mobile imaging and pushing them to greater depths. For instance Frohlich's taxonomy²⁹ classifies what people do with their photos along two main dimensions: here versus there, and now versus later, in this way creating four categories: "remote sharing", "sending", "archiving", and "co-present sharing". The *here* versus the *there* refers to trying to share a same physical space, to make the other see what I am seeing and to visualize where I am... The *now* versus the *later* makes reference to real time and archiving, as the two main different approaches in the mobile data sharing.

Finnish Ilpo Koskinen and Esko Kurvinen, are two of the early scholars who advanced mobile media as a new research field, analyzing noteworthy case studies on mobile images.³⁰ Kurvinen's article "Only When Miss Universe Snatches Me: Teasing in MMS Messaging" (2003), is the empirical theoretical background and inspiration for my

²⁹ Frohlich, D., Kuchinsky, A., Pering, C., Don, A., & Ariss, S. (2002). Requirements for Photoware, in ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work, Nov. 16-20, 2002, *ACM Press*, pp. 166-175.

³⁰ Koskinen, I., & Kurvinen, E. (2002). Messages visuels mobiles. Nouvelle technologie et interaction. *Réseaux: communication, technologie, société*, N° 112-113, pp. 107-138; Koskinen, I. & Kurvinen, E. (2005). Mobile Multimedia and Users: On the Domestication of Mobile Multimedia. *Teletronikk*, 3/4, pp. 60-68. Retrieved from <http://www.telenor.com/teletronikk/volumes/front.php>

autoethnographic and last chapter. It is with a similar perspective that I study how mobile “images help maintain conversation”,³¹ fluctuating from a more “intersubjective”,³² informal, intimate, and inner circled mechanism.³³

Okabe and Ito’s seminal article “Camera phones changing the definition of picture-worthy”,³⁴ helps one comprehend that the definition of what is worth being considered a picture is always being negotiated; as users started to give importance to ordinary objects and everyday events, and not only to special moments such as birthdays or holidays. In the will to understand these patterns of use, Kindberg et al. created a taxonomy based on the reasons for cameraphone image capture.³⁵ The researchers spotted two major dimensions: the “affective” versus the “functional”, and the “social” versus the “individual”.³⁶ Van House et al. used another classification in the social uses of personal photography: creating and maintaining social relationships; constructing personal and group memory; self-presentation and self-expression.³⁷ Then Van House and Davis made another study regarding the uses of the mobile: as a memory-capture device, as a communicative device, and as an expressive device.³⁸

³¹ Kurvinen, E. (2003). Only When Miss Universe Snatches Me. Teasing in MMS Messaging. *Proceeding of Designing Pleasurable Products and Interfaces DPPI03*, June 23–26, 2003, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA.

p. 101.

³² Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1967). *The Social Construction of Reality, A Treatise in Sociology of Knowledge*. New York: A Doubleday Anchor book. (First published in 1996).

³³ de Gournay, C. (2002). Pretense of Intimacy in France. In *Perpetual Contact: Mobile Communication, Private Talk, Public Performance*, J. E. Katz & M. Aakhus. (Eds.), (pp. 193–205), Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, p. 202.

³⁴ Ito, M., & Okabe D. (2003). Camera phones changing the definition of picture-worthy. *Japan Media Review*. Retrieved from <http://www.ojr.org/japan/wireless/1062208524.php>, accessed May 17, 2005.

³⁵ Kindberg, T., Spasojevic, M., Fleck, R. & Sellen, A. (2004). How and Why People Use Camera Phones. *Consumer Applications and Systems Laboratory, HP Laboratories Bristol*, HPL-2004-216 November 26, 2004. Retrieved from <http://www.hpl.hp.com/techreports/2004/HPL-2004-216.pdf>

³⁶ Kindberg, T., Spasojevic, M., Fleck, R. & Sellen, A. (2005). I Saw This and Thought of You: Some Social Uses of Camera Phones. In *Extended Abstracts of the Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI 2005)*, Portland, Oregon, April 2–7, 2005. New York: ACM Press, pp. 1545–1548.

³⁷ van House, N., Davis, M., Ames, M., Finn, M., & Viswanathan, V. (2005). The Uses of Personal Networked Digital Imaging: An Empirical Study of Cameraphone Photos and Sharing. In *Extended abstracts of the Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI 2005)* in Portland, Oregon, April 2–7, 2005. New York: ACM Press, pp. 1853–1856.

³⁸ van House, N. & Davis, M. (2005). *The Social Life of Camera phone Images*. Paper presented at Ubicomp 2005

workshop on Pervasive Image Capture and Sharing: New Social Practices and Implications for Technology. Tokyo, Japan, September 11, 2005. Retrieved from <http://people.ischool.berkeley.edu/~vanhouse/Van%20House,%20Davis%20-%20The%20Social%20Life%20of%20Cameraphone%20Images.pdf>

How we organize and share images and how this is inflected by the gender and age of the user has also been noticed by seminal ethnographies of cameraphone practices, such as those done by Mizuko Ito and Daisuke Okabe³⁹ in Japan, and Dong-Hoo Lee in Korea (2005). Based on Dong-Hoo Lee's 2005 article on female cameraphone empowerment,⁴⁰ Hjorth analyzed the role of context in a larger sense.⁴¹ In his 2006 doctoral dissertation, Risto Sarvas questioned mobile photography and metadata,⁴² and referred to Ulkuniemi's, 2005, four traditional snapshot photo functions: documentary, connection, interaction, and creation of self-concept. Sarvas noted that mobile phone cameras were the most sold cameras in the world, and also proposed extending the definition of snapshot photos as Chalfen had done in 1987,⁴³ in order to encompass a "snapshot media" definition.⁴⁴

Key concepts for studies concerning the roles mobiles can have, both in citizen journalism, and in the mass media, have been the works of Robinson and Robinson,⁴⁵ and Goggin.⁴⁶ The public roles mobile images had for the construction of hard news,

³⁹ Ito, M. (2005). Intimate Visual Co-Presence. *Paper presented at Ubicomp 2005 Workshop on Pervasive Image Capture and Sharing: New Social Practices and Implications for Technology*. Tokyo, Japan; Ito, M. & Okabe D. (2003). Camera phones changing the definition of picture-worthy. *Japan Media Review*. Retrieved from <http://www.ojr.org/japan/wireless/1062208524.php>, accessed May 17, 2005.

⁴⁰ Lee, D-H. (2005). Women's Creation of Cameraphone Culture, *Fibreculture Journal*, issue 6: mobility. Retrieved from <http://six.fibreculturejournal.org/fcj-038-womens-creation-of-camera-phone-culture/>

⁴¹ Hjorth, L. (2006). Playing at being mobile: Gaming, cute culture and mobile devices in South Korea, *The Fibreculture Journal*, issue 8, gaming networks. Retrieved from <http://eight.fibreculturejournal.org/fcj-052-playing-at-being-mobile-gaming-and-cute-culture-in-south-korea/>

⁴² Sarvas, R. (2006). *Designing User-Centric Metadata for Digital Snapshot Photography*, (Doctoral dissertation). Helsinki: Helsinki University of Technology and Helsinki Institute for Information Technology HIIT, p. 26. Retrieved from <http://lib.tkk.fi/Diss/2006/isbn9512284448/>

⁴³ To define snapshots photography I refer to the "casual and "home-made" photographs that mainly functioned "to keep records of the good and happy moments in the lives of one's self and one's family and friends". As defined by Chalfen, 1987 and quoted in Gómez Cruz and Meyer, 2012, p. 7.

⁴⁴ Sarvas & Vihavainen define snapshot media as the: "Pictures, video, sound, and text created by non-professionals (i.e., consumers) for non-commercial and non-artistic reasons, and the devices used to do this are basic consumer media creation devices, computers, and media management and editing software. In other words, (they) extend snapshot photography to cover the new uses and new media already in popular use." (n.p.). Cf. Sarvas, R., & Vihavainen, S. (2006). A Holistic View on Future Snapshot Media. Pervasive Image Capture and Sharing Workshop (PICS2006) at UbiComp 2006. Retrieved from http://groups.ischool.berkeley.edu/pics/papers/Sarvas_Vihavainen_holistic_pics06.pdf

⁴⁵ Robinson, W., & Robison, D. J. (2006). Tsunami Mobilizations: Considering the Role of Mobile and Digital Communication Devices, Citizen Journalism, and the Mass Media. In A. Kavoori & N. Arceneaux (Eds.). *The Cell Phone Reader: Essays in Social Transformation*, (pp. 85-103). New York: Peter Lang Publishers.

⁴⁶ Goggin, G. (2012). The iPhone and Communication. In L. Hjorth, J. Burgess & I. Richardson (Eds.). *Studying mobile media: cultural technologies, mobile communication, and the iPhone*, pp. 11- 27. Routledge.

and the *discourses* traditional media had, or did not have, over mobile media, is developed in detail in the second chapter. By discourse I adhere entirely to Hall's definition

A discourse is a group of statements which provide a language for talking about - i.e. a way of representing - a particular kind of knowledge about a topic. When statements about a topic are made within a particular discourse, the discourse makes it possible to construct the topic in a certain way. It also limits the other ways in which the topic can be constructed. A discourse does not consist of one statement, but of several statements working together to form what the French social theorist, Michel Foucault (1926-84) calls a 'discursive formation.'"⁴⁷

Miller and Edwards asked how the shift toward internet-based photo-sharing affected practices, posing questions such as: "when shared with strangers, do photos play a role in the creation of new socialization styles?"⁴⁸ They concluded that privacy was very significant for sharing or not sharing. Even nowadays, many users are aware of this issue and may be reluctant to share images, since they do not master the privacy settings. In his book *Mobile Multimedia in Action*, 2007, Koskinen had already discussed the impact private MMSs were having in people's everyday life. In the fourth chapter I further explore the possible misunderstandings that might occur when receiving and sending MMSs even between those with strong ties. In that chapter I also echo the excellent summary of the mobile visual field as found in Heli Rantavuo's 2008 dissertation.⁴⁹ She came to the conclusion that cameraphone photos, and their use, become meaningful to the participants through their own interpretations, the means of production, and

⁴⁷ Hall, S. (1992). What is a "discourse"? The West and the Rest: Discourse and power. *The Indigenous Experience: Global Perspectives*, pp. 165-173. Retrieved from <https://analepsis.files.wordpress.com/2013/08/hall-west-the-rest.pdf>

⁴⁸ Miller, A., & Edwards, W. (2007). Give and take: a study of consumer photo-sharing culture and practice. In *proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, San Jose, California, USA, April 28 – May 03, 2007. ACM Press: New York, pp. 347–356.

⁴⁹ Rantavuo, H. (2008). *Connecting Photos: A Qualitative Study Of Cameraphone Photo Use*, (Doctoral dissertation). Helsinki: Taideteollinen korkeakoulu. Publication Series of the University of Art and Design, A, N°. 88, Helsinki, Finland, pp. 19-21.

distribution of the photos, and through comparisons with, and connections to, other forms of photography and communication.⁵⁰

Finnish Mikko Villi authored another thorough dissertation, focusing on how “conventions and practices of mobile phone communication are manifested in interpersonal photographic communication when using camera phones.”⁵¹ Stressing topics such as mediated presence; he defends the analysis of “[...] the mobile phone as a communication tool mainly to study visual communication especially in the context of interpersonal communication.”⁵² He has also done a thorough cameraphone imaging state of the field, which is highly recommended for further reading.

Even since photo and video sharing platforms gained a share of the market, online mobile photography, and the affective part of the sharing practices, have remained relatively scarce in the researchers domain, except for those of Affect Studies scholars. Unfortunately, not many of the aforementioned studies relate the topic of mobile images with the notions of intimacy and ephemerality. Apart from most of the studies done by Kindberg and van House (which do concern mobiles, intimacy and video footage), the rest of the scholars in the above-mentioned taxonomy wanted, in my opinion, to be as objective as possible. However, mobile images are very personal, and thus subjective, and consequently encompass many more implications than can be understood and categorized.

Research Context and Chronology

In 2007, in a memorable keynote launching the first iPhone, Steve Jobs rendered a tribute to Kodak, when he said: “there is only one button down there”. Smartly enough, the goal was to keep on pushing the concept that taking pictures was not a complicated process and help make mobile photography popular by stressing on its presumption ease. Crafting a new turn in digital desktop software, Microsoft Windows Vista and

⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 23.

⁵¹ Villi, M. (2010). *Visual mobile communication: Camera phone photo messages as ritual communication and mediated presence*, (Doctoral thesis). Helsinki: Aalto University School of Art and Design.

⁵² Ibid. p. 26.

Office 2007 were being launched too. Nicolas Sarkozy had just become France's president, and with him the country entered a tough global financial crisis. Transformations were happening, some almost imperceptibly, and I felt that the web and digital images were slowly but surely piercing people's mobile media adoption habits. By that year the number of internet users in France was already almost at 32 million, reaching a 51.2 percent internet penetration rate.⁵³ As a cultural researcher, and through participatory observation, I was there to sense, experience, and record all these events as they were unfolding before my eyes.

I intended to start my research *a propos* the private social uses of mobile images by trying to find mobile images online. But, Googling "cameraphone images" referred me mostly, if not to say only, to advertisements of cellphones with embedded cameras. Moreover, the viewing and selection of images to construct my research corpus, just by discovering mobile videos online, was too difficult and lacked procedural structure and methodology: these images were presented and uploaded in disorganized and chaotic ways. Between 2007 and 2008, and in addition to this uncertain method of trying to figure out how I would find and delimit my online mobile iconographical corpus, I faced too many multiple ways with which these images were being tagged: camphone images, cameraphone images, cell phone images, etc., and as formerly described, the ones I found online had very little or no organization. This material constraint on the difficulty of finding my corpus was the main reason why I finally decided to outline other ways to negotiate how I could and would constitute it.

Between 2007 and 2008, there was neither a specific sharing, nor a social networking site to recognize or gather private, user-generated camphone images. In other words, there was no particular mobile video platform to congregate vernacular camphone productions and Facebook did not have this feature yet either. In fact, sites such as Qik, only started off with this site's alpha version launch, in December 2007 (it was not until July 2008 that it went into public beta). By December 2008 I started studying it, but then in April 2014, Skype acquired it and merged both services. Social mobile

⁵³ France. (2010, November 26). *Open Net Initiative*, <https://opennet.net/research/profiles/france>

networking sites such as Socialcam (2011), Klip (2012), or the mobile application Vine (a six-second-or less video app) that appeared much later in 2013, did not exist either. Private, vernacular mobile videos could be found on YouTube, or other platforms, but they had no clear indexation, no framework whatsoever, and thus were impossible to analyze in a contextualized way.

Due to the fact that my inquiry on the legitimation processes, simultaneously evolved with advances in technical developments, and, thus, the very progress of this dissertation, the study is divided into two main parts which form the four fieldworks that guided my chronological and conceptual corpus choices and different methodological approaches. Each chapter mirrors a different temporality, and represents a precise historical moment in the creation and reception of mobile images, evidencing both the embracing, and normatization processes these mobile cultures undergo. These diverse fieldworks lead to distinctive demonstrations, which together form the pieces of this normatization puzzle.

Thesis Outline, Case Studies, and Methodology

In the cameraphone years, with the problem of finding mobile footage online, the third edition of the Parisian Pocket Films Festival (2007) was the primary source of this type of mobile vernacular footage. The first chapter examines the mobile as a personal image-maker tool and scrutinizes how its resultant products can pass from a private sphere into a more public artistic sphere: the Pocket Films Festival (2007). This festival was more than just a collection of mobile films (not only art related), but as will be studied, a whole dispositif. Hosting both national, and international mobile films, conferences and debates, and also key people from the mobile scene, it was the best medium for learning what was being done in the mobile visual spectrum. The early 2000s were the very beginnings, and also the peak of the Mobile Festivals, and mobile users were slowly acknowledging how these self-produced mobile images could circulate and become more public. With a Film Festival Studies approach and starting on the reasons and motivations that led to the creation of a mobile film dispositif, I focus on

the early years of the Parisian Pocket Films Festival (2005-2007). This sequence will permit better understanding of how the cameraphone, initially perceived as a gadgetry device that could just produce low quality images, was shifting from being perceived as low-brow to high-brow, and a possible artistic enabling cultural object. I follow Manovich, understanding: the theorization of cultural objects as ways to represent and construct our referents, whether objects, information, categories, etc.⁵⁴

Constrained by the equipment and its low quality audiovisual materiality, the second part of the chapter moves on to examine intimate sharing through an in-depth case study of the hermeneutics of an award-winning film: *Porte de Choisy*, by analyzing its reception, the controversies and the critiques it aroused. Being a very intimate film, this case study allows exploration of the relationship between mobile vernacular footage and intimacy. What were the Pocket Films Festival and *Porte de Choisy* effects, and thus how did they sway the amateurs in their “construction of taste”,⁵⁵ and in the self-control (or not) of the disclosure of their own intimate images?

Meanwhile, I was always monitoring the evolution of mobile visual practices; the novelty of the mobile device, both within, and outside of, traditional media ambits, and how users being enabled to participate (or not) in the hard news construction was gently making waves: it became my second research corpus. What happened when unforeseen events popped up, and someone recorded the event with a cameraphone? The second chapter of this part focuses on the argument and debate formed around the mediatization of vernacular mobile images: by detailing the mechanisms through which personal private mobile images became the source of news scoops (between 2005 and 2011). In order to determine the consequences that visual mobile images may have on the construction of history, the given cases demonstrate that mobile visual data has multifaceted structures. The chapter is a timeline analysis of the most important news relayed by mobiles to record special unforeseen events, and studies how they became part of the hard news creation flow. The chosen mobile hard news items represent the

⁵⁴ Manovich, L. (2001). *The language of new media*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press. p. 15.

⁵⁵ Bourdieu, P. (1979). *La distinction: Critique sociale du jugement*. Paris: Éditions de Minuit.

type of mobile imaging that was used by the traditional mainstream media industries to build news stories and storytelling around those private mobile images. To analyze the stages by which art institutions, the traditional mass media and social networking sites participated in, and legitimated these mobile productions, I proceed in a chronological fashion. Rogers' adoption model helps me sketch how different populations got hold of the cameraphone and smartphone, its visual usage adoption, and thus the usage of this raw vernacular footage for hard news creation.

The second part also has two chapters. As time passed, vernacular mobile images became increasingly available, both on and offline. Therefore, the third chapter focuses less on institutionalized legitimation, and continues on to finely analyze the subject of peers as legitimation mechanisms, where communities of practices work as incubators for later, total self-validation, of the mobile image consuming norm. Mobile images still continued to be understood as something to exchange, thus I also explore the craze of this more ephemeral mobile image sharing. I begin first by describing the Eyephonography exhibit, I then interview the collective art group *Regards de Femmes*, to then go on to develop the chapter with the study of two teenage French groups, and analyze their Snapchat usages and ephemeral ways of sharing.

Through participatory observation of my own practices, the fourth and final chapter is approached in a reflexive way. I have therefore tried to grasp the relationship between my own mobile image history practice and the technical changes mobile culture was undergoing, and my participatory experience as a researcher. I examine whether or not there is intimacy or implicitness (in a connivance sense) embedded in cases of intimate mobile image sharing. Through the study of eight MMSs I seek to evince what the "codification and decodification"⁵⁶ of personal mobile images relies upon. Consequently, I engaged in an *a posteriori* autoethnographic approach, where I decided to study certain problematic MMSs I had exchanged with some of my strong tie friends. This last chapter concludes in the exploration of mobile screen mediated attraction and seduction

⁵⁶ Hall, S. (1980). Codificar y Decodificar. *CULTURE, MEDIA & LENGUAJE*. (Silvia Delfino, Trans.). London: Hutchinson, pp. 129–139. Retrieved from http://perio.unlp.edu.ar/catedras/system/files/hall._codificar-decodificar.pdf

processes of what I have called *the swipe logic*. I thus hope to make a contribution to the growing literature on screen intimacies.

I would like to state that, what I describe in this last part is based on particular personal experiences, and thus cannot operate as representative of a larger population. Moreover, due to the fact that these are solely first-hand participant observations, explanations and arguments that only I can develop, none of this data is intended to be used for generalization about private mobile use; I use very small-scale sampling with an awareness of its limitations. However, its value was in allowing me to probe more deeply into the questions driving the chapter. I hope this first-hand experience study will assist in spawning other future research. Further studies could entail doing similar autoethnography studies to compare how these practices change over time and/or entail larger sampled cases. Most mobile studies research, as is the case of most other qualitative research, consist of local, short-termed studies. Without losing the qualitative attribute of research, how can we develop a more general and global understanding of mobile use?

Adoption and Appropriation Patterns in Mobile Imaging

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Oslo Manual for measuring innovation, (the foremost international source of guidelines for the collection and use of data on innovation activities in industry) define four types of innovation: product innovation, process innovation, marketing innovation and organizational innovation, and it goes far beyond the confines of research labs, to users, suppliers and consumers everywhere – in government, business and non-profit organizations, across borders, across sectors, and across institutions.⁵⁷ When talking about the adoption and appropriation patterns in mobile imaging all the aforementioned meanings should be taken into account.

⁵⁷ Statistical Office of the European Communities. (2005). *Oslo manual: Guidelines for collecting and interpreting innovation data* (No. 4). Publications de l'OCDE.

To ground this theoretically, Rogers' *Diffusion of Innovations* theory (first published in 1962) is helpful. His theory states that "diffusion" is the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time and among the members of a social system, and seeks to explain how, why, and at what rate new ideas and technology spread through cultures.⁵⁸ In Rogers' terms an "innovation" can be an idea, a behavior, or any object that is perceived as new by its audience. His theory will help the grounding and be the backbone of my demonstration. As for the triumph in the spread of the innovation, Rogers describes five key points to take into account. First of all, Rogers defines the relative advantage that an innovation should have is to be *better*⁵⁹ than the idea that it supersedes; this can be an economic, social prestige, convenience, or satisfaction advantage. In the case of mobiles, all of these could eventually apply.

Secondly, Rogers takes into account the compatibility point, mainly with existing values and practices. In my subject matter case this could apply either to the technology (as seen in the autoethnography chapter) or to the social protocols and norms that constantly change within the mobile culture, as for instance the protocol of calling or texting someone when being at a restaurant. Thirdly, Rogers highlights the complexity or ease of use. According to him the "trialability is the degree to which an innovation may be experimented on a limited basis". This refers to the fact that users want to test, and try by practicing. And lastly, the "observability" issue: as being the results, which are visible to others, of which the selfie example became the most outstanding ambassador.⁶⁰

Measuring the users' adoption speed of the innovation or "innovativeness dimension, as measured by the time at which an individual adopts an innovation or innovations is continuous", Rogers partitioned this variable into five categories.⁶¹ To begin the Innovators,⁶² then the Early Adopters,⁶³ continuing with the Early Majority,⁶⁴ the Late

⁵⁸ Rogers, E. M. (1983). *Diffusion of Innovations*, 3rd ed. New York: Free Press, p. 35.

⁵⁹ Emphasis added.

⁶⁰ For more details on these characteristics see Rogers p. 15.

⁶¹ Ibid. p. 247.

⁶² "Innovators" also known as progressists or experimentals: those who dare to adventure new innovations.

⁶³ "Early adopters" is the term used to describe those most eager to adopt a new technology or innovation. Not really prescribers, they can nevertheless, help facilitate the launch and consumption of a new product,

Majority⁶⁵ and finishing with the Laggards.⁶⁶ As seen in figure 7, the percentage curve shows how they are categorized. It is not my intention to try to verify the pertinence of the percentages in this curve. However, and despite the fact that I have studied the phenomenon in an empirical way, the benchmark cases show that within the time frame studied (2005-2015), there were significant changes in the population of adopters. Or, at least in the mediatization of how these changes were happening as this curve portrays them.

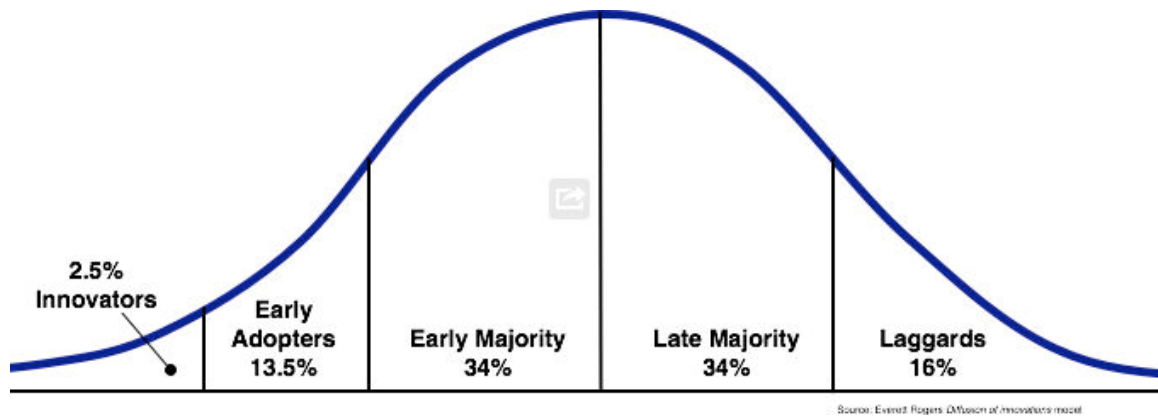


Figure 7. Relation between types of adopters, categorization done on innovativeness and their location on the adoptive curve [Source Rogers, E. M. (1983). Diffusion of Innovations, 3rd ed. New York: Free Press, p. 247.]

But, Rogers' definition of Innovativeness and Adopter categories is an "*Ideal type*"⁶⁷ model, that works as the "conceptualizations based on observations of reality and designed to make comparisons possible".⁶⁸ The model is linear and may be even seen as too static. In reality its categories are not rigid, are intertwined and thus his model is used here as a theoretical methodical *dispositif*, in Foucault's sense (1994), and as a way to help discern particularities in the adoption and social acceptance of mobile image usages.

In fact, after the book's first edition, in a later, third edition (1983), Rogers himself dedicated an entire chapter to criticizing the theory, understanding it was an artificial,

technology or service from the first days of its release. Therefore they are often associated with having a trendsetting role.

⁶⁴ The "Early Majority" are those adopters who deliberate some time, not the last but not the first.

⁶⁵ Late Majority, are the skeptical ones.

⁶⁶ The Laggards are usually the most traditional ones. Ibid. pp. 247-249.

⁶⁷ Original emphasis.

⁶⁸ Ibid. p. 247.

chopped generalization taxonomy, but which was found to be useful for the clarification of different diffusion periods. Part of his auto-criticism is the admission of being pro-innovation biased, with an implication that innovations should be diffused, adopted by most of the people, and that the act of innovating is considered positive and the act of rejecting an innovation is considered negative.⁶⁹

Following Joe M. Bohlen, George M. Beal and Everett M. Rogers; Chipchase and Steinhardt⁷⁰ consider that the diffusion process has had some variance in motives and temporality. For these researchers, there are also five stages of adoption: awareness, getting to know that the new thing exists; interest, even if the person does not really know why, if she has heard that it is useful, it will be worth checking it out. Then there comes the evaluation, a sort of mental test, forecasting its usage in his/her life, and, last but not least, the trial: the real test run and adoption: the “large-scale use of the idea”. For Chipchase and Steinhardt, the innovators and the early adopters are sure to find benefit in newness, and it will be the early majority who will second them. They may be older and less educated but, nevertheless, can be thus highly influential. But Chipchase and Steinhardt believe there is also another group: the non-adopters. They divide these into “recusers” and “rejecters”. When speaking about mobiles, the former refers to those people who do not buy a mobile because they feel no real need for it in their lives. The latter refers to that population who treat the fact of not buying as a sign of militantism.

Some other main criticisms of the diffusion of innovation theory are the individual-blame bias, the recall problem and the issue of equality.⁷¹ Other remarks also came from business and marketing perspectives and by other diffusion researchers, among them Lyytinen and Damsgaard.⁷² What was criticized the most, was that the theory did not focus either around the attributes of the innovations or on the organizations adopting

⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 93.

⁷⁰ Chipchase, J., & Steinhardt, S. (2013). *Hidden in plain sight: How to create extraordinary products for tomorrow's customers*. New York: Harper Business, p. 74.

⁷¹ Ibid. p. 133.

⁷² Lyytinen, K., & Damsgaard, J. (2001). What's Wrong with the diffusion of innovation theory ? The case of a complex and networked technology. In M. A. Ardis & B. L. Marcolin (Eds.). Reports Aalborg University Department of Computer Science R985010, 187, 1-20. Department of Computer Science Institute for Electronic Systems Aalborg University.

them. It must be taken into account that these categories depend not only on socioeconomic status, but also on personality variables and communication behaviors in general.⁷³ When relying on this theoretical stance, it must be acknowledged that innovations are adopted uncertainly, unexpectedly and sometimes even wildly. They can also have flaws and take many years to be adopted. Through this dissertation I will look at the adoption behaviors on a micro scale.

The last ITU report states: “by end 2014, the number of mobile-broadband subscriptions will reach 2.3 billion globally, almost 5 times as many as just six years earlier (in 2008)”.⁷⁴ With increasing smartphone market penetration, mobile images and video became more predominant yet fleeting, becoming ephemeral images, more to be experienced than captured. Vernacular photography and, to the extent of vernacular footage as we once understood it in the past, the Kodak moment or Nokia time, are no longer the same.

⁷³ Rogers, E. M. (1983). *Diffusion of Innovations*, 3rd ed. New York: Free Press, p. 251.

⁷⁴ The International Telecommunications Union (ITU) reports, ICT Facts and Figures, The world in 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/facts/default.aspx>

Part I.

Cameras, the Images, the Legitimation Years

Introduction: The Amateur Years of Cameraphone Artists and Citizen Journalists

Smartphones have a massive worldwide impact, not only in communicational terms but also in visual ones. Today, this is an evident statement. The increase of mobile photos and mobile footage production has slowly but gradually been validated by various cultural and creative industries in an ongoing process that still continues to the present day. Art institutions and the mass media have both embraced, and suffered for the contribution of this endorsement. In this visual appropriation, how can collective cultural processes be comprehended? How did these processes unfold? In particular, this first part develops the questions of: how have private vernacular mobile images been considered and thought to be of plausible public cultural worthiness? What were the public, collective discourses and narrations that supported and validated this social change?

As will be examined in the two chapters that constitute this part, between 2005 and 2010, a vast majority of discourses mobilized in popular culture, media, and everyday life, promoted the belief that anybody could become a generator of mobile visual content, produce and provide images and thus be seen. Using Barthes' terms, those were the years where the *myth*, and thus, even *belief*, that everybody was going to become a visual cameraphone author, and publisher of user created content, settled in. Those were the cameraphone amateur grounding years. True, the quantity of vernacular creation did increase, however, I seek to demonstrate that, at that time, in regard to real visibility in the public sphere, it would not be correct to say that *everybody* became a visual cameraphone author. Due to the fact that my inquiry on the cultural legitimization processes of the cameraphone images evolved simultaneously with the advances in technical developments, and, therefore, the progression of this dissertation, this first part is divided in two dissimilar but complementary chapters. One deals with the adoption of the device and its productions in an artistic French arena, and the other, to a more global journalistic timeline of mediated/broadcasted cameraphone images.

Actually, both chapters reflect on different yet similar legitimization processes that took place between the years 2005 and 2010. In 2007 - the beginning and definition of my research - the delimitation process of my corpus was quite difficult. With the idea of studying the private uses of vernacular mobile images, and with aspiration to construct a mobile video corpus, I started my research online, and sought “private cameraphone images”. However, as there were still *no* specific popular mobile hosting platforms, the online research I did when trying to find those amateur cameraphone images, mainly led me to stumble upon advertisements that *sold* cameraphones, and not of images *shot* with cameraphones. I therefore had to construct another method to create my corpus: it had to be offline. That year in Paris the Pocket Films Festival was burgeoning, and thus it offered an ideal environment: it was in the perfect place to learn about the evolution of the mobile vernacular image scene in its entirety. It was also observable that research, even online research, hardly made any analysis of the combined subject of everyday life and vernacular mobile images. Thus, my decision - to focus on the ways in which home mobile video and personal images became more public - was also an attempt to address that gap in the literature.

The first chapter examines the mobile as a *personal* image-making tool and scrutinizes how its visual productions can pass, from a *private sphere*, to a *more public, artistic, sphere*: the Pocket Films Festival (PFF). Being more than just a collection of mobile films; rather a whole dispositif, hosting both national and international mobile films, conferences and debates, and featuring key people from the mobile scene; the PFF was the best medium to learn what was being done in the mobile vernacular visual spectrum. The early 2000s were the very beginnings, and also the peak of the mobile festivals, and cameraphone users were learning how these self-produced mobile images could circulate, become more public, and even be considered as having artistic value. With a Film Festival Studies approach, and starting with the reasons and motivations that led to the creation of a mobile film dispositif. I focus on the historicity of its early years (2005-2007). I seek to comprehend: how did the cameraphone, a product, that when first marketed, was perceived as a gadget, a low-fi imaging device; shifted in perception to become a high-end luxury item; to then even be grasped as a possible artistic enabler, and ultimately, a cultural object. How and when were its products validated and

legitimated as artistic ones? I would therefore like to specify that, for *dispositif*, I also very much adhere to Agamben's essay *Che cos'è un dispositivo?* The author goes beyond Foucault's definition, enlarges and re-evaluates the concept. Some of the essay translations go for the term in English as "apparatus", but, in the Spanish and French versions of Agamben's essay, the term *dispositif* has remained, as originally in Foucault's terminology.⁷⁵ In all cases, Agamben refers to the "apparatus [*dispositif*] literally as anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviors, opinions or the discourses of living beings."⁷⁶

Collating specific trends and topics, festivals can be seen to reflect identities;⁷⁷ in this case it was the jamboree of the Parisian and French cellphone supporters and the surrounding culture. In the drive to enhance the image of the cameraphone amateur, the PFF held creative workshops, and the majority of the films featured were amateur cameraphone films. Since it only lasted several days, it was impossible to view all the footage presented, not to say analyze it. As a consequence, I devoted time to searching the PFF archives: not only to gain a larger overview, but also with the intention of making a clearer indexation and taxonomy.

However, I faced two main setbacks. Firstly, the diversity of the content: the PFF's archive ranged across diverse and multiple topics, from everyday life to specific footage, from pets to children's films, from black and white artsy footage to more experimental abstract films and so on. Secondly, I faced a physical challenge in formats: the mobile footage had multiple digital formats (some were in flv, some in avi, etc.), but the computers available for viewing it did not have all the software needed to read all the formats, making it significantly more complex to view or go through them. In addition, they had varying lengths, from one-minute videos to feature films. On top of that, in

⁷⁵ For a detailed research on the conceptual issues related to the different translation versions and genealogies of *dispositif* see Bussolini, J. (2010). What is a Dispositive?. *Foucault Studies*, N° 10, pp. 85-107. Retrieved from <http://rauli.cbs.dk/index.php/foucault-studies/article/view/3120>

⁷⁶ Agamben, G. (2009). *What is an Apparatus?* (D. Kishik & S. Pedatella, Trans.). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, p. 14.

⁷⁷ Dayan, D. (2000). Looking for Sundance; The social construction of a film festival. In I. Bondebjerg (Ed.). *Moving images, culture, and the mind* (pp. 43-52). Luton: University of Luton Press.

2007, due to the building renovations that the Forum des Images was undergoing, the PFF's archives were physically scattered in different parts of the city, and therefore some films were inaccessible. Today it is true that some pocket films *are* posted on the PFF's website,⁷⁸ but that was not the case at the time. Besides, the pocket films hosted on the PFF online official page are only the ones that have received awards, and to date, the dynamic of the site does not allow for any open comment or opinion of any nature to be left in regard to the films. This constraint exists because it has a 1.0 website logic.

Accordingly, I conclusively decided to take the 2007-year first prize entry, and used it as a case study, or exemplar. While the choice may seem overly pragmatic, the subject of this winning film centers on a constant and key topic within the mobile studies debate: the private and public dichotomy of the medium. Admitting that "I operate from a viewpoint that recognizes that neither public nor private are objective entities",⁷⁹ this binary relation has always been a problematic, divisive issue. Additionally, I must recognize that these concepts "are constantly shifting and socially negotiated".⁸⁰ Consequently, this in-depth case study moves on to examine intimate sharing through the hermeneutics of an award-winning film: *Porte de Choisy*.⁸¹ I analyze its reception, the controversies and the critiques it aroused. Being a very intimate film, it enables exploration of the relation between mobile vernacular footage and intimacy. How did the Pocket Films Festival and *Porte de Choisy* impact a broader mobile visibility, an ethical and thus cultural construction of a mobile culture taste? The last part of this chapter, unveils the question of mobile visibility as Art and thus as a taste enabler.

Moving on from the mobile amateurs and an artistic mobile milieu, and accepting that the validation processes of mobile images are multifaceted, the second chapter examines the cameraphone as a more collective image-making tool. Questioning the citizen journalism conception, so relating to the early years of the smartphone era, I scrutinize

⁷⁸ The Pocket Films Festival website, <http://www.festivalpocketfilms.fr/>

⁷⁹ de Souza e Silva, A. S., & Frith, J. (2012). *Mobile interfaces in public spaces: Locational privacy, control, and urban sociability*. New York: Routledge, p. 15.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Antonin Verrier. (2007). "Porte de Choisy", 8 minutes. Retrieved from <http://www.festivalpocketfilms.fr/spip.php?article648> and <https://vimeo.com/36400715>

how, and when, private mobile visual productions pass from a private sphere into a more *public media sphere*.

To do so, I focus on the *narrations and myths* fabricated and constructed around *the mediatization of vernacular mobile images* for hard news construction. What were the editing strategies traditional media gave to mobile images, between the years 2005 and 2009-10? This second corpus points out the different aspects and patterns in the situations, and mechanisms throughout which *personal private mobile images* can become the source of news scoops. I analyze the stages by which the traditional mass media and then the social networking sites (understood as a social media) participated in, and legitimated these visual mobile productions. I proceeded in a chronologically historical and *a posteriori* way. In order to study how these events and periods of time became part of the hard news creation flow, the chapter is constructed over a timeline of the most important news that was relayed by the traditional media, and recorded with mobiles to evidence special unforeseen events.

The selected corpus highlights six of the most exceptional examples among the early years of cameraphone and smartphone footage, as relayed by the Western mainstream journalism. These cases have been chosen, not by excluding other comparable mobile videos, but rather because they are metonymies, representations of the progression of smartphone and mobile visual usages that have been socially validated for news creation. The suggested subjective selection is not intended solely as a collection of hard news, but also to reflect on how we seek, discover, and learn from this huge quantity of mobile visual data that is available online. Secondly, and most importantly, it is meant to point to the legitimation and validation processes within media frames. These chosen mobile hard news pieces exemplify the type of mobile imaging that was *used* by the traditional mainstream media industries to build *actuality stories and storytelling* around those types of private mobile images.

It should be recalled that in the aftermath of the South Asian tsunami of December 2004, “the phrase ‘citizen journalism’ had entered into, and spread within the lexicon of journalism. Soon, and helping the strengthening of this trend, two other important

events happened: the London bombings and Hurricane Katrina”,⁸² remarks communication scholar John D. H. Downing. In the broadcasting of those events, the mainstream media adopted the term ‘citizen journalism’ to tease and stir the vernacular importance of it. It was intended to influence people to send their own images and contributions, and therefore to create the belief that a more collective news co-creation environment, was possible. But, was it a collective co-creation? Exactly from where and when did the expression “citizen journalism” come? In tracing the etymology of this now mythic term, technology writer, journalist and a fellow at the Berkman Center for Internet & Society, Dan Gillmor, looked for “citizen journalism”, and blogged about having discovered that it was Jim Klobuchar who first used the term in 1988, in the Minneapolis Star Tribune.⁸³ Undeniably, mainstream media and journalists were aware of this growing torrent of vernacular mobile images, taken by *average people*, and tried to profit from them by incorporating them into their own reporting work. As for the authors of these images and reports, a new range of terminology was created for them. Snaparazzis⁸⁴ or waparazzis were each “a new term for amateur photographers at major events...” Waparazzi was coined in February 2006 by Orange”,⁸⁵ reported The Guardian. However, neither of these two terms really broke into the mass media.

If cameraphone image contributors were called ‘citizen journalists’ or “participatory journalists”,⁸⁶ the question of “who is a journalist?” was, according to Gillmor, wrongly posed. One should not ask, nor attempt to place a label on these persons. Instead, the reflection should be more motivated on what journalism is.⁸⁷ In May 2006, the term ‘citizen journalists’, was also discussed at the We Media Conference in London, being declared problematic by many less technology oriented researchers and scholars, who are

⁸² Downing, J. D. H. (2011). (Ed.). *Encyclopedia of Social Movement Media*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications. p. 97.

⁸³ Gillmor, D. (2004). Mediactive, 4.0 Chapter 4: Journalism’s Evolving Ecosystem, *Mediactive – Creating a User’s Guide to Democratized Media*, <http://mediactive.com/4-0-chapter-4-journalism%E2%80%99s-evolving-ecosystem/>

⁸⁴ Greenslade, R. (2005, August 8). Seen it, shot it, sold it, *The Guardian*, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2005/aug/08/media.pressandpublishing>; Cf. Anon., “Paparazzi”, *English Wikipedia*, s/d, verified 2009, July 19 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snaparazzi>

⁸⁵ Media Monkey’s Diary, (2006, February 20). *MediaGuardian*, <http://media.guardian.co.uk/site/story/0,,1713281,00.html>

⁸⁶ Bowman, S. & Willis, C. (2003). *We Media: How Audiences are Shaping the Future of News and Information*. The Media Center at the American Press Institute.

⁸⁷ Gillmor, D. (2004). Op. cit.

more culturally biased, such as: Allan, Tilley and Cokley,⁸⁸ and Gunthert.⁸⁹ The latter has suggested that, when it comes to naming, instead of “all journalists”⁹⁰ they should be called “everybody photographer”;⁹¹ because the technical possibility of taking photographs does not transform the photographer into a journalist. I would also discern between journalists and journalistic moments. Similarly, in the artistic field, in order to gain visibility and thus artistic legitimation, mobile artists have to face sending their films to the festival and being accepted or not; they face art curators and art institutions - not everyone becomes a mobile artist. In other words, this second part seeks to examine: was the mass media editing process analogous with the artistic one, and so have strong gatekeepers, or was it arguably, more horizontal as in a lateral process. Furthermore, can being *in the right place at the right time* to take the mobile photograph or video, transform one into a photographer or a cameraman?

If technical advances facilitate new uses, it is also important to determine how changes in technology interact with everyday life activities, and then, to how these practices take shape through the artistic and media discourses narrated around them, and in this way make them even more visible. For instance, it is no accident that, similar to Porte de Choisy, all the cameraphone videos that are referred to in the second chapter of this first part, are one-shot mobile videos and were also delivered in *raw* format to the mass media. Why? Because unedited mobile images portray spontaneous filming capabilities; this facilitates traditional media workers post-edit those images, and go for news creation in their own style. All these mobile recording, and sharing changes have been accompanied by the increasing technical ease of 3G and 4G - the introduction of the iPhone and the tablets, etc. However, and, despite the increasing rate of adoption, far from everyone had a cameraphone, smartphone or tablet during this period. Technically speaking until 2011, most smartphones did not have visual post-editing availability

⁸⁸ Allan, S., Tilley, E., & Cokley, J. (2008), as quoted in Robinson, S. & DeShano, C. (2011). Citizen Journalism and Their Third Places? What makes people contribute information online (or not). *Journalism Studies* 12(5), pp. 1-16.

⁸⁹ Gunthert, A. (2015). *L'Image partagée. La photographie numérique*. Paris: Textuel. Cf. Chapter Tous journalistes ? Les attentats de Londres ou l'intrusion des amateurs, pp. 43-53.

⁹⁰ Gunthert, A. Op. cit. He makes reference to the front page of the French daily newspaper *Libération* of 20-21 August 2005, see his screenshot: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/gunthert/3361760025/>

⁹¹ Gunthert, A., Op. cit.

embedded within the device, and due to the file size factor, editing on the device was not that easy.

To sum up, the choice of two corpora, and the fieldwork carried out confirm the occurrences, and legitimation processes mobile images underwent during those years. Moreover, even if they might seem very dissimilar, they are two sides of the same hierarchization and cultural validation processes that *mobile visual practices*⁹² underwent during the mobile early years (2005-2010).

Being in a Pocket Film Festival, or appearing as hard news, meant obtaining strong cultural validation and legitimation. Both, this two-chapter analysis, and even I, an average user, demonstrate how we were all subjected to the discourses constructed around the cultural validation processes of the mobile images presumption. Therefore, those legitimation narratives, which were closely intertwined with the practices, and subsequently, often subconscious, were key in the very same “adoption evolution”, in Rogers’ terms.

⁹² Here specifically, I refer to producing, sharing, consuming and commenting mobile images. *Mobile visual practices* can be textual modes, but also photography and video exchanges, and later I will denote to those apps and mobile technologies that enable video conferencing as well.

Chapter 1 .

Cameraphone Images and the Genesis of their Artistic Legitimation. From the Pocket to the Screen

Personal, private and even intimate mobile footage, can end up being made public. Seen, published, viewed, staged, produced, shared, transferred, commented, edited, saved, lost, and remixed, are just some of those verbs used to describe what is done with and to mobile digital images. But how does personal mobile imagery enter into the *public sphere*, this area of our social life where, forty years ago, Habermas stated public opinion was formed?⁹³ How does personal mobile imagery pass from a democratic and public virtual space, as Warner⁹⁴ and Paparacharissi⁹⁵ advanced, to *plural public spheres*?⁹⁶

⁹³ Habermas, J. (1973). The Public Sphere. In P. Marris & S. Thornham (Eds.) (1999). *Media studies: A reader*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, pp. 92-97, p. 93.

⁹⁴ Warner, M. (2002). *Publics and counterpublics*. New York: Zone Books; Warner, M. (2010, April 26). [Radio broadcast], *The Origins of the Modern Public, Ideas*. Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, cbc.ca, emission conducted by Paul Kennedy, Episode 13 - Publics and Counterpublics, <http://www.cbc.ca/ideas/episodes/features/2010/04/26/the-origins-of-the-modern-public/>

⁹⁵ Papacharissi, Z. (2002). The Virtual Sphere: the Internet as a Public Sphere. *New Media & Society*, 4,

How does it become elevated to the status of art or reach media fame? The first chapter of this part attempts to understand the social dimensions and impact of personal intimate pocket films⁹⁷ when they are disseminated beyond their private contexts and are artistically elevated. The objective is to lay out the significance of vernacular mobile videos from a formal and cultural point of view once they are exhibited publicly and therefore legitimated as art.

In 2007, the use of the mobile phone as a video recording tool continued to increase in France. That same year, a survey done by the Association of French Mobile Operators (AFOM from its initials in French) on the uses of the mobile in France, showed that 76% of French people over 12 years of age had a mobile phone, and that for those users aged between 12 to 24, mobile phone usage was multifaceted: 97% of mobile use was for texting, 83% for taking photographs, 62% to listen to music, 60% for shooting videos and lastly 22% to connect to websites.⁹⁸ With these figures rising, it is important to identify the available public spheres and the ways in which the shift from the private sphere to a more public sphere occurred. This can be said to be the time when people sought “to play an active role in the production of images, thus, *reclaiming the copyright of their own lives*”.⁹⁹

Studying this significantly cultural period of the early years of mobile imagery enables us to analyze how people learned to deal with the sharing, or not sharing, of their personal mobile images. The questions that guided my analysis are: does the mobile phone medium change the way we film and then share our mobile home videos? If we assume that shooting with a cameraphone is technically quite easy, the main questions to disentangle are: how are/were these mobile images created and produced? How is

1, pp. 9-27. Retrieved from http://tiger.uic.edu/~zizi/Site/Research_files/VirtualSphere.pdf

⁹⁶ Macé, E. (2005). Mouvements et contre-mouvements culturels dans la sphere publique et les médiacultures. In E. Macé & E. Maigret (Eds.). *Penser les médiacultures*. Paris: Armand Colin, coll. Médiacultures, pp. 41-56. (emphasis added)

⁹⁷ The expression “pocket films” is studied more in depth further on in this chapter.

⁹⁸ AFOM, Observatoire sociétal du téléphone mobile 2007. (17 Oct. 2007). *TNS Sofres, leader français des études marketing et d'opinion*. Broken link http://www.tnssofres.com/sites/default/files/171007_afom.pdf

⁹⁹ Koskela, H. (2004). Webcams, TV shows and Mobile phones: Empowering Exhibitionism, Surveillance and society, *CCTV Special*, (Eds.), C. Norris, M. McCahil and D. Wood, 2(2/3). Retrieved from <http://www.surveillance-and-society.org/cctv.htm>

interesting, original and outstanding content, shared and discovered? Where and how is this content exhibited for public viewing? How are these mobile video images received offline? How does an individual decide whether or not to share their private video in the public sphere? These questions open the discussion towards a critical understanding of more complex matters. This particular case study enquires: how, in 2007, could an intimate mobile video of a Parisian French couple be artistically recognized and thus be illustrative of more global issues, such as the links between mobile images and the diffusion of private life to the greater public in the early years of the early twenty-first century?

I will start by first describing the context of the Pocket Films Festival (PFF). My analysis of the festival will attempt to identify the role it played in the sharing processes and the cultural space these mobile images acquired both in the mobile festival's scene and more broadly in the mobile "mediascape".¹⁰⁰ On the 29th of June 2007, the iPhone went on sale in the United States. It was a pivotal year in the history of mobile imaging. Thus, the second part of this work focuses on the 3rd edition of The Pocket Films Festival. I chose to analyze in detail that year's first-prize winner as a case study. In all, the Parisian Pocket Films Festival was held six times, 2007 being representative of its peak years. In 2010, and even though the format was successful and could have continued to run after its, final, sixth year, Laurence Herszberg, the executive director of the Forum des Images decided that the PFF had already made its mark and that it had run its course.¹⁰¹ This suggests that basing a festival on the technology of a given object, the mobile, (that is to say, founding it on a specific innovation) cannot be a long-term project. Other thematic festivals carried out by the Forum des Images have lasted longer.

¹⁰⁰ The term 'mediascape' implies the recognition that landscapes can be defined as 'mediated places' through technologies in general. This term stems from a video art exhibition sponsored by Deutsche Telekom at the Guggenheim Museum's Soho Galleries in New York in 1996; this exhibition explored the work of international artists dealing with changes in media technologies and the aesthetics of video art (Frohne et al.: 1996). Within the academic discourse, 'mediascape' is normally referenced in connection to Appadurai's discussion in *Modernity at Large* (1996: 35).

¹⁰¹ B. Labourdette, personal communication, February 19, 2014.

1.1. Film Festival Studies

It is of great help to draw on Film Festival Studies, a new discipline that studies Film Festivals as a whole, as a dispositif in Agamben's terms, which understands the festival network as being an alternative distribution system with its own core-periphery relations. Film festivals are a form of distinction and add cultural value to what is shown. How? As a spectacle, festivals are, *per se*, a media event. In order to comprehend any image properly, it is essential to frame it within a specific context, whether it be a newspaper, magazine, or other type of distribution channel, even larger dispositifs like film festivals, such as the Pocket Films Festival. The setting in which images are shown, in themselves, add heightened meaning to the perception of the images. Media anthropologist Daniel Dayan included, in his 2000 study of the Sundance Film Festival,¹⁰² a remark that should be strongly highlighted: festivals engage distinctive groups with diverse interests.

Each festival has - just as each magazine, newspaper, blog, or other publishing frame might have - a different focus, and therefore a specific target audience, both in terms of subject matter, content and reception. Here, the field of study is amateur mobile images. With reference to the film festival, Dayan describes it as a set of divergent performances, filmmakers, distributors, festival organizers, journalists, audiences, etc., and argues that it is not limited to visual display, but emphasizes "verbal architecture" that is "made up of different versions, relaying different voices, relying on different sources of legitimacy".¹⁰³ Using this "verbal architecture" as a conceptual frame, I will discuss the Pocket Films Festival.

The first question is: does possessing a cameraphone help and encourage a visual appropriation of our private lives, and if so, how? If this is the case, what do these everyday mobile filming practices entail? The main focus of this chapter is the analysis

¹⁰² Dayan, D. (2000). Looking for Sundance: The social construction of a film festival. In I. Bondebjerg (Ed.), *Moving images, culture, and the mind* (pp. 43–52). Luton: University of Luton Press. Reprinted in *The Film Festivals Reader*. Dina Iordanova. (Ed.). St Andrews: St Andrews Film Studies. pp. 45–58.

¹⁰³ Ibid. p. 52.

of an innovation, as stated in Rogers' terms.¹⁰⁴ In other words the purpose is to examine how the mobile's artistic possibilities and uses improved, as well as how the construction of a mobile aesthetic¹⁰⁵ taste developed. Through the comprehension of how a private pocket video becomes artistically dignified, I will explain how the reception of mobile filming has followed artistic status, and as time passes, these iconic productions become culturally legitimated objects. To better understand concepts such as status, taste, meaning, recognition and how these complex hierarchies are articulated and internalized by individuals I will also base this chapter on Bourdieu's *La Distinction*.¹⁰⁶

1.2. The Early Years of the Pocket Films Festival (2005-2007)

1.2.1. Creation and Motivations of a Pocket Film Festival Dispositif

Annually, between 2005 and 2010, the city of Paris hosted the Pocket Films Festival, which was organized in collaboration with the Forum des Images, the Centre Pompidou, as well as SFR (*Société Française de Radiotéléphonie*), one of the three major French telecommunication companies, as founding partners. On its home page the Festival defines itself as “a festival that centers around new image practices in relationship to mobility”,¹⁰⁷ as well as a place to discover innovative films where mobile filmmakers, people from the mobile industry, teachers, artists and researchers share experiences at round tables.¹⁰⁸ The PFF was a place where a diversity of mobile films, produced worldwide, found a place for debate and were made visible to spectators. These spectators could even experiment with the creation of films, by participating in mobile video workshops proposed by the festival.

¹⁰⁴ Rogers, E. M. (1983). *Diffusion of Innovations*, 3rd ed. New York: Free Press.

¹⁰⁵ Aesthetics being understood as that what refers to notions of beauty and ugliness.

¹⁰⁶ Bourdieu, P. (1979). *La distinction: Critique sociale du jugement*. Paris: Éditions de Minuit.

¹⁰⁷ Translation is my own: “*un festival autour des nouvelles pratiques de l'image liée à la mobilité.*”

¹⁰⁸ Personal communications with the PFF staff: N. Roth, April 2, 2008; Y. Gaillard, May 5, 2008 and B. Labourdette, December 15-17, 2009.

Most editions of the PFF have taken place at the Forum des Images, a cultural institution dedicated to cinema and to the audiovisual. The Forum, established in 1988 in what was formerly the Paris Cinemathèque, is now one of the key locations for film lovers in Paris. Located in the capital's city center, the Forum des Halles mall hosts the Forum des Images, a film foundation which holds at least 6,600 films about the city of Paris. During remodeling of the Forum des Images, the festival program was held at the Max Linder Panorama, the Pavillon de l'Arsenal and the Centre Pompidou. The desire to launch a venue-event for mobile films, mobile communication and mobile internet was behind the origins of the PFF. In 2000 the Forum des Images welcomed the ISEA¹⁰⁹ in partnership with the IRCAM,¹¹⁰ and the Imagina¹¹¹ fair, where the meeting of game creators and multimedia artists provided a breeding-ground for diverse projects. It was within this context in 2004 that the idea of the PFF emerged, mainly from the encounters of the Forum des Images' staff and people from SFR.

In the early 2000s the third generation (3G) of cell phones had just been launched in France and the operator (SFR) wanted to establish cultural partnerships in order to advertise and raise public awareness of the new mobile technology. In other words: to intersect cultural objectives with economic interests. Clearly, they comprehended that vernacular mobile image production was key in the leisure industry. The Forum des Images, catering to what was happening in the world of technology, agreed to launch a common project and appointed Benoît Labourdette - one of the leading figures in the cultural dissemination of innovative and mobile cinema – to design and manage the festival.

The creation of such an event was the culmination of a joint effort between B. Labourdette, the PFF's director, filmmaker and educator, and Laurence Herszberg, executive director of the Forum des Images. Both Labourdette and Herszberg were instrumental in petitioning for the event and invested a lot of their own efforts into it.

¹⁰⁹ In December 2000 Paris hosted the tenth edition of the International Symposium of Electronic Arts, (ISEA) which is one of the major meetings of the international artistic community in the arts and new media.

¹¹⁰ IRCAM, Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique, <http://www.ircam.fr/>

¹¹¹ IMAGINA, the European 3D fair, <http://www.imagina.mc/2013/index.php>

From the Forum des Images' side, Jean-Yves de Lépinay was the program director, Labourdette developed the content and Jeffrey Bledsoe was the director of event production. All three have also greatly contributed to the development of the festival. From the SFR business side it was mainly Jean-Marc Tasset behind the festival. In 2005, SFR approached the Forum des Images with a view to organize actions around mobility, to stimulate reflection on these pocket cameras and to offer amateurs and artists ways to work with the mobile device: the Pocket Films Festival was born.

From the very beginning and throughout the history of this festival, artists, actors, actresses, journalists, critics and filmmakers were invited, including some well-known personalities: Alain Fleischer, Pippo Delbono and Pierre Haski, amongst others. They stimulated interest around the concept of more and more people owning pocket cameras, motivating people who were still without one, to buy one. Reflecting on what this intense production of images could mean in educational terms, the idea of working with high schools, art schools, colleges and universities, also emerged. For example, during the 2007 PFF event, one of the teenagers there kindly explained to me about a pilot program she had been taking part in, where for about a year, SFR lent a group of students cameraphones enabling them to learn, question and express themselves artistically. It was called *Atelier numérique* and held in Bondy, Ile-de-France, in 2007.

1.2.2. From Low-brow Gadget to High-brow Culture

B. Labourdette told me that Pocket Films Festival was the name conceived by the people from the Forum des Images (mentioned above) as they felt this name best described a call for films made with cameras that fit in pockets. The word *pocket* is probably a cultural reference, implying both pocket photography and pocket cameras (those small sized cameras that can fit in one's pocket), maybe more precisely to both the 1890's pocket folding Kodak Kodet and the Pocket Kodak¹¹² as well as to the Pocket

¹¹² *Vintage ad browser*, n.d, Vintage Photography/Camera Ads of the 1890s, <http://www.vintageadbrowser.com/photography-ads-1890s>

Books,¹¹³ popularized in mass culture consumption after the Second World War, and which definitely helped to popularize both the idea of books¹¹⁴ and of culture in broader terms. These two aforementioned commodities, like the cameraphone, have insinuated themselves, slipped into, and been brought onto, the market, to be consumed as cultural goods of desire and pleasure.¹¹⁵

Whether or not the cameraphone boom was spreading worldwide during the late 2000's, it was still necessary to confer a cultural object value on the mobile, as a creative legitimacy and a visual cultural status. At least in France, the API-IPSOS 2008 Barometer¹¹⁶ showed that the frequency of use per month still leaned toward the digital compact. The aim of a valorization awareness campaign was clear even to naive eyes. On one hand it had to be done as if selling any other good, through expensive advertisements, but on the other it had to confer importance and respectability to the mobile as a communication and creation tool, as well as to its possible image productions. The goal was to make the tool gain importance as a commodity of desire for a broader consumer base, and to move beyond the innovators or early adopters, and engineer its penetration and impact into wider populations.

The PFF was able to merge economic interests, cultural objectives, and specific national and international historical circumstances, and thus played a subjacent and maybe imperceptible formative role in the emergence and cultural legitimation of mobile films in France. Sociologist Hervé Glevarec states that in France, in the sociology of culture and cultural practices, the notion of cultural legitimacy is key and reminds us that Bourdieu's legacy, regarding the link between legitimate culture and the dominant bourgeois classes, remains heavily anchored.¹¹⁷ In the case of PFF it is pertinent to point

¹¹³ Following the British success the Penguin Book had in revolutionizing the publishing industry in the 1930's through its high quality and inexpensive books. In the early 1939 the Pocket Books produced the first mass-market, pocket-sized paperback books in America and revolutionized the American publishing industry. In France it happened similarly with the *Livres de Poche* collection, but it was not until 1953.

¹¹⁴ Morin, E. (1962). *L'esprit du temps*. Paris: Grasset, p. 69.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Oudghiri, R., & Brunet, L. (2008). *Baromètre photo vague 2008, Les principales tendances du marché, Baromètre API/IPSOS*, p. 8. Retrieved from <http://www.sipec.org/statistiques.php?PAGE=statistiques>

¹¹⁷ Glevarec, H. (2005). La Fin du modèle classique de la légitimité culturelle. In E. Macé & E. Maigret (Eds.). *Penser les médiacultures, Nouvelles pratiques et nouvelles approches de la représentation du monde* (pp. 69-117). Paris: Armand Colin, coll. Médiacultures, pp. 70-71.

out - even if it sounds tautological - that it is through legitimation instances that *legitimacy* is created.¹¹⁸

How do conventions, norms and taste change? How did the cameraphone move from being considered a gadget to achieve the status of cultural object? To understand this shift it is useful to recap the seminal study of the Sony Walkman as a cultural object. This case study draws on some of the central ideas, concepts and methods of analysis in Cultural Studies, such as the famous Circuit of Culture diagram developed principally by the sociologists Paul du Gay and Stuart Hall.¹¹⁹ After the widespread listening pleasure provided by the Walkman had faded, on November the 10th of 2001 the baton was passed to the iPod as the vessel of choice for personal audio libraries.¹²⁰ But soon the possibility of having an individual music collection *inside* the cell phone device allowed it to become a music player as well. “The personalization of technologies has become a major marketing tool for mobile technologies.”¹²¹ This possibility, coupled with the many other applications, transformed the perception of the cell phone as a whole, as part of a bigger family; as Katz and Aakhus coined it: *Apparatgeist*. The concept refers to “the spirit of the machine that influences both the designs of the technology as well as the initial and subsequent significance accorded them by users, non-users and anti-users.”¹²² The apparatgeist theory was developed to help explain broad patterns of consistency and perceptions among practices that have become a part of peoples’ daily lives.¹²³

Nowadays studying what people do with their images, such as carefully keeping or sending them to their relatives, and what these images do to these people - bring them

¹¹⁸ Ibid. p. 83.

¹¹⁹ Du Gay, P., Hall, S., Janes, L., Mackay, H., & Negus, K. (1997). *Doing cultural studies: The story of the Sony Walkman*. London: Sage. The theory suggests that when studying a cultural text or artifact five “moments” should be looked at: its representation, identity, production, consumption and regulation.

¹²⁰ Wittkower, D. E. (2008). *iPod and philosophy: ICon of an ePoch*. Chicago, Ill: Open Court.

¹²¹ Ibrahim, Y. (2008). The Wired Body and Event Construction: Mobile Technologies and the Technological Gaze. *The International Journal of Technology, Knowledge and Society*, Volume 4, Issue 2, pp. 105-112.

¹²² Katz, J. E., & Aakhus, M. A. (2002). *Perpetual contact: Mobile communication, private talk, public performance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 305.

¹²³ Campbell, S. W., & Russo, T. C. (2003). The Social Construction of Mobile Telephony: An Application of the Social Influence Model to Perceptions and Uses of Mobile Phones within Personal Communication Networks. *Communication Monographs*, Vol. 70 (4), p. 29.

together, represent them, identify them - are aspects, which in fact, indicate very clearly that one cannot separate production from distribution, circulation and reception. Cultural anthropologist Richard Chalfen also opines that to understand how we manage these images, we must focus on what we do with them.¹²⁴ Moreover, almost ten years after the Circuit of Culture, Gérard Goggin discussed mobile convergences, in *Cell Phone Culture: Mobile Technology in Everyday Life*.¹²⁵ Here, he openly applied du Gay and Stuart Hall's theories to analyze the mobile culture in a broader line of attack. My research aims to combine the approaches of Goggin as well as du Gay and Hall, in order to critically apply them for mobile imaging studies, in an attempt to understand how these visual mobile cultural practices came to play a crucial part in our lives.

Ensuring broad reception of the mobile and of pocket films as interesting and worthy of serious consideration has not been easy, but has been, nevertheless, quite quick. This was also one of the reasons why the PFF - although hosted in prestigious mainstream institutions such as the Pompidou or the Forum des Images, - was a casual event and the reception environment created is largely defined by its friendly nature; for instance the festival was held free of charge and was open to all ages. Sometimes film stars or well-known personalities from the film industry were invited, adding extra excitement with the possibility to see celebrities. For instance, in 2008 in the PFF, the actress Isabella Rossellini presented her own project as a filmmaker, which received the patronage of the Sundance Festival. Exactly as theorized by the *Film Festival Research Network* (FFRN) scholars. The chance to see an *avant garde* film, or to see a film one cannot see elsewhere, as was for example Rossellini's "Green Porno" project,¹²⁶ also drew people to the festival and brought the user closer to these mobile video products. Additionally, because none of the pocket films included famous actors, the presence of a star at the festival gave the cultural production the needed quota of glam. The technique

¹²⁴ Chalfen, R. (1987). *Snapshot Versions of life*. Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, p. 119.

¹²⁵ Goggin, G. (2006). Introduction: what do you mean 'cell phone culture'?. *Cell Phone Culture: Mobile Technology in Everyday Life*. London: Routledge, pp. 1-16.

¹²⁶ Currently it is possible to view the "Green Porno" videos on line even from France, but in 2008 when trying to view the videos online, due to copyright issues the message that appeared was: "we apologize for the inconvenience, but this video is only available in the United States." In 2015 Rosellini put up a theatre monologue called *Bestiary d'amour*, in which she presented her play.

of transfer has always been used in the case of celebrity endorsements, especially in propaganda.

An informal and friendly spirit pervaded the festivals. Round table debates, creative workshops, partnerships with film schools and high schools (all with free admission), were held. Since its creation, the festival provided a lively forum in which to explore the artistic possibilities offered by the mobile phone, as a creative tool of ubiquitous presence with an important role in our daily lives, impacting on most, if not all, of our everyday activities. However, since mobile (cellphone/cameraphone/smartphone) models and technological capabilities change every year, so do the discourses that surround them. Accordingly, the ways people use and perceive these topics change as well. “Technologies are socially shaped along with their meanings, functions, and domains and use”,¹²⁷ explicates the Canadian researcher Jonathan Sterne, “[t]hus, they cannot come into existence simply to fill a pre-existing role, since the role itself is co-created with the technology by its makers and users.”¹²⁸

Even if the issues discussed at the PFF seemed to be the same across the festival’s various events, uses and practices changed at the same time as the device itself did; and thus studying their dual evolution is of importance to the researchers and mobile actors. At the festival, mobile social patterns were approached, not only from an aesthetic point of view, but also from a social and professional perspective. Consequently, many of the films, as well as the debates held at the festival, examined the relationship between images and society and also how mobility devices could influence other media transformations.

In its first year the PFF’s call for entries was made only at a national level in France. At that time, 400 films were screened in the competition. Ninety-eight films were projected before 3500 spectators, during 31 sessions, in the space of two days. In 2006, the second festival took an international dimension as an open competition including

¹²⁷ Sterne, J. (2003). Bourdieu, technique and technology. *Cultural Studies*, 17: 3–4, May-July, pp. 367–389, p. 373.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

foreign films. Internationally speaking there were 600 films presented but only 111 films had been accepted to be screened in front of the 5,350 spectators in the 44 sessions, held over two days. That year many spectators of *La Nuit Blanche*¹²⁹ also attended the PFF Festival because their timing coincided.

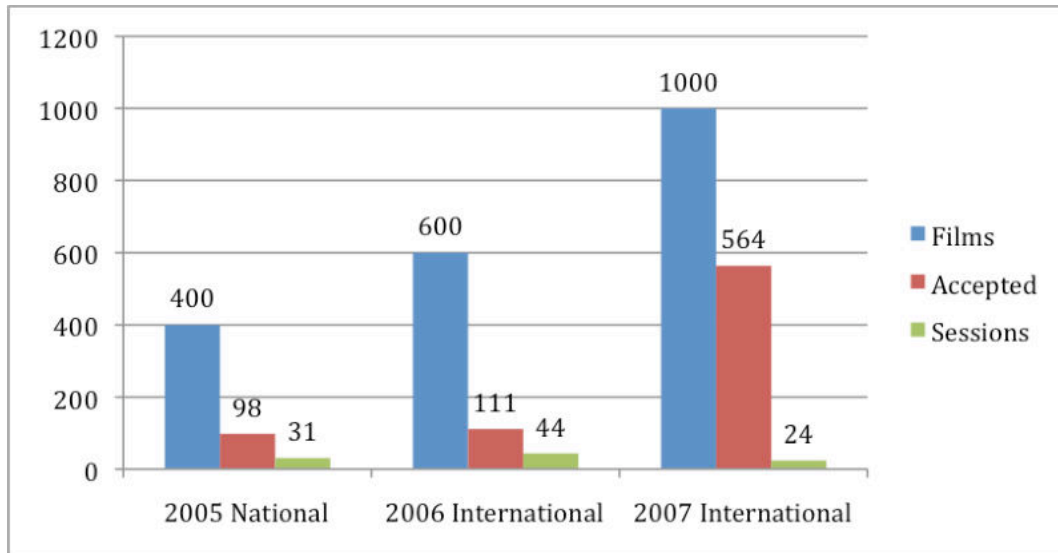


Figure 8. David, G. (2009). Overall view: figures of the PFF between 2005 and 2007, from national to international. (Data obtained from the PFF staff)

During the first two events, the PFF audiovisual content was shown only on big screens, as if anticipating the steadily increasing relationship and later convergence¹³⁰ of mobile phones, television, home cinema and internet; in the production, distribution and circulation of mobile images. Even though the quality of the images projected on big screens was poor (the bigger the screen the more pixelated the image), the festival organizers decided to project some of the pocket films on large screens so as to enhance the feeling of a common cinematographic experience, the “cinematic apparatus” of

¹²⁹ *The Nuit Blanche* – may be translated into English to something such as The Sleepless Night – and takes place in October. Since 2002 it has been an opportunity to explore artistic creations, sculptures, installations and performances for a night. With free entrance, it takes place in the streets of Paris and in some indoor places too, such as galleries from the contemporary-art scene and specific spaces such as churches, railways, etc. The concept has been exported and implemented in many other national and international cities.

¹³⁰ Gordon, E. (2010). *The urban spectator: American concept cities from Kodak to Google*. Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press.; Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York, N.Y: New York University Press.

being all together, watching the same film in a dark room.¹³¹ As the organizers told me later in interviews, they actively sought this effect, best achieved by screening a film collectively.¹³² From 2007 onwards, the festival retained its international dimension.

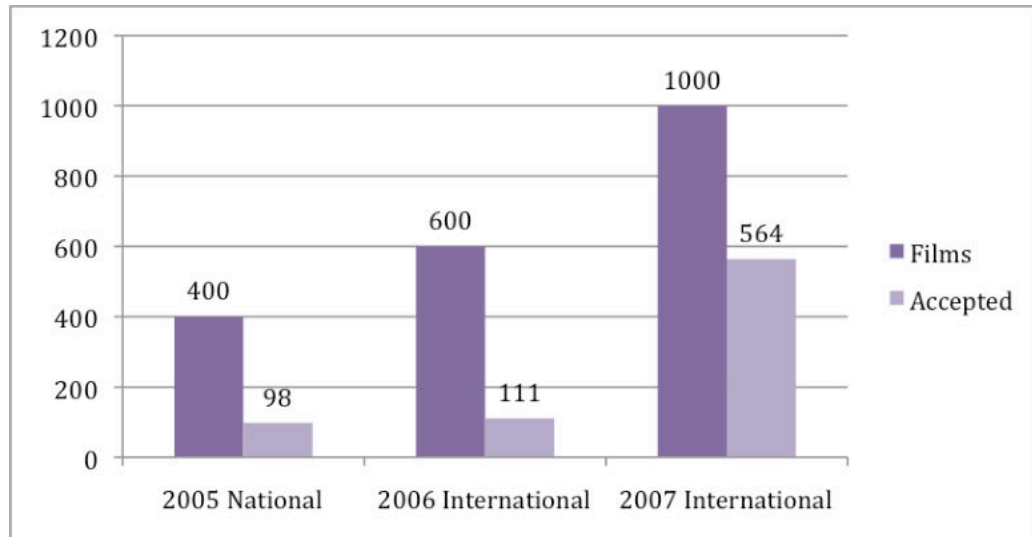


Figure 9. David, G. (2009). Number of films presented and films accepted for screening between 2005 and 2007. (Data obtained from the PFF staff)

1.2.3. Pocket Films Festival 2007, a Year in Detail: Logistics and Impact

In 2007 the event took place in the huge Centre Georges Pompidou, home of the *Musée National d'Art Moderne* (one of the largest museums of modern art in Europe), which also houses the *Bibliothèque Publique d'Information* (BPI), a vast public library, as well as the IRCAM centre for music and acoustic research. Located at the heart of the trendy Beaubourg neighborhood, and among the most visited museums in Paris, it is a cultural mecca, a space for exhibits, theatre plays, shows, and includes a library, bookshop, design boutique, and cafeteria.

On the French cultural scene the Centre Georges Pompidou is more than a place, it is a cultural landmark with its remarkable architecture that brings color to the city center:

¹³¹ Sturken, M. & Cartwright, L. (2003). *Practices of looking: An introduction to visual culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 155.

¹³² Personal communications with the PFF staff: N. Roth, April 2, 2008; Y. Gaillard, May 5, 2008.

you cannot miss the place. Nevertheless, an event hosted in a space of the Pompidou Centre's stature, could be intimidating for an average Joe, spectator or mobile filmmaker interested in participating. Despite the fact that the festival had no entrance fees and that it was centered around a popular cultural industry commodity (the mobile), the location, which served to legitimate the festival's artistic framework, meant the event could therefore be criticized, either as an over popular and mainstream festival or even as inaccessible to certain groups. It could be inferred that the decision to include the PFF in the cultural agenda of the Centre Georges Pompidou is proof that its programming team perceived the festival as worthy of a massive cultural arena (i.e. cultural industry) and interesting enough to share the scene with grand maestros. In the following years, after *Le Forum des Halles* was renovated, the festival moved to the *Forum des Images*.

Throughout the years, the selection committee has consisted of various members of the festival's team, changing every year, except for its artistic director Benoît Labourdette. Between 2007 and 2008, Yves Gaillard was the festival programmer and made a significant contribution to the film selection process. As expressed on the Film Festival Research Network (FFRN) page¹³³

Programming or curating is an aesthetic practice and an essential part of film culture that can be found in film clubs, arthouse cinemas, in exhibition contexts and most obviously in film festivals (Klippel 2008). Surprisingly the practice of programming is one that – like film festivals – has been neglected for study until very recently.

The programmer is a key figure, a first filter: the editor and decision maker.¹³⁴ A second selection committee determines which movies will compete. In 2007, this committee

¹³³ Film Festival Research Network (FFRN) site. (Last update 2015, May), <http://www.filmfestivalresearch.org/>

¹³⁴ For an insightful analysis of this trend see especially the Programming page and bibliography Programming, Film Festival Research, "*Film Festival Research, The website for the Film Festival Research Network*", <http://www.filmfestivalresearch.org/index.php/ffrn-bibliography/7-programming/>

was composed of: B. Labourdette, Y. Gaillard, L. Herszberg, J. Y. Lépinay and J. Bledsoe. At the end of the first selection, a program committee, consisting of three members of the PFF plus a representative of the Forum des Images, screened the films to be accepted for competition. Finally, a jury judged those films. In 2007, the program committee consisted of Claude Miller (Chairman), Dominique Blanc, Tom Novembre, Alain Riou, and Philippe Germain: all were figures from cinema and theater. During the festival, the jury views the films and chooses the winners.

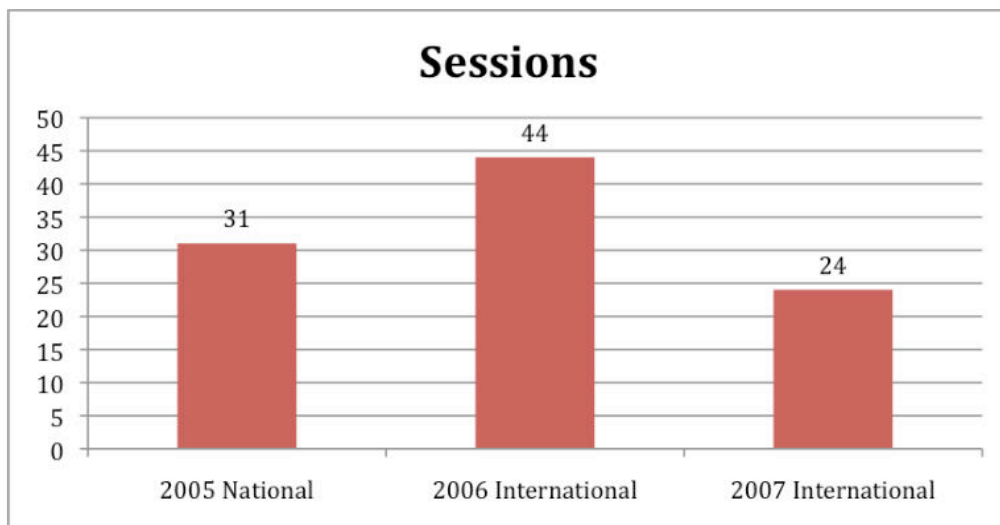


Figure 10. David, G. (2009). Number of national, international screening sessions held in the PFF between 2005 and 2007. (Data obtained from the PFF staff)

In 2007 the festival was held from the 8th to the 10th of June, and was divided into 24 sessions with an attendance of 3,500 spectators. Around 1,000 films had been sent in and 564 films had been accepted, out of which 200 films were projected on big screens and 364 were to be viewed on the fourth screen: the mobile. In comparison to the previous years of the festival, the increase, both in the number of movies entered and accepted, shows the increase in the popularity of this filming technique. The level of attendance due to the *Nuit Blanche* or other possibly overlapping events should be taken into account. But, if the commodity is free, as it is in the case of the PFF, then it is impossible to determine its monetary value or carry out an economic assessment. Construction of value can be gauged through the relationship between notoriety and

cultural goods. In this type of case, construction of value can be gauged through the relation between the cultural goods and the notoriety they have.

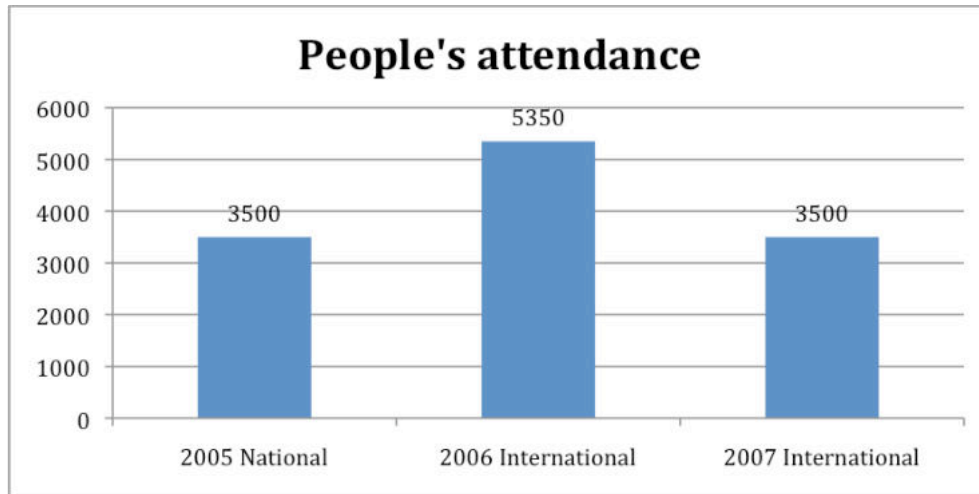


Figure 11. David, G. (2009). Attendance of the PFF between 2005 and 2007. (Data obtained from the PFF staff)

The festival was extended to include an additional day, so there are three days of screenings, and after the festival the winning films can be found in the PFF's website. However, in the introduction to *Time Out of Time: Essays on the Festival*, the Italian anthropologist Alessandro Falassi describes how, a "festival time imposes itself as an autonomous duration, not so much to be perceived and measured in days or hours, but to be divided internally by what happens within it from its beginning to its end."¹³⁵ Actually the PFF's atmosphere was quite euphoric,¹³⁶ maybe due to the festival's date at the beginning of summer or possibly due to its relation to other events (*La Nuit Blanche*), and festivals, or even *vis a vis* the other mobile film festival circuit. Therefore, understanding how these characteristics shape film festivals, and the PFF in particular, it is also necessary to get a clear picture of the whole festival, for contextual analysis.

¹³⁵ Falassi, A. (1987). *Time Out of Time: Essays on the Festival*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

¹³⁶ David, G. (2007, June 16). Please do not turn off your cellphone, *Actualités de la Recherche en histoire visuelle*, <http://www.arhv.lhivic.org/index.php/2007/06/16/433-please-do-not-turn-off-your-cellphone>

Until its third year the PFF only accepted films for viewing on the big screen, but from 2007 onwards, the films were projected either on big or small pocket screens. When registering their film for competition, artists or authors themselves had to decide beforehand how the film should be screened if accepted. The choice was between big or small screen. If the film was not accepted for one group (the big screen) it would not compete for the other category (the small screen). It is a risk that the author had to take in choosing one format over the other.



Figure 12. David, G. (June 2007). Spectators viewing from the phone trees at the Pocket Films Festival third edition, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. Personal collection.

In the entrance hall, attendees were welcomed by *phone trees* (figure 12), which were lit up from behind and seemed to glow from within. The cameraphones hung from their transparent plastic branches, broadcasting the pocket films on a loop. These short amateur films, which could be viewed individually and randomly at one's own pace, were divided into four categories: small screen (52), moving images (49), mobile memory (35), and mobile series (41). The reason behind these four categorizations is

unclear. Yves, the programmer, revealed that it was just a way to organize the films.¹³⁷ Media scholar Julian Stringer puts it quite plainly

The issue of programming is very important because it is intimately connected to the issue of reception. Curators imagine a certain program and by doing so envision a way to highlight, promote and contextualize the films. Some scholars and curators would even go so far as to say that programming means not (only) programming films but “programming the public” (Fung, 1999). They point to the fact that programming directly influences the constituency of the audience – although no one can foresee what audience reaction and outcome a certain program will have.¹³⁸

The three-day agenda was divided into the international competition, the international panorama, the French panorama, the young creators, the *ateliers* and round tables and also some *cartes blanches* were given to international schools and institutions. For example 2007, one of the round tables played host to Isao Ohashi, DoCoMo’s president (DoCoMo is the predominant mobile phone operator in Japan), who talked about the company and the i-mode (DoCoMo’s Mobile internet).¹³⁹ In a fairly in-depth way he described being able to have one handset for two different telephone lines, for example for two different family members, or one for business matters and one for a personal private line. Those models had not yet been launched in Europe and turned out to be very interesting to his audience. Their interest indicated that the mobile echoes the intrinsic dialogue between private life and public spheres, and that there might be an increasing demand for separating the two.

¹³⁷ Y. Gaillard, personal communication May 5, 2008.

¹³⁸ Stringer, J. (2008). Genre Films and Festival Communities: Lessons from Nottingham, 1991-2000. *Film International* 6:4, pp. 53-59.

¹³⁹ NTT DOCOMO is Japan’s premier provider of cutting-edge mobile voice, data and multimedia services. With more than 60 million customers in Japan, the company is one of the world’s largest mobile communications operators.

In 2008, French operators were already proposing the double sim mobile phone, which would somehow separate personal and professional life.¹⁴⁰ However, even today in 2015, many people are seen carrying two mobile devices. Ohashi also showed examples of some specific features, such as, direct music downloads to the mobile phone, the telephone as a credit card, a GPS, etc., all functions which are now, much more common but were little known in France in 2007. Ohashi made it clear that there were still many things to be developed, such as memory capacity, sharing speed, and copyrights. Indeed, he touched on many relevant issues, which are still under discussion today.

For Juha Kaario, researcher at Nokia, the reflection focused on what it means to be mobile. According to her, mobility can be understood as being on the move, but also as changing situations, as when connecting near and far spaces at the same time, and lastly, as making use of idle time. In the vast field of possible topics within Mobile Studies, Kaario centered her discussion on the collective content creation and curation. The subject of crowdsourcing, a concept coined in 2006 by Jeff Howe,¹⁴¹ has proved to be representative and revealing and will be discussed in more depth in the second part of this chapter. At the 2007 PFF edition, the pocket films presented were, for many, a way to recognize amateur artists or spot new filmmakers. Nevertheless, in the world of mobile image production, as happens in the history of image production, there is a mix of amateurs and professionals,¹⁴² especially when it concerns adopting new technologies. Moreover, in the second part, I will further explore the line between professional and amateurs and how thinking in these binomial terms becomes obsolete.

¹⁴⁰ D. S. (2008, Feb. 20). Comment utiliser deux cartes SIM à la fois?, *Le Figaro - Actualités, High-Tech*, <http://www.lefigaro.fr/secteur/high-tech/2008/02/20/01007-20080220ARTFIG00402-comment-utiliser-deux-cartes-sim-a-la-fois-.php>

¹⁴¹ Howe, J. (2006, June 2). Crowdsourcing: A Definition, *Crowdsourcing, Why the power of the crowd is driving the future of business*, http://crowdsourcing.typepad.com/cs/2006/06/crowdsourcing_a.html

¹⁴² Chéroux, C. (2007). Le jeu des amateurs - 1880-1910: L'expert et l'utilisateur. In A. Gunthert & M. Poivert (Eds.). *L'art de la photographie: Des origines à nos jours* (pp. 255-273). Paris: Citadelles & Mazenod.; Gordon, E. (2010). *The urban spectator: American concept cities from Kodak to Google*. Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press.; Gunthert, A. (Nov. 2009). Shared Images: How the Internet Has Transformed the Image Economy. *Études photographiques*, N°24, pp. 182-209. Retrieved from <http://etudesphotographiques.revues.org/2832>

Issues and images of vernacular iconic production are of interest to anyone doing research in Visual Mobile Studies because they facilitate a global view and a deeper understanding of what is being produced, in this case by or for mobile phones. McLuhan's dictum holds true, "a new medium is never an addition to an old one, nor does it leave the old one in peace. It never ceases to oppress the older media until it finds new shapes and positions for them."¹⁴³ Additionally, it seems that people who take the time and money¹⁴⁴ to make a pocket film get involved not only with the tool (the mobile) are also somehow connected to older versions (Handy-cam, video cameras, etc.).¹⁴⁵ In my research I postulate that individual sharing of images both challenge and are challenged by, the tools used.¹⁴⁶ In the case of the mobile phone this is even more evident because the communication level is embedded in the image as it is produced: it is in its DNA so to speak. At the PFFs, the booming mobile field was creatively explored and every year some new sections were added, reflecting on global trends. An analogy could be made to the turntable, which as Sterne reminds us, started as a playback device but over the course of the 1970s became a musical instrument.¹⁴⁷ As for the case of the mobile phone, the processes by which the device culturally evolved into a visual recording tool is analyzed all throughout this research project.

The following case study portrays an example of how the cameraphone became a social system which provides meaning and helps us connect to the "fine grain of everyday life" with a "broader sweep of sociohistorical change";¹⁴⁸ because "[i]n part, this was the result of changing attitudes toward what constituted the public performance."¹⁴⁹

¹⁴³ McLuhan, M. (2008). *Understanding media: The extensions of man*. London and New York: Routledge. (First published in 1964), p. 189.

¹⁴⁴ Some of the chosen pocket films are very expensive productions, produced and filmed as any other feature film. However, they enter the competition under the condition that they are to be viewed in the mobile phone screen, but no one refers to the fact that they are just shared through and not captured with mobile phones.

¹⁴⁵ Bolter, J. D., & Grusin, R. (1999). *Remediation: Understanding New Media*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

¹⁴⁶ McLuhan, M., Op. cit.

¹⁴⁷ Sterne, J. (2003). Bourdieu, technique and technology. *Cultural Studies*, 17: 3–4, May–July, pp. 367–389, p. 373.

¹⁴⁸ May, H., & Hearn, G. (2005). The mobile phone as media. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 8(2), pp. 195–211, p. 205.

¹⁴⁹ Sterne, J., Op. cit.

1.3. Mysteries of an Exposed Intimacy, The Analysis of “Porte de Choisy”, a Pocket Film by Antonin Verrier

“Objectivity fears subjectivity, the core self.”
Daston & Galison p. 374.

1.3.1. Rationale for Case Study

In an attempt to understand if our French vernacular mobile image exhibition parameters were moving, whether or not they were pushed further, or discussed in any way, I decided to describe in detail the 2007 winning French pocket mobile film *Porte de Choisy* (PdC).¹⁵⁰ To begin with, I will here explore how, when supported and mediated by a mainstream cultural institution, the production of private amateur mobile footage participates in the re-invention of intimacy and of the mobile as a tool for the creation of public image. In the second part, I discuss the materiality, content of the film and its reception. The third and last part of the video analysis focuses in its inter-iconicity, positioning PdC in relation to broader home mobile movie production.

Shot by Antonin Verrier in 2007, PdC belongs more to the type of films and images that can be made for fun, in a playful, spontaneous way, than to the mundane *home-mode* photographed-sex, mainly for self and partners’ consumption,¹⁵¹ rarely shown to a wider audience. But Sturken, M. & Cartwright, consider that values of what can or cannot, or what should or should not be shared, are not as universal as is usually presupposed.¹⁵² In this same vein, philosopher Charles Ess cautions: “[m]obile devices evoke a wide gamut of crucial ethical questions - questions that require careful and systemic ethical reflection regarding these devices and their potential ethical and

¹⁵⁰ Verrier, A. (2007). *Porte de Choisy*, 8 minutes, <https://vimeo.com/36400715>

¹⁵¹ Schwarz, O. (2010). Going to Bed with a Camera: on the Visualisation of Sexuality and the Production of Knowledge. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 13(6), pp. 637-656. p. 639.

¹⁵² Sturken, M., & Cartwright, L. (2003). *Practices of looking: An introduction to visual culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

political issues”¹⁵³ - as will be further seen and developed in the second part of this chapter.

Blaming the jury (as will be seen further on in JJ’s letter) for having made the decision to screen PdC, and later awarding it a prize seems pointless. Most of the time judgments and decisions are based on local community conventions and might be accepted only in one place at a specific period in time. Nevertheless, PdC met all the expectations of what that year’s pocket film should ideally portray. The question is: by recognizing this mobile film, did the PFF wish to push the socio-cultural visual sharing boundaries and therefore the acceptability of what could be shared from our everyday private lives? Was the PFF profiting from Verrier’s proposition in order to push forward the representations, identity, production, consumption and regulation of this device, to refer back to du Gay and Stuart Hall’s Circuit of Culture?

To answer this question it is important to recall that, in France, the iPhone was to be launched in November 2007 (after the PFF I am now dealing with). With a large variety and diverse range of apps - that enabled geolocalization, taking photographs and many more, the iPhone was quickly seen as the Swiss knife of portable technology. The iPhone embedded all these aforementioned features in one single device. And because easier, user-friendlier ways of mobile recording apps soon followed,¹⁵⁴ the bustling social networking sites and online platforms were where these images were most often hosted. This could probably have been one of the reasons why attention was biased toward the sharing of one’s intimacy, and the award went to PdC. Indeed, the film is intrinsically related to one of Mobile Studies’ key topics: *intimacy*, a concept developed in more depth as this chapter progresses. Or, maybe this was just a coincidence and it won because, as signaled by Ruth Barcan quoting a photography editor of an Australian magazine publishing house: “Everyone likes to see the average guy and girl next door

¹⁵³ Ess, C. (2009). Always On? Ethical and Political Dimensions of Mobile Communication Technologies. In J. K. Nyíri (Ed.). *Communications in the 21st Century, Engagement and Exposure, Mobile Communication and the Ethics of Social Networking*, Passagen Verlag, pp. 17-25, p. 20.

¹⁵⁴ Lasén, A. (2010). Mobile Media and Affectivity: Some Thoughts about the notion of Affective Bandwidth. In Höfllich, Joachim R., Kircher, Georg F., Linke, Christine, Schlote, Isabel (Eds.). *Mobile Media and the Change of Everyday Life*, F Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, pp. 1-23.

getting it on.”¹⁵⁵ Moreover Barcan continues developing the idea that people just want to relate to and to see people like themselves, real people.¹⁵⁶ This trend that boomed in the 90s, with a plethora of television reality shows, is also related to an ego involvement where beholders can identify with the protagonists or the situation, and the “I” can signify the fine line between fiction and reality.¹⁵⁷ As an alter ego, the cultural integration gets transformed into imitation desire.¹⁵⁸

The film narrative can be summarized as follows: Antonin, a man in his early twenties, begins filming his girlfriend, Cloé. Sitting in the bathroom talking on the phone, she is trying to arrange an appointment. Then, she walks naked out of the toilet and joins him in bed. There, they interact physically and there is the suggestion of fellatio. The third and final part of the film continues, mainly as a self-referential film, where Cloé searches the internet on the desktop computer to learn how to get to the Parisian Porte de Choisy, one of the several city gates of Paris (*portes de Paris*) that serve as access points to the city when coming or leaving by Paris’ ring road. The fact that Cloé has to go to Porte de Choisy is what gives the film its title.

1.3.2. Hermeneutics of an Award-winning Pocket Film

In studying the 2007 PFF jury’s first prize, I would like to make clear that it is not my intention to discuss whether PdC is an artistic film or not. My intention is neither to take an Art History approach nor to express a personal judgment. Instead, the point is to analyze how the film won first prize and what this fact might illustrate, represent, and signify. In other words: how did the Pocket Films Festival influence a broader aesthetic, moral and thus cultural construction of taste? I also recognize that choosing a winning film might make it seem that I endorse the jury’s decision; again, this is beside the point.

¹⁵⁵ Barcan, R. (2002). In the Raw: “Home-made” Porn and Reality Genres. *Journal of Mundane Behavior*, Volume 3(1), pp. 87-109, p. 87.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 92.

¹⁵⁷ Williams, L. (2004). (Ed.). *Porn Studies*. London: Duke University Press.

¹⁵⁸ Morin, E. (1962). *L’esprit du temps*. Paris: Grasset, p. 76.

As winner, the author received two thousand Euros, a new cameraphone and the film represented the French PFF in other festivals and countries. Moreover, the jury recognized that this film focuses on a major aspect of people's relationship with mobile images: closeness. In the jury's approval of the film as worthy of first prize, the pocket film is then endorsed as artwork and reaches a higher status. In this regard, and in the first French online version of this text, medieval historian and anthropologist Pierre Olivier Dittmar commented

If these images reach the statute of artwork and are welcomed into a legitimating institution - as is the case of the Pompidou Centre - it is precisely because, they are too trivial (there is nothing exceptional) and too singular (this is the story of a one couple) and because they did not exist in the public forum, in the ordinary flow of images. By rewarding the film, and not keeping it hidden, the jury has recognized that it [the film] puts the finger on a major aspect of our relation to images and to intimacy. Ultimately, and this is not the least of paradoxes, this "extra-ordinary and representative" side of the analysis of works of art [said Dittmar in reference to my analysis of PdC and it being awarded] is a very fundamental tool for anyone interested in the social uses of images.¹⁵⁹

I could not agree more with P. O. Dittmar's words, because in general terms, this type of mundane and surprising mobile imaging does not reach the public arena on a large scale. Therefore the couple's courageous gesture, in sharing their intimate mobile film for public projection and discussion, is not a minor detail, but the very core of the issue.

¹⁵⁹ Dittmar, P. O. (2010, February 19). *Mystères d'une intimité exposé, Corazonada, Culture Visuelle*, [Online blog comment], <http://culturevisuelle.org/corazonada/2010/02/19/mysteres-d'une-intimite-exposee-porte-de-choisy-14/>. Translation is my own: "Si ces images accèdent au statut d'œuvre d'art et sont accueillies dans une institution légitimante - comme c'est le cas du Centre Beaubourg Pompidou - c'est justement parce que, à la fois trop banales (il n'y a rien d'exceptionnel) et trop singulières (ce n'est que l'histoire d'un couple), elles n'existaient pas sur la place publique, dans le flux ordinaire des images. En primant ce film, les membres du jury ont su reconnaître qu'il mettait le doigt sur un aspect sans doute majeur de notre rapport aux images, à l'intimité, mais qui restait caché. In fine, et ce n'est pas le moindre des paradoxes, ce côté "extra-ordinaire et représentatif" fait de l'analyse de œuvres d'art un outils tout à fait fondamental pour qui s'intéresse aux usages sociaux de l'image."

Verrier expressed to me that the screening of the film had somehow bonded them as a couple, as an open expression of their love, a statement of happiness. For them it was an audiovisual way to proclaim their loving relationship publicly.¹⁶⁰

1.3.3. The Reception of *Porte de Choisy*: Controversy and Critique

After having been recognized by the PFF and thus highlighted in some press articles, PdC shows how in the Paris of 2007 the cultural industry sanctioned a greater degree of exposed intimacy as quite natural and thus prompted this kind of sharing. The thought of mobile users visually recording and sharing their intimate life introduced a new possibility. Mastering the exposure of personal and private images seemed intertwined with the concept of sharing. At this time, consumption of private mobile images as art and as a commodity by us, personally, or by others, was slowly starting to take place. The mainstream media were talking about User-created Content (UCC) and User Generated Content (UGC). In order to clarify this terminology, I would like to establish the differences between the two terms as they were understood at that time. In 2007, an OECD report discussed the terms of UCC and UGC.

The report said

User-created content (UCC) (French: “*contenu auto-créé*”) or the so-called “rise of the amateur creators” is one of the main features of the participative web but the participative web is a wider concept. UCC comprises various forms of media and creative works (written, audio, visual, and combined) created by Internet and technology users. Despite frequent references to this subject no commonly agreed definition of user-created content exists. Also referred to as “user-generated” content, sources such as Wikipedia refer to it as “... various kinds of media content that are produced by end-users (as opposed to traditional media producers such as professional

¹⁶⁰ A. Verrier, personal communication, September 17, 2012.

writers, publishers, journalists, licensed broadcasters and production companies)".¹⁶¹

One of the most paradoxical points to take from this quote is that in order to describe UCC, the example used is one of the most UGC sites of all: Wikipedia. Larissa Hjorth's observations are illuminating. According to her, UCC are contents created by the user, whereas UGC are contents that the user creates *and* mediates.¹⁶² Why is that significant? Because, gradually, the ways in which personal images were exposed was starting to shift. Visibility can also be a means to gain value. In the PFF case the pocket films are content created by the users (UCC) but they are not content that the user creates *and* mediates (UGC). It is the PFF team and jury who decide what and how the films will be mediated on their website, without any interaction from the users. Maybe it is because neither the festival organizers nor the festival sponsors want any negative comments on their website. Maybe it is because this level of participation would need close moderation. In any case, there is no possibility to comment. I could therefore speculate that, in fact, they do not want anyone to have control over the created content. In any case, this obviously gives them the unquestionable voice of authority.

Copyright laws and the circulation of images are issues that also need much more analysis, since most of these mobile pocket films are not posted or shared on many other sharing platforms. The PFF site does not post all the films "especially due to legal issues: some directors prefer not to see their films circulating on the net and fear losing control over them as they can be copied, altered, or partitioned in various ways once they are online. Finally, there is a willingness on our part to show films that we think are important."¹⁶³ The festival is a *hierarchy-generating* event. The amateurs' creations are framed and legitimized by being exposed within its frame and not elsewhere. Verrier himself admitted that he would have preferred to only present the film at the Centre

¹⁶¹ Wunsch-Vincent, S., & Vickery, G. (2007). *Participative Web and User-Created Content WEB 2.0, Wikis and Social Networking*. Paris: OECD, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Retrieved from <http://www.oecd.org/internet/ieconomy/38393115.pdf>, p. 17.

¹⁶² Hjorth, L. (2012). iPersonal. A Case Study of the Politics of the Personal. In L. Hjorth, J. Burgess, I. Richardson (Eds.). *Studying Mobile Media: Cultural Technologies, Mobile Communication, and the iPhone* (Routledge Research in Cultural and Media Studies), pp. 190-212. London: Routledge.

¹⁶³ Y. Gaillard, personal communication, May 5, 2008.

Pompidou (projection site of the third Pocket Films Festival, 2007) “because there, it was taken to the appropriate level, as a moment of cinema.”¹⁶⁴ He recognized that, had he decided to post the film on YouTube or Dailymotion or any video platform, it would have allowed him to broaden its audience, but he said he feared that by this means the film risked gathering rather tendentious and derogatory comments.

By doing so Verrier adheres to the fact that it is the Art institution that frames his pocket film and thus legitimizes it as a piece of art. Furthermore, making reference to YouTube and Dailymotion (during 2007 and 2008) Verrier also said that: “in these sites there is no nudity, except that of the *go-go dancers*.” Indeed, many of these sites used to have a strict policy against the sharing of pornographic content and tried to impose limitations on the display of nudity. Therefore, at that time, he could probably not have posted his film on YouTube anyhow, as the site was still better able to track and monitor inappropriate content. Even today, in YouTube’s community guidelines users are ordered: “don’t cross the line” and threatened that videos that violate this policy are flagged as unsuitable and reviewed.¹⁶⁵ They try to make it clear that YouTube is not for pornography or sexually explicit content and this can be taken to include one’s personal video/s, as such, those types of images can’t (shouldn’t) be posted on YouTube. Nevertheless, current practices dictate otherwise and override YouTube’s policy. In an interesting turn of events, years later, Verrier himself, uploaded his mobile videos to Vimeo.

In Bourdieu’s terms, the “construction of taste” towards the acceptance of a mobile visual culture was carried out through these kinds of events, awards and criticisms.¹⁶⁶ For instance, in the 3rd PFF four prizes were given: three Jury Prizes and one Audience Award, but PdC, the intimate and engaging pocket film, did not receive the Public Award. Did that mean that the public was not yet ready to award such an intimate film, that they felt should remain private? Or, perhaps, that the jury wanted to reward and legitimize more voyeurism, to help push the boundaries of what the audience could bear

¹⁶⁴ A. Verrier, personal communication, June 12, 2008. Translation is my own: “*car là il était pris à sa juste mesure, en tant que moment de cinéma.*”

¹⁶⁵ The YouTube Team (n.d.). YouTube Community Guidelines, Safety, *YouTube*, <http://www.youtube.com/yt/policyandsafety/communityguidelines.html#communityguidelines-line-crossing>

¹⁶⁶ Bourdieu, P. (1979). *La distinction: Critique sociale du jugement*. Paris: Éditions de Minuit.

to be shared and seen? Even though giggling was heard during the screening, the level of viewer acceptance or embarrassment is difficult to determine. However, if the festival's public is to be taken somehow into account, this letter can operate as a sample. I would like to share the only letter sent to the PFF jury by a spectator. It was later passed on to Verrier. The letter reads¹⁶⁷

Sir, Good afternoon,

It is ridiculous to write like this, especially cause you'll laugh at my clumsy foreigner French. As I do not find any forum on the PFF's site where I can give my opinion, I can only send it directly here. I introduce myself, JJ, faithful viewer of the PFF for three years, and cinema student. I write because I am simply outraged by the awards, the winner being a movie called *Porte de Choisy*, from which I ignored the author. I can't understand how you could choose such a film for the jury's first prize, a film so vulgar, simple imitation of exploitation films, and which, by the way has no audio visual qualities. How could you find grace in the crack of the bed as the characters melt in the faded out end? That being said, I'm not at all against naked movies (Godard and Jeunet have proven a true aesthetic), but the nudity shown with such rudeness and lack of subtleness, which you seem to especially enjoy so much, as you can see I am very shocked.

I am among those many disappointed viewers, let down by such a selection and probably maybe one of the only ones who dare write to you because it seems that we the audience only have the right to be excited or disappointed discreetly in our head. You say it is a pocket film festival, but considering all the work and enthusiasm the organizers and participants have invested, we expected a better film to deserve the award. And the first prize of the jury, it represents to some

¹⁶⁷ In the original French version the letter has many mistakes, and I decided to keep them in the translation too.

degree the total level of the festival. Among all the good surprises in the programs, I am astonished that such a film has drawn your attention. In 2006, you chose “*Cahier froid*” and “*Perle*”, each one of these films has a singular conception design and exceptional quality, despite the technical limitations of the medium. In 2007, your selection criteria changed.

I do not have the slightest intention to criticize the role and work of the jury; I just find it shameful that such a festival, with an enthusiastic team closes the screenings with so rude a film. I am writing as a sincere festival spectator and passionate cinema lover, who has no right but to write a few vague and unnecessary lines, just hoping for a better closure for its next edition. [sic]¹⁶⁸

Sincerely, JJ

To JJ, the film is too trashy and does not deserve to be among the winners. In Bourdieu's sense this would be tagged as something of bad taste. JJ does not agree with the decision, is even “very shocked” and feels that the jury's choice might only be contributing to broaden his chasm of “disgust provoked by horror or visceral intolerance (‘feeling sick’) of the tastes of others”.¹⁶⁹ According to Bourdieu taste is not a matter of individual interpretation but rather built through experiences, education, cultural class, cultural background and other aspects of identity.¹⁷⁰ Therefore, JJ may be verbalizing, the feelings and thoughts of others, all those “many disappointed viewers, let down by such a selection”, those who disagree with the jury. JJ considers him or herself as part of a minority “...probably maybe one of the only ones who dare write to you” and

¹⁶⁸ The letter dated June 2007, was provided by Verrier. Translation is my own. The French original version is enclosed in Appendix.

¹⁶⁹ Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. (R. Nice, Trans.). Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press. Retrieved from *Internet Archive*, http://archive.org/stream/Ebooksclub.orgDistinctionASocialCritiqueOfTheJudgementOfTaste/ebooksclub.org_Distinction_A_Social_Critique_of_the_Judgement_of_Taste_djvu.txt

¹⁷⁰ Sturken, M., & Cartwright, L. (2003). *Practices of looking: An introduction to visual culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 48.

powerlessness, frustrated - believing that the letter will not incite any change. However, they feel the necessity to write anyway, to express disagreement.

The winning films can be seen during the two to three days of the Pocket Film Festival but after the event, the festival's website hosts the entire collection. As mentioned, contrary to the now well-known social platforms, this site does not enable comments to be posted online from people browsing the web. With the growing tendency for users to migrate towards participatory websites, this stance is indicative of a form of defense, via a tactic of silencing, by installing security and exhibiting authority. In the wake of mobile internet, the lack of interactivity and interaction, comments or remarks on the PFF's site is unusual. JJ complains, "As I do not find any forum on the PFF's site where I can give my opinion, I can only send it directly here...because it seems that we the audience, only have the right to be excited or disappointed discreetly in our head." Having to send a paper letter seems awkward, especially for a mobile film festival, but this is telling in terms of the force of emotion compelling this viewer to act.

Moreover in the PFF - a place where a variety of tastes are obvious and many voices are screened - that which might disgust some could appeal to others. Some films and spectators applaud elegance, others simplicity, but a spirit of innovation and creation is always celebrated. Each year the jury is comprised of different judges who raise new questions and make changes in the selection process. Besides, since there is no record of their subjective decision-making process, the lack of transparency seems to denote, and be an indicator, that the jury's decision is influenced by personal taste. To this end JJ spells it out in black and white: "I can't understand how you could choose such a film for the jury's first prize [...] it represents to some degree the total level of the festival." JJ also makes reference to former decisions. These distinctions between different kinds of tastes and aesthetic values are what have usually been understood as *high* and *low* culture, elaborated in Bourdieu's *Un Art Moyen*.¹⁷¹

¹⁷¹ Bourdieu, P. (dir), Boltanski, L., Castel, R., & Chamboredon, J. C. (1965). *Un Art Moyen, essay sur les usages sociaux de la photographie*. Paris: Éditions de Minuit.

Awareness of the event was raised through advertising with posters in the Parisian Metro, attaining a high degree of visibility among those who heed city billboards. Reviews on the other hand – another way of spotlighting an event in the general press – were few. Two articles appeared in revues centered on cinema. One had been published in *Le Film Français* (June 11, 2007) the first web magazine devoted to audiovisual professionals, and another in *Cahiers du Cinéma*, the influential French film magazine, founded in 1951, which has reinvented the basic tenets of film criticism and theory. They illustrated that the PFF was gaining in reputation, maybe even denoting a desire to become a more a highly valued cultural event. In *Cahiers du Cinéma* the article by Arnaud Macé was entitled: “*Deviner où nous sommes*”,¹⁷² which means in a cunning double sense “guessing where we are”. On one side he refers to the physical sense and to the other in a more moralistic term, as if we were living a sort of esthetic decline. In other words: The title refers to the geo-location of being mobile ourselves, not knowing where a person might be (in reference to the geo-location feature the devices have), but also brings up more sociological questions of where we as an *under construction* mobile society can be. A. Macé’s article also addresses the banalisation of the mobile phone and its future use as an exercise, learning, and recreation tool. The author raises the possible risks of this small, ergonomic, gimmicky object, by mentioning that many pocket films centered on the topic of surveillance. At the end of his article he criticizes PdC, stating that it was a relative success, not due to its borderline content, but because of its materiality and aesthetic choice.

Two other press releases were published in the more general press, one in the online site of the well-known French newspaper *Le Monde* and the other in *National Hebdo*, signed by Topoline.¹⁷³ In *Le Monde* Andrea Giomaro, Italian filmmaker, said of the PFF: “it is the Cannes of the pocket films”,¹⁷⁴ as though associating the PFF with the Cannes Festival would brighten up the mobile culture event. Even B. Labourdette, the festival’s director, says: “the mobile is a competitor to the digi cams, an eye in the hand, similar

¹⁷² Macé, A. (July-August, 2007). *Deviner où nous sommes*, *Cahiers du Cinéma*, N°625, p. 61.

¹⁷³ Topoline. (2007, June). La Semaine de Topoline, Air Du Temps, *National Hebdo*.

¹⁷⁴ Tilouine, J. (2007, July 6). Le festival Pocket Films consacre les amateurs de la caméra-stylo - *Le Monde.fr - Actualité à la Une*, http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type_item=ART_ARCH_30J&objet_id=993272&xtmc=amateurs&xtcr=4

to a “*caméra-stylo*”.¹⁷⁵ The “camera-stylo” or “camera pen”, a metaphoric concept, coined in 1948 by Alexandre Astruc,¹⁷⁶ envisioned the progression of cinema through a camera pen, something that would enable and help liberate the cinema, and thus referring to mobiles, Labourdette continues

This visual advance owes much to technological mobile advances. The mobiles now equipped with cameras rival the digital cameras. Everyone has a camera in his/her pocket, this is a reality where it is interesting to exploit on the artistic level... Filming with a mobile has much closer sensations than those felt with the super-8.¹⁷⁷

Labourdette sees the mobile as a way to enhance the possible artistic amateur exploitations of the future. Nevertheless, these affirmations contradicted the less positivistic ways of understanding the PFF and mobility in general: a mobile cultural-phenomena. For instance in Topoline’s article, which appeared in *National Hebdo*, a former newspaper linked to the Front National, the French extreme right party, the author criticizes the event and is clearly against adhering to the use of the cameraphone as a recording tool for possible sociological issues. However, Topoline is correct to say that all judgments should be made relative to what is going on, especially in the context of local current affairs. Topoline’s remark is intrinsically linked with what had happened during the 3rd PFF. On the 12th of June, the Versailles Tribunal judged Massire Touré, a high school teen who had recorded a *happy slapping* (a filmed assault) with his mobile phone. Most of the media discourse around this new, everyday life-recording, tool, were unenthusiastic. Moreover, the over-mediated event led to the increase in discussions on happy slapping in France in 2006-2007. The results of which can be seen in this extract from Wikipedia

¹⁷⁵ B. Labourdette, personal communication, June 14, 2012.

¹⁷⁶ Astruc, A. (1948, March 30). The Birth of a New Avant-Garde: La Camera-Stylo. Originally published in *L’Écran française* as an article entitled *Du Stylo à la caméra et de la caméra au stylo*. Retrieved from https://soma.sbccc.edu/users/davega/FILMST_113/FILMST_113_0ld/GENERALTHEORY/CameraStylo_Astruc_1928.pdf

¹⁷⁷ Labourdette, B., Op. cit.

In February 2007, an amendment aimed at criminalising happy slapping was added to a law “on the prevention of the delinquency” by the Parliament of France based on a proposal from then Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy. In the final text, the anti-happy-slapping clause appears as the last part of Article 44, which also deals with ambushing law enforcement personnel. The law equates filming or photographing certain classes of violent crimes, including severe beatings and rape, with being an accomplice of such crimes. The law makes it illegal to broadcast the images of such crimes, punishable by up to 5 years in prison and/or a €75,000 fine.¹⁷⁸

Both of the youngsters (the aggressor and the filmmaker) ultimately faced prosecution and were incarcerated. The latter was accused of not having helped the teacher (an offence in France) and for violation of private life, after broadcasting the images. He was fined and sentenced to six months’ imprisonment. Massire Touré’s lawyer stated the youth had no secret intentions and had merely recorded the event as a matter of reflex. According to the lawyer, he did not have any idea of the extent of media coverage that the diffusion of his pocket film would have. It could even have been shared without his consent. Nevertheless, Topoline criticizes Touré as a victim of his time, someone who had to film because it was part of the current zeitgeist or what could be more specifically named “the platzgeist: a gestalt sense of the spirit of an environment, whether a neighborhood, city, region or country.”¹⁷⁹ He ironically questions: “we do not know if Massire Touré had the intention to compete for the Pocket Films *Palme d’Or*...”¹⁸⁰ Whatever the case, critical reviews unarguably hold significance and hence influence popular taste and lead to new perspectives, contributing to the building of a “veritable mood database”.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ Wikipedia’s Happy Slapping page especially the paragraph that refers to France
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Happy_slapping

¹⁷⁹ Chipchase, J., & Steinhardt, S. (2013). *Hidden in plain sight: How to create extraordinary products for tomorrow’s customers*. New York: Harper Business. p. 146.

¹⁸⁰ Topoline, Op. cit.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

The mobile scene itself develops both locally and globally, moves quickly, and raises its own ontological questions. Depending on the jury's members and with regard to diverse historical contexts, the PFF award results vary widely. For example in the 2008 PFF, the influence of the Olympic Games were quite obvious: *The Champion*, a one-minute film of a Hammer Throw, was awarded first prize; in 2009 it was *Incident*, as an omen of the Parisian riots and social incidents that were to happen that very year. In 2010 the winning film had the eloquent title of *Fear Thy Not*. The title of a film forms a base foundation, in a similar manner to a caption for a newspaper photo or a voice-over in film.¹⁸² Like captions, titles give directives on how one should look at pictures, and the title of the festival's 2010 winner was maybe a barometer of the worldwide political revolutions that were to come in just a couple of months.

It appears that amidst the variety and aesthetic caprices of the mobile films entered in the PFF, across different tastes, certain general principles of approval emerge from the jury. It should be remembered that the public votes to decide the film that will win the Public's Choice Award. Therefore, by promoting some films and not others the jury somehow conditions and influences the audience's choices too. But could it happen any other way? Could all the mobile films submitted be accepted, or at least be seen on an online-only basis? The discussion around jury composition, role and how their choices are made remains unanswered. "Is it to make new taste (therefore exceeding current taste) or is it to generate the standards of current taste?"¹⁸³ In any case, I could conclude by saying that through the PFF, and more precisely through the PdC case study, the binary terminological distinctions such as *high* and *low*, private and public, amateur and professional, are more complex than they seem and should not be reduced to one definition.

¹⁸² Moller, F. (2012). Celebration and Concern. Digitization, Camera Phones and the Citizen-Photographer. In C. Martin & T. von Pape, *Images in mobile communication: New content, new uses, new perspectives* (pp. 57-78). Wiesbaden: VS-Verl, p. 62.

¹⁸³ Raven, F. (2005, September 1). The Critic - Maximizers and Satisficers. *Art Times Online*, <http://www.arttimesjournal.com/speakout/Aug05speakout.htm>

“Artification”,¹⁸⁴ or the transformation of non-art into art is always done by collective signification. Since the PFF does not allow comments on its site, this collective signification has occurred not through audience participation, but rather through critics’ interpretations. These interpretations then reinforce other values and this feedback loop is further supported. Closer examination reveals the need to attribute an artistic, and thus cultural value to an object - once considered a simple gadget - which now has other significations as it is transformed into a cultural object, setting a criterion for evaluation.

1.3.4. Cameraphone Images in the Dawn of a Mobile Habitus Era

Through film analysis, which is to say, an analysis of its *mise-en-scène*, its cinematography, sound and editing,¹⁸⁵ I will shed light on how private mobile images are staged and should be deconstructed so as to understand their potential cultural impact. Through this case study I would like to clarify what I will call *the exposable* versus the *non exposable*, relating this exposed-intimacy concept to a broader and more flexible concept, one that I will call *mobile cultural habitus*.

To make a point of reference, I turn to the concept of *habitus*, firstly as used by Marcel Mauss, secondly as described by Norbert Elias, then last, as by Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant. In Mauss’ classic paper: *Les Techniques du corps*¹⁸⁶ he referred, in general terms, to habitus as those performative acts, the ways a specific culture does things, such as swimming, eating, running climbing, etc., and which is exactly what defines the varying cultures such as they are. Later, in 1939, *The Civilizing Process* (translated into

¹⁸⁴ Shapiro, R. (2004). « Qu’est-ce que l’artification? », Communication au XVIIème Congrès de l’Association internationale des sociologie de langue française, Tours. Retrieved from <http://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/docs/00/06/69/38/PDF/Artific.pdf>

¹⁸⁵ Aumont, J., & Marie, M. (1988). *L’analyse des films*. Paris: Nathan.

¹⁸⁶ Mauss, M. (1934). Les techniques du corps. Article originally published in the *Journal de Psychologie*, XXXII, ne, 3-4, 15 March - 15 April 1936. Communication presented at the Société de Psychologie on the 17th May 1934. Online digital edition, Jean-Marie Tremblay, Cégep of Chicoutimi 17 February 2002. Retrieved from <http://www.philo-online.com/TEXTES/MAUSS%20Marcel%20Les%20techniques%20du%20corps.pdf>, Chapitre I, Notion de technique du corps: “Ces “habitudes” varient non pas simplement avec les individus et leurs imitations, elles varient surtout avec les sociétés, les éducations, les convenances et les modes, les prestiges. Il faut y voir des techniques et l’ouvrage de la raison pratique collective et individuelle, là où on ne voit d’ordinaire que l’âme et ses facultés de répétition.”

English in 1969), Elias, understood it more as an *etiquette*,¹⁸⁷ similar to the self-restraining social manners and styles that are internalized and auto-imposed. In 1965, the concept was food for thought for the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, who paraphrased Mauss' and Elias' definition of habitus, expanding it to include *experiences*¹⁸⁸ as well, not just organic or mental dispositions, but also as unconscious mental schemes of perception and actions that condition our behaviors.¹⁸⁹ "Like Bourdieu, both Elias and Mauss used habitus as a way of discussing embodied subjectivity, "practical knowledge" as Bourdieu calls it, but Bourdieu's distinctive contribution was to treat habitus, itself, as being stratified across a society (as opposed to Elias and Mauss, who tended to think of habitus as stratified across different societies or epochs)".¹⁹⁰ In this line, Loïc Wacquant, contemporaneous and once frequently Bourdieu's coauthor, continued to dig into the concept. "Habitus is indeed a multi-scalar concept". He underlines that habitus is intrinsically linked to the doxa, the capital and the field, as well as to the symbolic power and reflexivity.¹⁹¹ There is an individual habitus... where these individual experiences are selected and stamped by membership in collectives and attachment to institutions... in particular those that anchor strategies of group-making. There can also be a class habitus, an ethnic one, a regional habitus and so on...¹⁹²

At the intersection of all these notions, and related to the Mobile Studies field, I should say that the ensemble of mobile habits people have, such as telephoning, playing games, listening to music, texting, videoing, etc., - in a Mauss and Elias sense - could be generalized as, and therefore named: 'mobile habitus' in a Bourdieusian-Wacquant sense. Therefore, as I understand it, the mobile habitus is constituted by *idiosyncratic manners* that encompass the performative side, the etiquette, the experiences, and the multi scalar concepts. They can be distinctive of different cultures, countries or ages, go

¹⁸⁷ Emphasis added.

¹⁸⁸ Emphasis added.

¹⁸⁹ Bourdieu, P. with Wacquant, L. (1992). *Réponses. Pour une anthropologie réflexive*. Le Seuil. Cf. p. 71: "Des notions telles que "habitus, champ et capital peuvent être définies, mais seulement à l'intérieur du système théorique qu'elles constituent, jamais à l'état isolé." and p. 101: "Parler d'habitus, c'est poser que l'individuel, et même le personnel, le subjectif, est social, collectif. L'habitus est une subjectivité socialisée."

¹⁹⁰ Sterne, J. (2003). Bourdieu, technique and technology. *Cultural Studies*, 17: 3–4, May-July, pp. 367–389, p. 370.

¹⁹¹ Wacquant, L. (2014). Putting Habitus in its Place: Rejoinder to the Symposium. *Body & Society*, 20, pp. 118-139.

¹⁹² Ibid. p. 120.

hand in hand with the different technological changes, *but yet remain somehow characteristic of a large majority of mobile users no matter what their diversities*. In this mobile habitus there are recognizable usages and specific performative acts such as: checking one's mobile numerous times, many times and all through the day, or today's taking of selfies, etc. The mobile habitus has a marking effect and is a status enhancer. Historically, susceptible of changes, these mobile visual habitus are intrinsically fluid, flexible and spontaneous: continuously evolving with new mobile technologies. They mainly entail the several uses and diverse practices of mobile social networking and mobile apps. Thus, since mobile visual habitus is a concept in motion that changes at a constant, and almost imperceptible rate; it is essential to observe the patterns of participation and the changes those habits portray: the transformations, in consumption and sharing, that image creation is constantly experiencing.¹⁹³

1.3.5. Conditioned by the Equipment

If we take it as a given that a framework will change with the advent of new technology, then the PFF must be understood as a framing dispositif (Foucault, 1989). However, both the framework and PdC's intrinsic specificities act together to socially construct our perspectives. My analysis will now continue with a more in-depth study of the film PdC, focusing on its technical features: image quality, composition, editing, sound, etc. To do so I use Feldman's (1967) four-step model of art criticism as a springboard: *description, analysis, interpretation and evaluation*. This will entail what Feldman calls the "verbal image" (space, time, energy, flow, etc.), the integration among the elements (structure, style, form, content), the meaning derived (ideas, associations, hypothesis) and defend with evidence the supported opinion of the work (likes and dislikes, strengths and weaknesses).¹⁹⁴

Porte de Choisy is a personal pocket film that depicts a couple's intimate moment at home. Entirely shot with a cameraphone, this eight-minute film gives an impression of

¹⁹³ Bourdieu, P. with Wacquant, L. (1992). Op. cit.

¹⁹⁴ Feldman, E. B. (1967). *Varieties of Visual Experience*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

lack of speed. This maybe because it is presupposed that videos recorded with mobiles have to be short, one minute or less, since they are usually designed to be viewed on internet sites or sent to other mobiles. Maybe it is as Verrier said: "There cannot be cuts in love."¹⁹⁵ In PdC as in many pocket films, including many of the ones I viewed in the PFF archive, there is no editing, no special effects, no music added and no scripted scenario. Even after interviewing the filmmaker several times, I haven't been able to determine if the film was scripted or spontaneous.

Among the freshman groups of French university students (2010-2011) where I have had the opportunity to screen the film to people about the same age and social class as the couple starring in it, the comments I received were: "I could have done same or better", "Did this film win the first prize? - You must be kidding!", or even "No way, this must be a joke!" The students were very surprised that such a "simple ordinary film" could have won. Therefore, the next section aims to dissect PdC's uniqueness and decipher the reasons why it was awarded first prize.

PdC shows an intimate instant in the lives of a young French couple. It is footage they made of themselves, making them the subject and object at the same time. The protagonists are Antonin Verrier, director and second role, and Cloé, his partner-muse-actress. Antonin used to film his girlfriend almost every day: "I love filming her".¹⁹⁶ The film is part of a series: they had become used to shooting spontaneously in the morning or during evenings in bars, as a kind of diary of personal memories of their relationship. Even though it won an award, PdC suggests that mobile image creation can be legitimated through the actors' enjoyment of their own intimacy: "They are fun to do",¹⁹⁷ he continued. Like a self-imposed (re)creative exercise, perhaps the fact that they regularly filmed themselves made them more comfortable in front of the camera and this comes across in the film.

¹⁹⁵ A. Verrier, personal communication, June 12, 2008. Translation is my own: "*On ne peut pas faire de coupes dans l'amour.*"

¹⁹⁶ A. Verrier, personal communication, June 12, 2008. Translation is my own: "*J'adore la filmer.*"

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. Translation is my own: "*Ils sont drôles à faire.*"

Cameras now have a long history of recording everyday life, but were historically used for special occasions and events, noteworthy moments bracketed off from the mundane.¹⁹⁸ Bourdieu named those instances “photographic occasions” usually birthdays, weddings, and tourism, in fact a photographic occasion was a special moment that merited being shot, registered and remembered.¹⁹⁹ However, with the mobile always at hand, it seems as if life is similarly to the sentiments of Paris Hilton, who famously said: “the way I see it you should live everyday like it’s your birthday”, enabling us to be transformed into what Gunthert has called “tourist of the everyday”,²⁰⁰ demonstrating that thinking about photography in Bourdieu’s “photographic occasions” terms is now obsolete.

Mobile images are anchored in the present, where *The Now* is perceived as short-lived and ephemeral. With its ubiquitous and lightweight presence the cameraphone is frequently used as a kind of archive of a personal subjective viewpoint, a collection of fragments of everyday life.²⁰¹ Cameraphones and other hand-held multimedia tend to contribute to what has been called “the aestheticisation of everyday life”²⁰² or to the aesthetics of banality.²⁰³ Upon reflection, Verrier points out that PdC is the most intimate film he has made, but curiously, the film that most people have seen.²⁰⁴ Let’s investigate the reasons for this paradox.

Verrier used to be quite attached to his V600 Sony Ericsson, recognizing he did not like other brands. Fetishism and emotion *vis a vis* technological devices has always been an

¹⁹⁸ Chalfen, R. (1987). *Snapshot Versions of life*. Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press.; Gye, L. (2007). Picture This: the Impact of Mobile Camera Phones on Personal Photographic Practices. *Continuum*, 21(2), pp. 279–288.

¹⁹⁹ Bourdieu, P. (dir), Boltanski, L., Castel, R., & Chamboredon, J.C. (1965). *Un Art Moyen, essai sur les usages sociaux de la photographie*. Paris: Éditions de Minuit.

²⁰⁰ Gunthert, A. (2014). L’image conversationnelle, *Études photographiques*, N° 31. Retrieved from <http://etudesphotographiques.revues.org/3387>. Translation F. Aziz: “*touristes du quotidien*”.

²⁰¹ Ito, M., Okabe, D., & Matsuda, M. (2005). (Eds.). *Personal, Portable, Pedestrian: Mobile Phones in Japanese Life*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

²⁰² Featherstone, M. (1991). *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism*. London: Sage.

²⁰³ Koskinen, I. (2007). *Mobile multimedia in action*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

²⁰⁴ An explanation in the margin is that there is a distinction to be pointed out between those who saw PdC in the presence of its authors-actors, physically at the PFF on the Pompidou’s big screen and the audience that can still view the film online. In any case, in a thoroughly mediated world, argued Livingstone (2005) “audiences and publics, along with communities, nations, markets, and crowds, are composed of the same people.” (quoted in Baym and boyd: 2012: 322). This lack of distinction between public and audience allows me to use the terms interchangeably.

issue. Bourdieu, was interested in the physical technology of the camera, quoting one photographer who had said: “I love my Leica both physically and emotionally”, referring to it as a structuring material which conditioned his practice. Undoubtedly, the materiality, and the possibilities enabled by the mediums influence artists’ creative intentions. The V600 Sony Ericsson Verrier used was equipped with a primary camera of 1.3 MP, 1280 x 1024 pixels, a LED flash and a secondary video camera of QCIF, Quarter Common Intermediate Format, which is a standard size for images produced by low-resolution digital cameras and video cameras. QCIF images are 176 pixels wide and 144 pixels tall (176 x 144). This means its image quality has a particular electric noise that might remind us of the analogue graininess or texture. Visual noise is the name given to graphical elements that do not clearly transmit information and overlap with the main presentation and compete with the visual information the viewer is trying to understand. The framing, image and sound quality all influence a film’s readability.

For Verrier, who is left-handed, this model was easy to handle, and the recording mechanism, which is automatically triggered by opening the device, was very fast and efficient for shooting spontaneously in comparison with other cameraphones he had tried. Since most pocket films appear to have been filmed impulsively and yet really should appear relaxed and completely ordinary, quick recording is a key asset in the use of these devices. Automatic devices might work more easily for impromptu recordings and are linked to more spontaneous and unconscious visual behaviors. Verrier was thoroughly convinced he had been very lucky when filming because “the camera set itself on long version”.²⁰⁵ Previously, on his mobile, “the time function did not allow me to film more than a minute. Here, I was able to film for eight minutes, the mobile had unlocked itself”,²⁰⁶ he added. He is someone who believes in technology as a determiner for what can happen and sees the cameraphone as an agent of his results.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ A. Verrier, personal communication, June 12, 2008. Translation is my own: “*la caméra s’est mise sur version longue toute seule.*”

²⁰⁶ Ibid. Translation is my own: “*la fonction temps ne permettait pas d’enregistrer plus qu’un minute. Ici j’étais capable d’enregistrer pendant huit minutes. Le portable ça a débloqué tout seule.*”

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

PdC's aesthetic choices construct the style and history of the film, and are - especially for the jury who could not explain the reasons of such a seemingly arbitrary choice for first prize - its alibi. The combination of formal technological aspects of the film - the visual noise, the sound, the ways of holding the device - all contribute to the range of meaning and impact. Although PdC had been warmly welcomed and shown in the 6th Berlin Porn Film Festival (October 2009), Verrier himself said he considered PdC neither soft nor home porn, but would catalogue it more readily under the Experimental Porn category in which it had been screened.²⁰⁸

Consequently, I will now turn to content analysis to illustrate the impact of the medium, moving from a technological focus to a more thematic approach. Three central *leitmotifs* stand out: the noise, the nudity and the introspection of the film, which all happen to be directly related to its three main moments and physical spaces.

1.4. Private, Personal, Intimate or Exposed Intimacy?

In this section, after having framed this mobile footage in its exhibition dispositif (the PFF) and with the intention to link this personal intimate mobile film (PdC) to the concept of intimacy, I will employ an interpretative subjective method. But first we must explore what is understood as intimate. In *The Transformation of Intimacy, Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies*, British sociologist Anthony Giddens argues that, both sexuality and intimacy are socially constructed and that “[i]ntimacy implies a wholesale democratising of the interpersonal domain, in a manner fully compatible with democracy in the public sphere.”²⁰⁹ He also claims that intimacy is a negotiation of personal ties and that its transformations might have subversive implications for modern institutions.

As in much of the world, the last decade has seen the increasing penetration of the cameraphone into French people's everyday lives. Therefore the paradigms embodied by

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Giddens, A. (1992). *The transformation of intimacy: Sexuality, love, and eroticism in modern societies*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, p. 3.

the cultural industries have changed too. The valorization of the intimate has found a strong endorsement in the public sphere. Therefore, rather than discussing intimacy it would be more precise to discuss the expositions, mediations, and publicity of these intimate mobile images. The question then arises of when and how this audiovisual intimacy gained exposure? By the early 2000s, nudity in France was neither a taboo nor a subversive topic, but the intimate mobile images screened at the Centre Pompidou were interpellant images that reaffirmed the saliency of Giddens' words fifteen years after they were written. Concepts vary within different cultures and eras, are forged socio-historically, and are geographically located.

Notions also change due to particular shifting perceptions, epochs and contexts. In addition, it is quite difficult to make generalization and to define intimacy. Intimacy might be what we share only with a very close few: a secret garden. *Ergo*, many people link it to sexuality, which, since the nineteenth century has been developed in most occidental societies as a secret. Writer Kovadloff's thoughts regarding intimacy are also very suggestive: "[w]ith the word intimate I refer to this spiritual region and its mode of contact where we give to know, not exactly what we believe, but more profound and deeply what we are".²¹⁰ I would venture to state that this is the true reason why PdC won, because it is a publicly rendered portrait that reflects Cloé and Antonin's internal dynamics.

According to the French psychoanalyst Serge Tisseron public space is what we share with the largest number, while private space is only what is shared with no more than a handful of selected individuals.²¹¹ The intimate space is limited in its sharing. Intimacy, therefore, does not coincide exactly with what one thinks, but more broadly with who one is. In the case of PdC, it is important to determine whether the images are perceived as intimate because of the nudity, the general content, the way in which the footage was

²¹⁰ Kovadloff, S. (2006). *Ensayos de intimidad*. Buenos Aires: Emecé. Translation is my own: "*Con la palabra «intimidad» remito yo a la región espiritual y a ese modo de contacto en los que damos a conocer, no exactamente lo que pensamos sino, más honda y ampliamente, lo que somos. De modo que, cuanto en la intimidad aflora, no necesariamente ha de ser lo que premeditadamente nos proponíamos brindar, sino lo ineludible, lo que no podemos soslayar sin que, al hacerlo, no estemos traicionando nuestra espontaneidad, nuestra sed de transparencia, nuestras necesidades de expresión más sustantivas.*" p. 9.

²¹¹ Tisseron, S. (2001). *L'Intimité surexposée*. Paris: Editions Ramsay.

filmed, or the fact that the images were ones that would typically remain private. I hypothesize that there is an ironic twist: that by exposing intimate images a private content of our inner selves is being shared. This seems contradictory because this exposed intimacy is shared with everyone, and this goes against the definition of intimacy. Each time something intimate is shared it becomes less intimate: sharing erodes intimacy, which is fragile.

In this paradox PdC reveals a couple's complicity: under the label of intimate images they share an *a priori* hidden moment,²¹² but once these private mobile images are shared, it is our task, as viewers to accept (or not), the mystery, its reasons, and understand the practices, the usages and the possible cultural benefit of this type of image sharing. Whatever the reason for their decision, it is laden with many meanings and emotions. It could even be said that what these mobile images reveal is not really intimate but a personal iconography. But, "[h]owever revealing, self-images do not automatically constitute biographical evidence which others can understand."²¹³ Here, Schneider means that, no matter how intimate the images might be, they should be inscribed in a larger scope i.e. to the person's life history. Similar to when one places a color next to another and it seems to change its hue in relation to the surrounding ones, images are understood quite differently either out of context or in relation to other images.

One might ask then: what is PdC's *real context*? Is it the moment Verrier filmed Cloé? Is it the instant when the couple first saw themselves on the home computer screen? Is it the film screening at the PFF venue? Or just, is it more broadly speaking its long lasting online life? PdC, as most creative pieces, as most videos do, has multiple contexts. This is one of the complexities of digital and mobile imaging distribution; a characteristic that becomes particularly relevant when discussing the flow of mobile images. Moreover, mobile images are small in terms of digital size and if mobile footage is short, it is usually easy to transfer, encouraging easy circulation.

²¹² Seguret, O. (1998). Cinéma intime. In E. Leibovici (2004). (Ed.) *L'intime*. Paris: Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts.

²¹³ Schneider, U. J. (2009). Counter Knowledge, An Update on Foucault in the Age of Mobile Communication. In J. K. Nyíri (Ed.). *Engagement and Exposure: Mobile communication and the Ethics of social networking* (pp. 103-108). Wien: Passagen, p. 108.

At the PFF festival, PdC competed in the documentary/feature films category. Through fictional writing or filming, the role of borrowing or transferring when re-presenting the self, are all indications of the presence of the other in the figuration, self-discovery and co-construction of a mobile subject. In PdC the characters work together to construct what could be a typical lie-in morning in the life of a young French middle class couple. Therefore, this fictional pocket film appears to be an example of “cultural evidence”²¹⁴ that operates as a subjective and polyphonic construction of their portrait in 2007. In Hanno Hardt’s words we could say that PdC “[...] makes ‘seeing’ a meaningful social practice”,²¹⁵ because “fiction [operates] as cultural evidence”²¹⁶ and is a place where the imaginary – due to its aesthetic realms – can be perceived as something even more concrete than reality.²¹⁷

1.4.1. In the Bathroom: One of the most Personal Intimate Places

The film starts in media res, no title or music to guide viewers on the situation; only two seconds of black. There is an attempt to zoom, but the basic simplicity of the tool used when Verrier filmed (March 2007) did not offer the ability either to zoom-in or out properly, or to change lenses. Throughout the film the camera records the movements and breathing of the holder, shaking as Verrier tries to find the best shooting angle. The spectator must watch for a while, before deciphering the head of a young woman who appears to be sitting on the toilet seat, who is framed by blue and white bands on the right and black on the left side. (Figure 13)

²¹⁴ Hardt, H. (2007). Constructing Photography: Fiction as Cultural Evidence. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 24(5), pp. 476–480.

²¹⁵ Ibid. p. 477.

²¹⁶ Ibid. p. 476.

²¹⁷ Morin, E. (1962). *L'esprit du temps*. Paris: Grasset, p. 104.



Figure 13. Verrier, A. (2007). Cloé in Porte de Choisy [Pocket film, V600 Sony Ericsson]. Screenshot.

Cloé is on her mobile phone and her boyfriend, Antonin, is in the process of filming her with his. A *mise en abyme* of their actions, a young man uses his mobile to film a young woman while she is talking on her mobile too, arranging a *rendez-vous* she has at Porte de Choisy. In the film we do not see whom Cloé is talking to and are given no clue to their identity. This absent/present third person is her interlocutor.²¹⁸ He or she is in an unknown place that melts ephemerally into the couples' intimate *kairos* through the mobile phone.²¹⁹ "The telephone is an irresistible intruder in time or space" because "it is a participatory form that requires a partner."²²⁰ It is not clear from McLuhan's words whether his intruder is the person on the other end of the line or the person sharing the same physical space as we converse on the phone, or possibly both. It is common in mobile communications to have the sensation of physically being in the place from where you are speaking but mentally or affectively transported into another space. "When space feels thoroughly familiar to us, it has become place" states

²¹⁸ Gergen, K. J. (2002). The challenge of absent presence. In J. E. Katz & M. A. Aakhus (Eds.). *Perpetual Contact Mobile Communication, Private Talk, Public Performance* (pp. 227–40). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

²¹⁹ de Souza e Silva, A. S., & Frith, J. (2012). *Mobile interfaces in public spaces: Locational privacy, control, and urban sociability*. New York: Routledge.

²²⁰ McLuhan, M. (2008). *Understanding media: The extensions of man*. London and New York: Routledge. (First published in 1964), pp. 291- 292.

geographer Yi-Fu Tuan.²²¹ Something similar occurs when driving, when even without really realizing, we look intermittently backwards and forwards through the rear-view mirror. This sort of zapping action belongs to what Foucault described as “heterotopic space”.²²² The moment when you see yourself in the mirror, the space of the phone call, can be understood as heterotopia. It might also be interesting to think about this in these terms because social and mobile media are said to compress time and space, while here it appears to be fragmenting them both.

Cloé is seen listening to the other end of the line. She plays with a fringed curtain, a representative gesture that marks the threshold of an intimate space, which is being trespassed. Then, she feels observed and casts a glance at her lover and smiles at him, therefore at the camera too. From this stolen period in time, a game of *seduction through gazes* is set in play. This is the time when the spectators’ eyes adjust to the low-lit grainy introduction. This Peeping-Tom keyhole effect works as an analogy of voyeurism: it is based on the desire to observe the privacy of individuals under specific conditions in order to experience enjoyment. When she finishes her telephone conversation, irritated, she throws her mobile to the floor. Everyday expressions such as: “Fuck it! – It is just pissing me off!” are heard. By this reaction to the call, Cloé unintentionally links both spaces.

Privacy can refer to a lot of different things: security, individual data, identification and personal information. Understanding what privacy looks like, is to grasp a social situation and how information will flow. In 2007-2008, the period of time in which most of this ethnographic case study took place, the limits of which elements of personal lives were worth recording were even less clearly defined than today. (They are still to be defined, but at least at the moment of writing, more time has passed for self-reflection). Due to the fact that “[a]t the end of 2007, the first ‘unlimited mobile Internet’ packages arrived in France, coinciding with the first iPhone in Europe”,²²³

²²¹ As quoted in de Souza e Silva, A. S., & Frith, J. (2012). *Mobile interfaces in public spaces: Locational privacy, control, and urban sociability*. New York: Routledge, p. 8.

²²² Foucault, M. (1984). Michel Foucault, Of Other Spaces Heterotopias. (J. Miskowiec, Trans.). *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité* 5 (French version originally published in 1967), pp. 46-49.

²²³ Martin, C. (2012). Images and Representations of the Mobile Internet. In C. Martin & T. Von Pape

people were experimenting more and discussing what could and should be shown publicly, though blogging and reality television was already gaining more popularity. Privacy, intimacy, self-mediation, and identity in relation to mobiles, were part of popular debates. It could be thus deduced that the PFF's 2007 edition was also the year that expectations of what could be filmed with a mobile and publicly shown were being culturally seeded. Popular discussion showed that the boundaries of public exposure of private life had to be established. Popular discussion showed that the images portraying people in bathrooms was going to become something to be seen more and more and more often. At the moment of writing, it has been proven throughout the world that social sharing patterns do much more than merely relay our daily lives: they may even end up having global consequences, as will be further discussed in the following part of this chapter.

1.4.2. Naked Raw Images to Share

*"Have I doubt when I'm alone
Love is a ring, the telephone
Love is an angel disguised as lust
Here in our bed until the morning comes."*

Patti Smith and Bruce Springsteen,
Because the Night (1978)

As if proceeding from the very intimate and personal sphere to different stages of publicity, PdC moves spatially from the toilet, to the bed and finally to the computer. In the second scene of the film, after little action, Cloé comes out of the bathroom, and soon the excessive movements of the camera make the image visually confusing. That much camera movement is not expected, at least not so abruptly. But, due to the small cameraphone size - yet again technology impacts the results - Antonin's movements are exaggerated, making it difficult for viewers to understand what is happening. As of 2012-13 most mobile videos share this shaky quality. Most filmmakers try to keep visual

(Eds.). *Images in mobile communication: New content, new uses, new perspectives* (pp. 21-40). Wiesbaden: VS-Verl, p. 143.

noise to a minimum. PdC, like most of the mobile videos recorded in the early 2000s, has a particular electronic noise reminds us of analog films, and which also gives it a greater sense of reality, a “naturalness”.²²⁴

In the context of increasing reality entertainment, the positive reception of PdC by the PFF jury, could be related to a growing consumption of what Barcan has called “erotic authentica” and a “taste for the ordinary”.²²⁵ Nevertheless, due to the simplicity of the form, many amateur mobile films or videos are presented as if they could have been shot with a camcorder or other small recording tool (for instance digicams) that enables video recording. The particular grainy appearance of mobile images is obtained only after hours of post-production and image editing of footage filmed on another camera. The audiovisual ambiguity created by the mobile video recorder requires the viewer to infer much of what they are seeing since the image carries less information. Thus, an underlying seduction beyond the content of the image, that seems to come from what the image lacks in information, appeals to the viewer’s eye, almost as if taunting the viewer’s malaise.

Cinematographic scenes of complete feminine nudity appear in many films, such as is the case of Chantal Akerman’s film *La Captive* (2000), to cite a contemporary of PdC. Figure 14 portrays the way Akerman used a shower screen to veil the actress’ nude body, whereas in figure 15, Verrier unconsciously used the mobile recording device to blur the image of Cloé’s naked body. PdC’s visual distortion is intrinsic to the early years’ mobile image DNA. Indeed, it is as if the pixelated image influenced Verrier’s intuitive choices and allowed him to create this intimate, yet iconic, representation of the characters: the medium as message. Moreover, for the nudity of the film, the author understands it correspondingly. “With the poor quality of the image, we can show things that we could

²²⁴ Proitz, L. (2007). *The Mobile Phone Turn, A Study of Gender, Sexuality and Subjectivity in Young People’s Mobile Phone Practices* (Doctoral dissertation). Oslo: Unipub AS. (Acta Humaniora; No. 314). Retrieved from the Ncom database, Nordicoms Database on Nordic Media and Communication Research, [http://nordicom.statsbiblioteket.dk/ncom/en/publications/the-mobile-phone-turn\(e41577b0-d8b3-11dc-838e-000ea68e967b\)/export.html](http://nordicom.statsbiblioteket.dk/ncom/en/publications/the-mobile-phone-turn(e41577b0-d8b3-11dc-838e-000ea68e967b)/export.html), p. 12.

²²⁵ Barcan, R. (2002). In the Raw: “Home-made” Porn and Reality Genres. *Journal of Mundane Behavior*, Volume 3(1), pp. 87-109.

not show with a normal camera”²²⁶ he says, as if thanking the cameraphone for the fact that they were sharing an intimate time free from worries of exhibitionism.



Figure 14. Akerman, C. (2000). *La Captive* [film]. Screenshot.

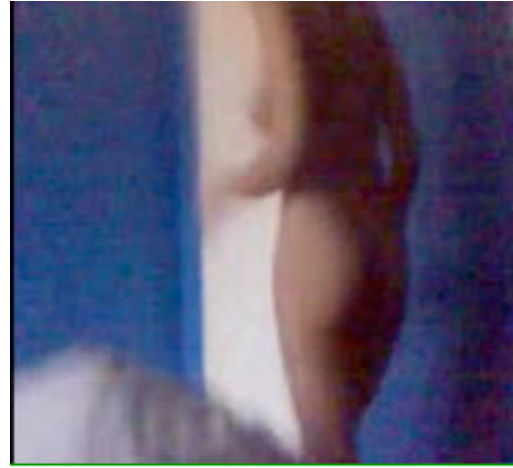


Figure 15. Verrier, A. (2007). *Cloé in Porte de Choisy* [Pocket film, V600 Sony Ericsson]. Screenshot.

My initial observation on the film is that the intrigue and feeling of shared intimacy is anchored, then installed and unfolded before the viewers. This feeling concerns an explicit relationship between aesthetics and ethics.²²⁷ I believe this occurs thanks to the films characteristics such as the blurred and pixelated image, a long one-take shot, non edited sound and its theme, a young couple at home in bed. By recording themselves and achieving some sort of disembodied state, Cloé and Antonin participate in a universal public sphere without being judged.²²⁸ Recalling one of Edgar Morin’s book titles they become *The Stars* of their own film.²²⁹

²²⁶ A. Verrier, personal communication, June 12, 2008. Translation is my own: “*Avec la mauvaise qualité de l’image, on peut montrer des choses que l’on ne pourrait pas montrer avec une caméra normale.*”

²²⁷ Van Doorn, N. (2010). Keeping it real: User-generated pornography, gender reification, and visual pleasure. *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 16(4), pp. 411-430, p. 413.

²²⁸ Warner, M. (2002). *Publics and counterpublics*. New York: Zone Books.

²²⁹ Morin, E. (1972). *Les stars*. Paris: Seuil.

1.5. The Raw Sound and the Kinesthetic Gazes

An important aspect of any film, the sound is another factor worth analyzing in PdC. When Cloé steps out of the bathroom and approaches Antonin, apart from the visual inconsistency, his voice volume also rises steeply out of sync. In 2007 most of the cameraphones had no means of sound adjustment. In filming there are two main ways of dealing with sound. The most frequent one is the traditional way. Generally shot with a dual registration system, images are stored in the camera while the sound is recorded separately. Images and sound are synchronized later in post-production. The shift towards another way of managing sound came about when vernacular home video recorders such as handy cams became more popular and sound and image technology developed so that they could be registered simultaneously.²³⁰ Much home mobile footage is part of this amateur recording trend.

After a while Cloé realizes that Antonin is really making a mobile film, embarrassed she asks him to stop and acts as if she no longer wants to be filmed. Often mobile recording refers to “patterns of courtship-teasing as a prelude to fostering intimacy” or are “a humorous nagging or transgression (creating a representation of the girl without her consent)”.²³¹ As Sonia Boyce states in *Performing Being Looked At*, “we all know how to behave in front of the camera”; it is “a contract between the photographer, models, camera, publisher and the viewer.”²³² It could even be thought that while Verrier was filming he wanted to distance himself from the moment, viewing it as an outsider. However, as confirmed by him in the first interview, he was used to filming his love life, more in a search for what has been conceptualized as “perpetual visual contact”.²³³

²³⁰ In the next part of the chapter I will expand on how this is one of the reasons why voice-overs are added in the production of news that are based on mobile phone footage.

²³¹ Schwarz, O. (2010). Going to Bed with a Camera: on the Visualisation of Sexuality and the Production of Knowledge. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 13(6), pp. 637-656.

²³² Boyce, S. (2012). Performing Being Looked At. *Journal of Visual Culture*, 11(2), pp. 212-214.

²³³ Koskinen, I. (2004). Seeing with Mobile Images: Towards Perpetual Visual Contact, The Global and the Local. In K. Nyíri (Ed.). *A Sense of Place. Mobile Communication: Places, Images, People, Connections, Communications in the 21st Century: The Mobile Information Society*, Budapest, 11 June 2004.

PdC, similar to many online representations, symbolizes that the presentation of the *[self]* may be achieved through the *[other]*. It is also a presentation of the couple as an entity, treading a very fine line between the ever-blurred concepts of private and public. PdC also belongs to the vast corpus of images “...taken in bathrooms or bedrooms but uploaded to publicly accessed websites.... Very often, these are images of a sexual nature, or portraying nudity, with websites dedicated exclusively to them.”²³⁴



Figure 16. Verrier, A. (2007). Cloé and Antonin in Porte de Choisy [Pocket film, V600 Sony Ericsson]. Screenshot.

In PdC there is an particular relationship between the spectator, the perspective, the narrative, the spectacle and the screen, and all these perspectives are mobile and combine into a multiplicity of desires. For instance, on one hand, the fact that Antonin’s filming somehow bothered Cloé, as she realized the implications of being filmed in such an intimate moment, which she verbalized several times. But on the other hand it could be supposed that it really did not bother her. Firstly, because there is a strong affective link between them and secondly, because the familiar tool used - the

²³⁴ Lasén, A., & Gómez Cruz, E. (2009). Digital Photography and Picture Sharing: Redefining the Public/Private Divide. *Knowledge, Technology & Policy*, 22(3), pp. 205–215.

mobile - did not threaten her femininity or the “secret” complicity of their exchange. Verrier told me that he was used to doing mobile videos to keep a sort of track of his life: a personal mobile visual diary²³⁵ a log chronicling his everyday life,²³⁶ a “mobile-mentary”,²³⁷ meaning a mobile documentary. Therefore Antonin’s partner at that time, Cloé, was also used to it. According to him, this familiarity with the device and its dynamics created new levels of intimacy between them, encouraging playful visual experimentation in strange situations. So, instead of being annoyingly unpleasant, mobile video recording was a regular occurrence to which they were pretty much habituated.

1.5.1. Haptically in Bed

Haptics refers to the sense of touch, a field that has gained pertinence with the success of the iPhone and its touchscreen. Antonin and Cloé (figure 9) are now both naked in bed. Going to bed with the mobile is a frequent habit within the young adult population.²³⁸ Even taking it to the toilet is common; both physical places are very intimate spheres.²³⁹ When Antonin and Cloé are in bed they play at fighting and struggling with their hands and the mobile camera moves with them and echoes their movements and actions. As a result the corporeality is immediately perceived and adds visually interest to what is being seen. It makes the scene bizarre, as the focus point moves too quickly, which contrasts with the stillness portrayed in the first minutes. In the film the malleability of the device is at its peak. Antonin’s body movements participate in his way of filming and images are seemingly at our fingertips. Different models of cameras determine the way in which the user will hold it. Mobile cameras

²³⁵ A. Verrier, personal communication, June 12, 2008.

²³⁶ van House, N. (2006). Distant Closeness: Cameraphones and Public Image Sharing. UbiComp '06 PICS Workshop (pp. 234-237). Retrieved from http://web.mit.edu/21w.789/www/spring2007/papers/vanhouse_distant_closeness.pdf

²³⁷ Schleser, M. R. C. (2010). *Mobile-mentory mobile documentaries in the mediascape*, (Doctoral dissertation). University of Westminster, School of Media, Arts and Design.

²³⁸ Lenhart, A., Ling, R., Campbell, S., & Purcell, K., (2010, April 20). Teens and Mobile Phones, Chapter 3: Attitudes towards cell phones. *Pew Internet and American Life Project*. Retrieved from <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Teens-and-Mobile-Phones/Chapter-3/Sleeping-with-the-phone-on-or-near-the-bed.aspx>

²³⁹ Torralba, C. (2012, January 31). Survey Says: 87% Android Owners Use Their Device on the Toilet, *Android Authority*, <http://www.androidauthority.com/87-percent-use-android-on-toilet-49522/>

bypass the viewfinder, which enables the camera to be held away from the body, often at arm's length. This method of framing increases movement of the camera and results in a blurrier shot. To take a picture with a mobile is to get closer, to bend, to move: to be mobile. (The selfie stick only started to be used worldwide as of 2014). Since mobile images are not usually neat snapshots, it seems that it is not really the image quality that counts but the moments it captures.²⁴⁰ I should also add that with the inclusion of tablets into the media market ecology in the 2010's, creating images with mobile devices has become even more physical. This could be understood as "the physicality of the image" or "living in the image",²⁴¹ because they are images that are not only built aesthetically through a sight paradigm but also, even if unconsciously, through bodily and synaesthetic cooperation.

Viewers of PdC see the couple lie down and listen to their guttural sounds and whimpers. In a world where we may act as if on a stage,²⁴² the mobile acts not only as a communicative tool, but also as a souvenir box, as a tool to express our own complex and fragmented embodiment.²⁴³ Since the mobile is a camera without a viewfinder, maybe it can be understood as the writer, artist and filmmaker, Alain Fleischer postulates, as if filming through the ear. In 2006, Fleischer shot *Chinese Tracks*,²⁴⁴ an experimental short mobile film. At the same time as he was speaking on the mobile and wandering through a street in Shanghai for half an hour, the filmmaker recorded all that

²⁴⁰ Hjorth, L., Burgess, J., & Richardson, I. (2012). *Studying mobile media: cultural technologies, mobile communication, and the iPhone*. New York, NY: Routledge.; de Lange, M. L. (2010). *Moving circles mobile media and playful identities*, (Doctoral dissertation). Rotterdam: Erasmus Universiteit, Netherlands. Retrieved from <http://www.bijt.org/wordpress/2010/11/21/download-my-phd-dissertation-moving-circles/>; Brook, P. (2012, November 15). Photographs Are No Longer Things, They're Experiences, Raw File, *Wired.com*, <http://www.wired.com/rawfile/2012/11/stephen-mayes-vii-photography/all/>

²⁴¹ Bal, M. (2003). Visual Essentialism and the Object of Visual Culture. *Journal of Visual Culture* 2(1), pp. 5-32, p. 9.

²⁴² Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday.

²⁴³ Pellegrino, G. (2009). The Electronic Body between Fragmentation and Concentration. In J. K. Nyíri (Ed.). *Engagement and Exposure: Mobile communication and the Ethics of social networking* (pp. 169-177). Wien: Passagen Verlag.

²⁴⁴ Fleischer, A. (2006). *Chinese Tracks*. The pitch: "In China, in the maze of a traditional neighborhood, a narrator gets lost, and like breadcrumbs on a path, has the directions communicated to him by phone. The images shot by the same tool are the counterpoint to what he describes." Cf. In C. Martin & T. Von Pape (Eds.). *Images in mobile communication: New content, new uses, new perspectives* (pp. 21-40). Wiesbaden: VS-Verl, p. 37.

his “ear was seeing”.²⁴⁵ By capturing the video with the cameraphone held at the ear-level, what the spectator observes on screen is what the ear would see if it could.²⁴⁶

PdC might be inspired in the style of the *Cinéma Vérité*. This type of cinema developed in the post war France of the 1950s and 1960s by anthropologists Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin, being recorded without a written or rehearsed scenario. However, it was later revealed that several scenes in the *Chronicle of a Summer* were recorded many times over, in order to choose the best shot. Its participants had to act as if the film was spontaneous each time.²⁴⁷ In my opinion PdC is not exactly of this ilk. For me, PdC is more closely equated to a subjective type of cinematic practice, in line with blockbusters filmed with *Dogma95's* rules²⁴⁸ or like *The Blair Witch Project*, by Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sánchez, 1999. These examples place viewers in a position similar to seeing what the cameraman was experiencing subjectively. Likewise, in PdC the image is rendered in a very physical way, by the movements of the camera. Similar to Fleischer's 2006 film, in some of PdC's scenes, the viewer is unsure of what is happening, and thus it creates the perception that a third person is filming the couple. I attribute this perception to my initial observation that the corporality of the image interests the

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Jarrigeon, A. (2012). Images in Mobile Uses, A New “Middle Brow Art?”. In C. Martin & T. von Pape (Eds.). *Images in mobile communication: New content, new uses, new perspectives* (pp. 21-40). Wiesbaden: VS-Verl, p. 37.

²⁴⁷ Anastas, A., Gabri, R., & Bucher, F. (2010). *Under the Pavement, First Essay and research on the film Chronicle* by Edgar Morin and Jean Rouch (1960).

²⁴⁸ Porte de Choisy meets all of the ten criteria listed in the *Dogma95's* rules:

1. Filming must be done on location. Props and sets must not be brought in (if a particular prop is necessary for the story, a location must be chosen where this prop is to be found).
2. The sound must never be produced apart from the images or vice versa. (Music must not be used unless it occurs where the scene is being filmed).
3. The camera must be hand-held. Any movement or immobility attainable in the hand is permitted. (The film must not take place where the camera is standing; filming must take place where the action takes place.)
4. The film must be in color. Special lighting is not acceptable. (If there is too little light for exposure the scene must be cut or a single lamp be attached to the camera).
5. Optical work and filters are forbidden.
6. The film must not contain superficial action. (Murders, weapons, etc. must not occur.)
7. Temporal and geographical alienation are forbidden. (That is to say that the film takes place here and now.)
8. Genre movies are not acceptable.
9. The final picture must be transferred to the Academy 35mm film, with an aspect ratio of 4:3, that is, not widescreen. (Originally, the requirement was that the film had to be filmed on Academy 35mm film, but the rule was relaxed to allow low-budget productions.)
10. The director must not be credited.

viewers the most. The physical relationship between the “on-camera” actions and the “behind-camera” reactions are easily discernible.²⁴⁹ PdC and films that follow the Dogma 95’s rules all seem to be spontaneous, nothing staged. This may or may not be the case but certainly every film entails staging and performance, at least for the filmmaker. Finally, I believe that mobile film festivals such as the PFF, along with the expansion of mobile use and the acclimatization of its visual practices, contribute to placing this type of imaging in an ongoing negotiation and in a filming paradigm that highlights corporality.

1.6. Fragmentations of a Mobile Nudity

*“Life is a tragedy when seen in closeup,
but a comedy in long-shot.”* Charlie
Chaplin

After a silent pause the young woman lets herself be captured. Through the close-ups and the low angle shots, especially of her face and breasts, we see a change in their rapport. A more powerful and lyrical one, because as Balázs expressed, the close-up exaggerates all face movements, “the close-up exaggerates all face movements, and this aids/highlights facial acting”, contributing to facial acting, it forces the viewer to attend to the tactile qualities of his visual experience and generates a sense of intimacy²⁵⁰ and “as conventions of distance are broken down, the visual sense generates tactile feelings”.²⁵¹ Close-ups are also used to prolong suspenseful moments.

Aside from issues of cost, it is also the easy handling, and the user friendliness of tools, that determines their use and wider public acceptance. In addition, thanks to its malleability, the mobile is a tool that allows self-filming, as well as filming at a very short distance from the subject without having to zoom in. For these reasons

²⁴⁹ Chalfen, R. (1987). *Snapshot Versions of life*. Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, p. 52.

²⁵⁰ Balázs, B. (1970). *Theory of the film: Character and growth of a new art*. New York: Dover Publications, (E. Bone, Trans. 1952). (Original work published 1945).

²⁵¹ Feldman, E. B. (1967). *Varieties of Visual Experience*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, p. 437.

cameraphones often shoot scenes of psycho-physical closeness between a few people. When not tagged as mobile porn videos, the amateur mobile videos shared online or in mobile festivals such as the PFF, hardly ever portray nudity. One might ask, if the cameraphone is a device for recording daily life and intimate moments, why isn't nudity a more frequent theme, since nudity itself is routine, banal and daily? However, PdC illustrates an everyday intimate scene, in which ordinary is not banal. Towards the end, Cloé's complete nakedness is seen. She had already hinted to viewers when in the bathroom, with the words: "I must get dressed", but the image of her entire naked body is only seen when the scene changes space; and then the limits between what is hidden or shown become blurred, just as confusing as the image.

Self-exploration and exploration of the self, are accomplished through "co-experienced"²⁵² social interaction or using an unfixed identitarian relational notion that can give rise to tensions. For instance, by consenting to being filmed Cloé seems submissive, but on the other hand, as Antonin lies in a supine position with Cloé on top of him, she is shown in a dominant position. Theorizing women's engagement in sexualized technologies (momentums) can be understood both as sexist and liberating.²⁵³

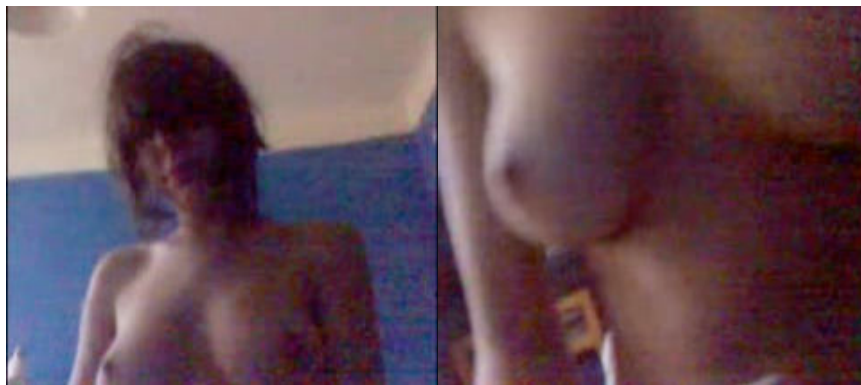


Figure 17. Verrier, A. (2007). Diptych: Cloé in Porte de Choisy [Pocket film, V600 Sony Ericsson]. Screenshots.

²⁵² Battarbee, K., & Koskinen, I. (2004). Co-Experience – User Experience as Interaction. *CoDesign Journal* 1, pp. 5-18. Retrieved from

http://www2.uiah.fi/~ikoskine/recentpapers/mobile_multimedia/coexperience_reprint_lr_5-18.pdf

²⁵³ Evans, A., Riley, S., & Shankar, A. (2010). Technologies of Sexiness: Theorizing Women's Engagement in the Sexualization of Culture. *Feminism & Psychology*, 20(1), pp. 114–131.

In the wake of their morning intimacy, there is nudity. But Cloé didn't get undressed in front of the camera. She is shamelessly naked and behaves in a natural manner.²⁵⁴ Like a game of hide-and-seek, where he tries to catch her (to film her), she tries to hide, but finally let's him capture her (on film). In bed, they laugh playfully. The young woman even covers her eyes with a black pack of cigarette papers, as if parodying the technique used in the mass media to censor parts of the image, usually the eyes, in an attempt to hide the subject's identity. By covering her eyes with a sort of homemade censor-bar, Cloé seems to wish to create a home-made mask of anonymity. The parallel can be seen in the following two images. (Figure 18)



Figure 18. Diptych: Cloé in Porte de Choisy [Pocket film, V600 Sony Ericsson] and masked photo of Paris Hilton, private collection.

Funnily enough, the young woman begins, as if she were a little girl, to make faces at the camera - uncensored expressions of an inner, more childish, self. Maybe it is as Balázs states, that it is the close-up that will help us discover the soul of a thing.²⁵⁵ In PdC the images are choppy, and there are some detailed close-ups of Cloé's body, such as her tongue and her shoulder blade. Since there is no post-editing, the different close-ups help hold the object under diverse perspectives and uncommon angles, as if representing an intensification of their affective link.

²⁵⁴ Berger, J., Blomberg, S., Fox, C., Dibb, M., & Hollis, R. (2008). *Ways of seeing*. London: British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books. (First published in 1972).

²⁵⁵ Balázs, B., Op. cit.

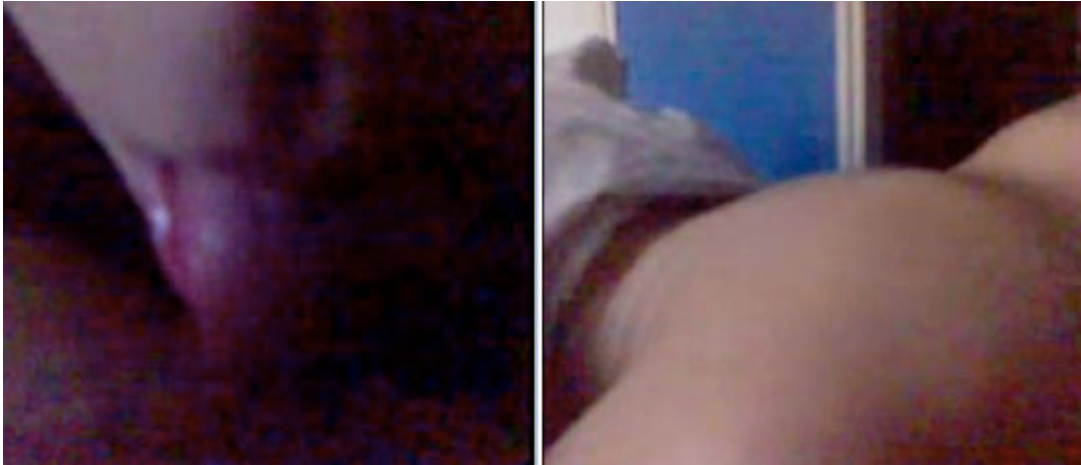


Figure 19. Verrier, A. (2007). Diptych of Cloé in Porte de Choisy [Pocket film, V600 Sony Ericsson]. Screenshots.

Frequently filmed at a distance of arm's length, proximity to the object is a core aspect of amateur cameraphone videos. Detailed shots of Cloé's body exemplify the directness of this film. The skin and the mouth enter into classic binomial relations such as: inside-outside, private-public, hidden-shown, shame-shameless, exposed-not exposed. But, could a third option be considered? What does it mean not to be intimidated by the idea of showing privacy? If a naked body is shown, does it necessarily mean that privacy is displayed as well? Does a naked body represent willingness to cross the boundaries of the *exposable*? And if the body is naked, does that necessarily mean that the subject is exposed bare?

To answer such questions requires us to look, not only at this case study, but beyond as well. In *Ways of Seeing*, John Berger's theoretical construction of the difference between being *nude* and being *naked* is useful to consider. According to him: "A naked body has to be seen as an object in order to become a nude... To be naked is to be without disguise".²⁵⁶ If being nude or naked both entail being without clothes, nudes, as in paintings or sculpture, tend to represent beauty whereas naked would be associated with embarrassment and represented in a sexual manner. Thus, the representation and recontextualization of private and public images, in terms of self-representation should

²⁵⁶ Berger, J., Op. cit. p. 48.

be discussed. The mobile acts more as a device that enables image appropriation - that permits transposition and rewriting of the figure of the self.

1.6.1. *Exposable Versus Non-exposable*, What is (a) Public?

The modern trope, which says “everything is online” is true in the sense that all societal topics find a place online, and it is difficult to imagine any cultural subject, which has not been represented, described, commented on, or illustrated online. If we refer to online collection of facts, a lot of data, even the private personal information is available. Therefore, it is important to make the distinction between what is and what is not online. Although binary and thus somewhat simplistic, I propose two categories, which follow cultural conventions: the *exposable* versus the *non-exposable*. The boundaries between these two groups become less and less definite. By *exposable* I mean everything that is shared online without concern or hesitation. Consider, for example, a popular visual platform of the time such as Flickr, or a social media site such as Facebook.

Nobody is obliged to create a profile, post statuses, photos, or videos, etc. But, it seems almost like a collective demand, a social pressure influences people’s practices, pushing them to participate socially. Not so many years ago the pressure was on mobile phone purchase and possession. Years later this pressure shifted to personal life and privacy preservation. The duality of what *one is supposed to* share, like for example travelling pictures: one should at least send a private MMS to keep friends and family informed of how the trip is going. “The idea of a photo message being a mobile and instant postcard...”²⁵⁷ Gone are the days of not knowing how friends or relatives are doing while on the move. With the term *non-exposable*, I understand it to mean all that is not shared, those images people do not expose, and so remain latently unseen. Those are the truly intimate images, regardless of their (sexual) content. However, as seen through the pocket film PdC, these limits (for some) are losing their boundaries.

²⁵⁷ Villi, M. (2010). *Visual mobile communication: Camera phone photo messages as ritual communication and mediated presence*, (Doctoral thesis). Helsinki: Aalto University School of Art and Design, p. 155.

Why then, is it important to discuss the *exposable* and the *non-exposable*? Because the same intimate image can be *exposable* to one person at a certain time and *non-exposable* at another: it can be *exposable* to one person and *non-exposable* to others, etc. Thus, after some more off-frame shots, Antonin orders Cloé to “stop kicking the camera”, and immediately after, she is no longer ashamed and is willing to be filmed again; she is at ease, just *naked* as the Verrier sees her. However, somehow both characters are conscious of being within the broad confines of a prohibited *showable*. She amiably asks him several times to stop the game. He replies singing mischievously: “Watch out, I’m filming”, as if saying: attention, we are in a prohibited land, implying that filming would mean later showing the footage to an audience. Demonstrating that a brief moment of intimacy can be exposed, PdC confirms an apparent zeitgeist, a tendency that came into play around 2007, which aimed to augment publicly, exposed intimacy.

Ling’s conclusions regarding online photo sharing can be extended to PdC when he says that: “the displaying and sharing of pictures online is one way to demonstrate friend’s intimacy and bonds with one another.”²⁵⁸ At the PFF, Antonin and Cloé had just got back together again after having been separated for a while, and exposing themselves at the screening of their film, before a large audience, served as a cohesive force for the couple.²⁵⁹ In the case of PdC, the film was first shown on big screen and only afterwards did it appear online on the PFF’s site. Paradoxically, exposing images of their intimacy to strangers helped bring the couple closer together.

Exposable and thus shareable content illustrates this in-between private and public space and allows active authors to be shown as they wish to be seen.²⁶⁰ The boundaries between private and public life are difficult to draw, as the distinction between watching and being watched and models of behavior that define normalcy of the *exposable* are in constant flux. A myriad of perspectives exist in the Western world: the male, the

²⁵⁸ Ling, R., & Donner, J. (2009). *Mobile Communication, Digital Media and Society Series*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, pp. 72-75.

²⁵⁹ A. Verrier, personal communication, September 17, 2012.

²⁶⁰ Gunthert, A. (29 July 2008). Les chats, les marmottes et les fins de la participation, *Actualités de la recherche en histoire visuelle*, <http://www.arhv.lhivic.org/index.php/2008/07/29/774-les-chats-les-marmottes-et-les-fins-de-la-participation>

investigative voyeur, the erotic, the pornographic, the gendered ethnic, to name a few. As Denzin puts it clearly, it is just a matter of conventions and epochs.²⁶¹ What was intolerable a few years ago has now become standard. Among the many examples could be the controversial photography exhibition *Controverses*,²⁶² first held at the *Musée de l'Élysée* in Lausanne and then in Paris at the *Bibliothèque Nationale*, both events had great attendance and incited much debate.²⁶³

1.6.2. A Mobile Intimacy

To refine the concept further: intimate, relates feelings, sensations, souvenirs, dreams, conflicts or other things seen as personal and even secret. But, when the intimate becomes public, it loses the very quality of intimacy. Yet, it is impossible to make strong generalizations or talk about intimacy in general terms: the idea is flexible, and defies definition, as it tends to be quite subjective.²⁶⁴

The concept of intimacy in a Eurocentric model is governed by social and collective norms, but these changed over time and space. Social codes related to the sharing and reception of private images have evolved and so have corresponding cultural practices. In the book *L'intime*, edited by art historian and critic Elizabeth Leibovici, there are several examples. For instance, during the Middle Ages, privacy and modesty were concepts that did not exist as such. Even taking a bath was ritualized and addressed to a privileged audience, which was mainly the help or close visitors that used to converse with the person while she was taking her bath. From the sixteenth to the early eighteenth century, toilets evolved into places of negotiated seduction. Subsequently, from the late eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century, the privacy of

²⁶¹ Denzin, N. K. (2006). Analytic Autoethnography, or Déjà Vu all Over Again. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*. Sage Publications, August–35: 419–428.

²⁶² The exhibition *Controverses* was inaugurated in Lausanne in the Musée de l'Élysée in 2008 and then started an international tour, being its first stop the French National Library. Presented in Paris from the 3rd of March till the 30th of May 2009, the exhibition attracted more than 65,000 visitors.

²⁶³ Lenot, M. (aka) Lunettes Rouges. (2009, March 16). *Controverses*, *Amateur d'Art*, <http://lunettesrouges.blog.lemonde.fr/2009/03/16/controverses/>

²⁶⁴ Servoise, S. (2012, May 31). L'Art de l'intime, *Raison-Publique.fr*, www.raison-publique.fr/article413.html<http://www.raison-publique.fr/article413.html>

the family was gained at the expense of a more collective promiscuity. Once bathing was no longer carried out in public it shifted from a social opportunity to a strictly hygienic practice. Domestic servants no longer took part in that privacy and their intrusion, as audience within the private home sphere, was no longer accepted.²⁶⁵ The creation of the living room allowed a space for the reception of guests and further division of the home, creating rooms with varying degrees of visibility and intimacy.

With the establishment of the great bourgeois project of the nineteenth century, social relations were further normalized: good education, good character, and good health. Shame and rejection of nudity became the principles that governed most of life and living arrangements for Western civilizations.²⁶⁶ Openness towards the *other* was unacceptable and therefore it was not the voyeur but the person who allowed themselves to be seen in an intimate situation who was criticized. It is in this context that the word “in-doors”, (later to become indoors) emerged to describe the domestic space. The new bourgeois family and its insular nature, set the stage for the increased intimacy of the individual body. Secrecy increased as the relationship with the flesh, feelings, and everything intimate became more individualized.²⁶⁷ For this analysis it is helpful to return to the stereotypes and clichés associated with the notion of privacy and its relation to sexuality as a register of normative discourse.

In Europe, it is generally considered that everything related to the bedroom is intimate. Yet, as previously mentioned, privacy covers a much broader scope. It is thus imperative to determine what kinds of images are intimate because of their tendentious content (in our case, sexuality and nudity in the bedroom) and what images can be deemed worthy of open display. The degree of *intimacy* is inseparable from the location, the time, and the framework in which they are shared and revealed. Sharing of mobile images that are expected to remain hidden is to cross a border, but it is a border that shifts along with the cultural transformations and technological availabilities.

²⁶⁵ Leibovici, E. (2004). *L'intime*. Paris: Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts. (First published in 1998.)

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Boyer, C. A. (2004). Architecture, intimité, promiscuité. L'évolution de l'espace domestique en France du Moyen Âge au XIXe siècle. In E. Leibovici (Ed.). *L'intime*. Paris: Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts, (pp. 74-78) (First published in 1998).

Therefore, “sometimes [i]mages can be played with, and can work as a form of resistance. Sometimes it is more radical to reveal than to hide.”²⁶⁸ This notion is particularly salient in the following example. For instance, to increase its privacy settings, YouTube, on the 18th of July 2012, launched a face-blurring tool that would provide online image anonymity in videos at will. This provision was incited by the fact that many images had recently been uploaded from political revolts and the subjects were thus seen as vulnerable. The study of the relation between online public visual identities and online visual anonymity is not of the purpose of this chapter, but could certainly be material for future research, and is particularly interesting for areas such as politics and activism.

The exposable versus the non-exposable undergoes a constant individual and collective negotiation. This can be exemplified in the instructions often given out when photographing or filming family scenes. For instance, in many home movies the person filming interacts with the participants, which gives the story a cohesive thread. In PdC there is also a visual storytelling device. In this case it seems as if the drive to narrate comes from the narrative’s very participants. Verrier claims that this clear narrative structure may have been lacking in his other pocket films.²⁶⁹ It is interesting to note that many other pocket films presented at the PFF seem to be missing this clear desire for a narrative construction. Should *public intimacy* be understood as an online oxymoron? Or as Alberti’s 1435 window metaphor, reintroduced by Anne Friedberg as the now well-known concept that the web is an open window to the world?²⁷⁰ More than a window, perhaps today’s intermediated everyday life has become more like Lewis Carroll’s looking glass. Foucault’s heterotopian concept is again relevant, or perhaps it is as when Goggin describes the internet, as “... a portal that opens into many other spaces?”²⁷¹ De Souza e Silva pushed the reflection further by stating that

²⁶⁸ Koskela, H. (2004). Webcams, TV shows and Mobile phones: Empowering Exhibitionism. *Surveillance and society*, CCTV Special, (Eds.). C. Norris, M. McCahil and D. Wood, 2(2/3). Retrieved from [http://www.surveillance-and-society.org/articles2\(2\)/webcams.pdf](http://www.surveillance-and-society.org/articles2(2)/webcams.pdf), p.199.

²⁶⁹ A. Verrier, personal communication, June 12, 2008. This interview was done long before the release of Verrier’s short film “There is Always a Love Story”, (2011) which has a clear narrative structure.

²⁷⁰ Willis, H. (2008, August 19). *Virtual Window*. YouTube video, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u-dDisiNfI8>

²⁷¹ Goggin, G. (2012). *New Technologies and the Media*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 22.

Because many mobile devices are constantly connected to the Internet [...] users do not perceive physical and digital spaces as separate entities and do not have the feeling of ‘entering’ the Internet, or being immersed in digital spaces, as was generally the case when one needed to sit down in front of a computer screen and dial a connection.²⁷²



Figure 20. Kaye Ringley, J. (July, 5-6, 2001). Jenny and her partner [Web archive gallery]. Screenshots.

A strong digital visual imprint is nothing new for many people today. Consequently, a review of the history of auto-online exposure might be useful for our case study. For this, we turn to the example of the original web scandal. Between April 1996 and late 2003, Jennifer Kaye Ringley broadcast her daily intimate life to the world-wide-web.²⁷³ Jennifer was the first person who voluntarily surrendered online images of herself in intimate moments. Jenni filmed herself relaxing in her living room, sleeping, eating, etc., and at the peak of her popularity it was estimated that JenniCam.org had between 3 and 4 million visits daily, which for that time was huge. The site was subtitled “life, online”. By sharing her private world to anonymous spectators, Jennifer Kaye Ringley broke the culturally conventional models of intimacy and disturbed the general internet protocol. Jenni may have been ahead of her time but a new generation of cyber-

²⁷² de Souza e Silva, A. S., & Frith, J. (2012). *Mobile interfaces in public spaces: Locational privacy, control, and urban sociability*. New York: Routledge, p. 149.

²⁷³ Jimroglou, K. M. (2001). A camera with a view: JenniCAM, visual representations and cyborg subjectivity. In E. Green and A. Adam (Eds.). *Virtual Gender: Technology, Consumption and Identity* (pp. 286–301). London: Routledge.

exhibitionists and voyeurs would soon follow her lead. Nowadays, images of Jenni's shared intimacy can still be found online but her site no longer exists.

Since the JenniCam.org days, the broader public has been continuously learning where and how to display personal images - on sharing platforms such as Flickr (established in February 2004), (YouTube and Dailymotion, both created in February 2005) and through the blogging boom in 2004. This shift occurred quite naturally, as the digital realm slowly became intertwined with the real world around us. Then, from the social networking sites, on to today's situation, with mobile visual apps, the learning carries on and on.

1.6.3. From the Bedroom onto the Web 2.0

Due to the proliferation of home recording devices, which encourage the production of intimate content, in 2006, YouPorn was born and amateur pornography took off. This was due to three interrelated phenomena: the "sexualization" or "pornification"²⁷⁴ of media and society, the increased preoccupation with everyday life (seen in the prevalence of TV reality shows such as Big Brother) and the success of Web 2.0.²⁷⁵ The mobile video representations of private moments, eroticism and playfulness, are reshaping emotions and moods in present time and are often symbolically and emotionally laden.²⁷⁶ In PdC there is just a short instance when the camera suggests that the couple is having a sexually explicit moment and Antonin continues shooting for one continuous take. All throughout the film, actions are recorded in real time.

It could be asked - isn't PdC just like the first amateur porn home-videos, those which became so popular in the middle of the 1980s? Certainly PdC is somewhat similar to those amateur videos, shot at home by couples with their own camcorders. However,

²⁷⁴ Williams, L. (2004). (Ed.). *Porn Studies*. London: Duke University Press, p. 7.

²⁷⁵ Van Doorn, N. (2010). Keeping it real: User-generated pornography, gender reification, and visual pleasure. *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 16(4), pp. 411-430.

²⁷⁶ Schwarz, O. (2010). Going to Bed with a Camera: on the Visualisation of Sexuality and the Production of Knowledge. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 13(6), pp. 637-656.

one main difference is that those videos were (unless rare exceptions) not shared with a larger audience such as at the PFF, nor uploaded to the internet. Therefore, if the couple wanted to find a larger public, their videos had to be swapped with other couples through swap services, a process that could eventually make it to the video store. The professional porn industry quickly found a way to capitalize on the trend of amateur porn production.²⁷⁷ However, as PdC is soft, or experimental porn, as Verrier calls it, it may be tagged as an artistic experimentation. The fact that PdC was awarded first prize at the PFF justifies its classification as art and not simply amateur porn. And "...when an image is presented as a work of art, the way people look at it is affected by a whole series of learnt assumptions about art. Assumptions concerning: beauty, truth, genius, civilization, form, status, taste, etc."²⁷⁸ Thus, PdC is assumed to be artwork and further discussion, on its status as such, is no longer needed.

When Cloé gets up, steps out of bed and heads toward the desk, the spectator sees for the first time that she might be staging her nudity for the camera, (figure 21). This can be deduced because the young lady does not grab anything to wear, as would be expected. She remains naked and then their intimate footage takes a new turn. However, this moment could also be seen from another perspective: it could be understood as a product of performance and negotiation, as a – "tie-sign" in Goffman's sense, expressed in patterns of gender power and unconscious emotional manipulation.²⁷⁹ As she stands up, Antonin gives her instructions on how she should get to Porte de Choisy. Mundane, real life tasks, are intertwined into the pocket film they are recording, and in reality, triviality surrounds the film. This routine moment continues the record of the manifestations of habitus, which will be discussed later.

²⁷⁷ Patterson, Z. (2004). Going On-line: Consuming Pornography in the Digital Era. In L. Williams (Ed.). *Porn Studies* (pp. 104-123). London: Duke University Press.

²⁷⁸ Berger, J., Blomberg, S., Fox, C., Dibb, M., & Hollis, R. (2008). *Ways of seeing*. London: British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books. (First published in 1972), p. 4.

²⁷⁹ Schwarz, O., Op. cit.

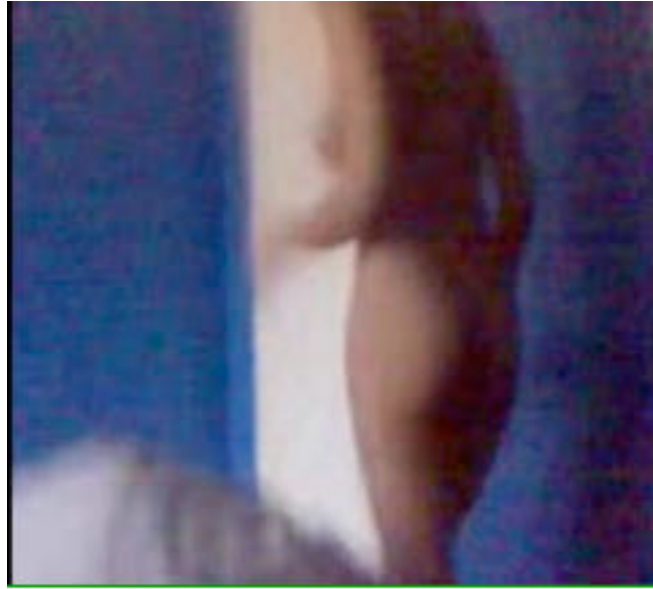


Figure 21. Verrier, A. (2007). Cloé in Porte de Choisy [Pocket film, V600 Sony Ericsson]. Screenshot.



Figure 22. Verrier, A. (2007). Cloé in Porte de Choisy [Pocket film, V600 Sony Ericsson]. Screenshot.

When the scene moves to a desk placed near a window, the steep contrast created by the natural light burns the white balances of the image (figure 22). This is due to the fact that when filming with cameraphones, the response to light is determined by the CCD or CMOS camera sensor, which is different in each model and, in those early years, could not be done manually ahead of time. It also means that the person who films must be familiar with the model used in order to better predict the resulting images. Up

to 2012, most lightning sensors on mobiles were inferior to other recording devices on the market but mobile recording and imaging technology continues to evolve. In PdC we literally see how Antonin deals with the lighting, as it ends up playing an important role in the film's aesthetic.

1.6.4. Porte de Choisy's Aperture and References

As in any creation process, the selection of recording tools is very important as it visibly affects the results of a film. For example, two photos taken simultaneously in the same space but with different cameras will end up being very different. Figure 23 shows a screenshot taken from the pocket film PdC alongside a photo taken, with an OlympusU700 compact camera, during one of A. Verrier's interviews. Both are at his home, the place where PdC was filmed. The two images were obviously taken on two different days and therefore have different light, which influences the colors shown. Nevertheless, there are obvious differences in the sharpness and the tones of blue and brown. (Figure 23a and figure 23b)

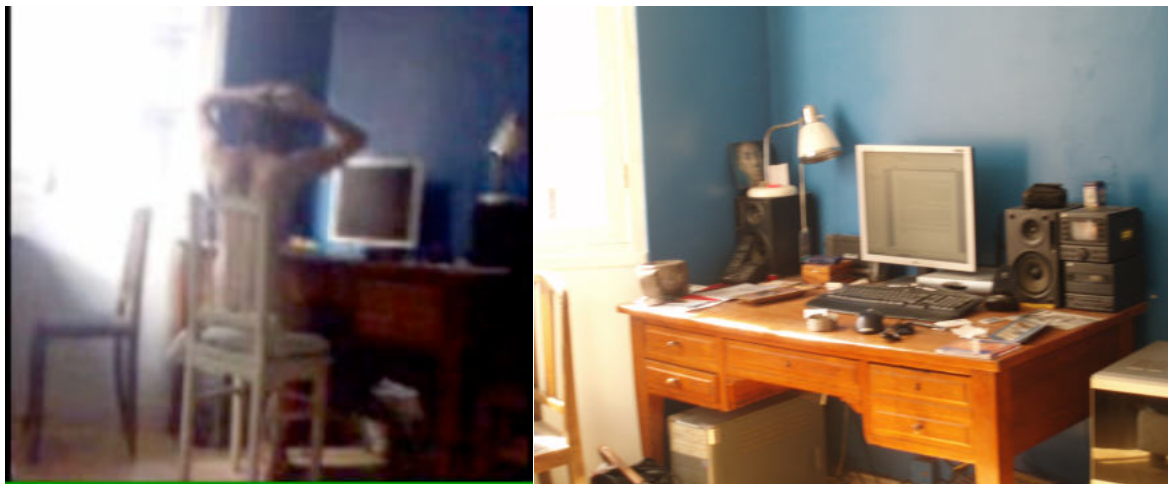


Figure 23a. Verrier, A. (2007). Cloé in Porte de Choisy [Pocket film, V600 Sony Ericsson]. Screenshot.

Figure 23b. David, G. (June 12, 2008). Antonin Verrier's home, Olympus U 700, personal collection.

Coquettishly, Cloé takes a seat and fixes her hair into a small bun. “I’ll look it up on the internet”, she says, referring to the location of Porte de Choisy. She approaches the desktop computer and hurries to find out the best way to reach this famous place. Probably, she intended to check the French RATP (*Régie Autonome des Transports Parisiens*, the Paris Transport Authority) site, which provides interactive maps for the Parisian subway and buses, allows search of Ile-de-France’s public transport routes and gives traffic information in real time. Alternatively, Cloé may have wanted to check mappy.fr, another well-known French site that provides addresses, maps, and route-planning guides. The fact that she had to log on to the home computer to search for the route reflects the fact that in 2007, few mobile phones were equipped with an embedded Global Positioning System (GPS).

The origins of GPS were related to LBMG (location-based mobile games) and artistic projects. Because as already stated, “[...] it was not until 2007, with the release of the original iPhone, that the development of location-based applications left the experimental domain of art and research and became more accessible to the general public.”²⁸⁰ At the moment these lines are being written, GPS capabilities and operating systems can run in tandem with mobile applications, find other users, locate places, or geotag images. This last fact, geotagging, is important to note because underlying the GPS logic is the notion of a life under constant surveillance. I approve that “apps have converted phones into urban remote controls”.²⁸¹ The GPS app is common to most smartphones and has enabled mobile users to experiment with new ways of understanding space, cities and displacements.²⁸² Other layers of information are also being added to places, for example through augmented reality applications. Authors like Corinne Martin, highlight that non-uses also teach us how appropriations take place. For example, around 2008, “...mobile Internet use still appeared limited and the image of the computer for surfing the Internet [still] remains dominant for the time being.”²⁸³

²⁸⁰ de Souza e Silva, A. S., & Frith, J. (2012). *Mobile interfaces in public spaces: Locational privacy, control, and urban sociability*. New York: Routledge, p. 96.

²⁸¹ Perlroth, N. (2012, December 13). Mobile security and storage emerge as hot investments, *The Global Edition of the New York Times*, p. 15.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Martin, C. (2012). Images and Representations of the Mobile Internet. In C. Martin & T. Von Pape (Eds.). *Images in mobile communication: New content, new uses, new perspectives* (pp. 21-40). Wiesbaden:



Figure 24. Verrier, A. (2007). Cloé in Porte de Choisy [Pocket film, V600 Sony Ericsson]. Screenshot.

In front of the screen, back to the viewer, Cloé is as if alone, forgetting the camera. In the PFF's brochure, available at the movie theater and also in the PFF's online site, PdC's was pitched as "a game of seduction, a portrait of the painter's beloved muse". If we know that the pitch clearly influences the reception process, why did the PFF decide to link a mobile video (PdC) to the art of painting and not to a photograph or movie? Clearly, this was a rhetorical move, intended to add value to the film by placing it within a specific set of discourses. However, to better illustrate how this last part can be compared to the painter's beloved muse, I place Cloé's representation in dialogue to references of female backs found in other pieces of art. Depending on one's cultural background, many different images will be connoted by a specific object. The back is a recurrent figure in many psychological, western, and police films, especially in scenes of suspense or departure. The back has been the subject of many famous art masterpieces that make up the European canon of Art History. PdC's pixilated scenes may be considered as a tribute to the Pointillist school of late 19th and early 20th century Impressionists. Scenes from the film can call to mind Toulouse-Lautrec's, *La Toilette*, 1891 (figure 25) and Seurat's *Poseuse de dos*, 1887 (figure 26).

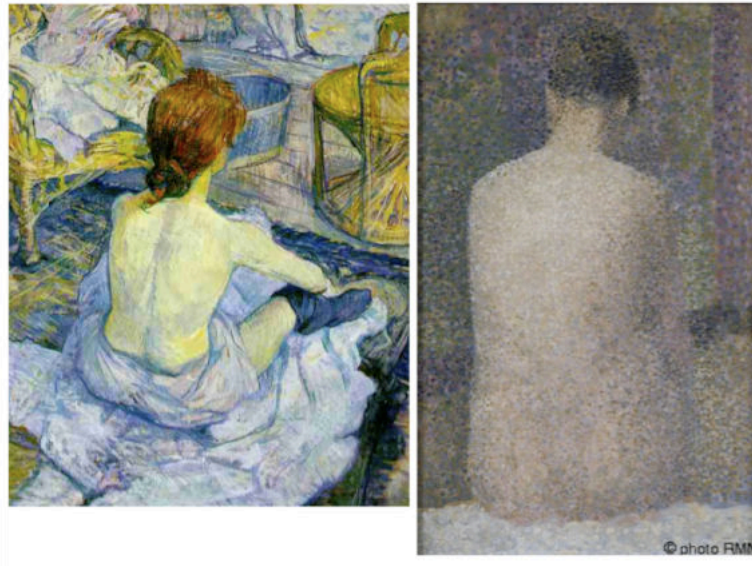


Figure 25. Toulouse-Lautrec, H. (1889) Rousse (La Toilette) [Painting, oil on board]. Paris, France: Musée d'Orsay, public domain.

Figure 26. Seurat, G. (1887) Model, Back View [Painting, oil on wood]. Paris, France: Musée d'Orsay, public domain.

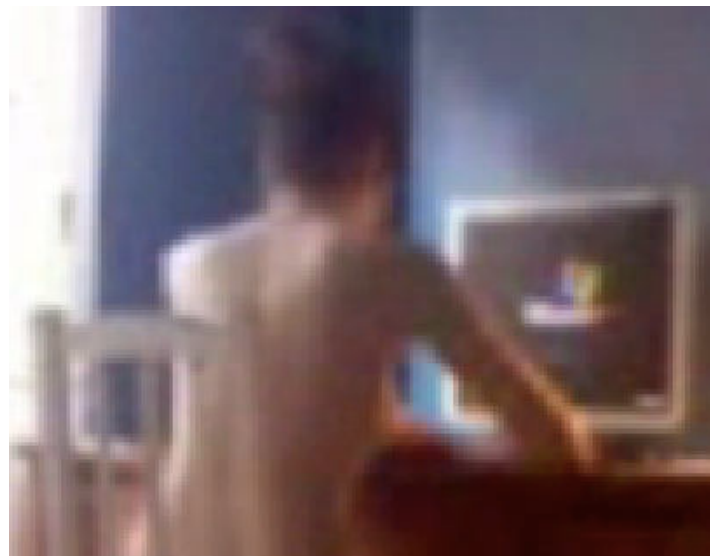


Figure 27. Verrier, A. (2007). Cloé in Porte de Choisy [Pocket film, V600 Sony Ericsson]. Screenshot.

Putting Verrier's scene in this context can help show that this subject is often used as an expression of feminine beauty. Effectively, there is an iconic resemblance, signified by the woman's nude back sitting at the desk; and thus like a distant female model, Cloé refers to classic figures within Art History. In fact the female back is a classic figure in

Art and I could therefore cite numerous masterpieces that PdC hints at. However, even if the artistic reference is evident, and even if it could also seem that the image emerges by itself - magically as Verrier previously said - that “the mobile had unlocked itself”; my intention is not to inscribe Verrier’s mobile film in an artistic genealogy, but to discuss the choices, the narrative of the film, its usages, how it reached its audience and finally how it was received and gained acceptance. The goal is to understand the practices and the effects (but also even the affects) related to the image and not the formal part of the image itself. Mainly because the basic goal of Antonin’s film was not to portray Cloé as a beautiful muse or model, but to transgress, and thus push, the bounds of exposing an intimate amateur moment in an artistic mainstream place such as the Pompidou. It was this undeniable ambience of complicity and amorous feeling that the couple had just experienced that was being shared with the public.

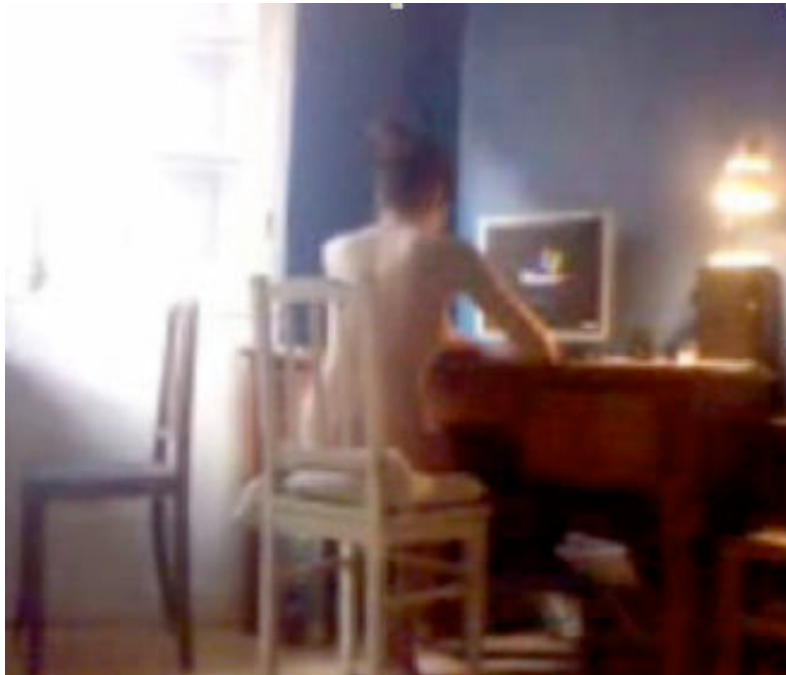


Figure 28. Verrier, A. (2007). Cloé in Porte de Choisy [Pocket film, V600 Sony Ericsson]. Screenshot.

In the last part of PdC, while the computer is starting-up, Antonin asks Cloé: “Could you turn the little white light on please?” - “What?” she replies, but immediately switches it on and the verbal dialogue gets transformed into a visual interaction. The answer is *in* the image. Antonin does not get up out of bed to change the lighting

himself: he asks her to try a different lighting. The camera does not stop filming and there is no scene break. The editing of the image occurs, not in pre or post-production, but as a continuation of actions while shooting the image. As in a work in progress, we participate in the image construction, like in a jazz improvisation where musicians try out new notes. Here, the spectator witnesses the construction of the film as part of the film itself as we see the effects of the different lighting options. Like spies, watching through a keyhole - the mobile shamelessly registers not only the image but the construction of the image too.

Usually, in the film production world, the *making of* is invisible to the viewer. This is one of the fundamental conditions for the fictional universe of the film to work. In visual fiction, or as called in theater, the “Fourth Wall”,²⁸⁴ the manufacturing process must be hidden to the viewer and the line between fiction and reality should not be trespassed. The viewer is usually denied this information so that the filming dispositifs may be “absorbed”.²⁸⁵ When referring to different filmic discourses, there are some filmmakers that share the *making of* their films. This is done to engage the audience and make them feel that they are more part of the film, as if they were - by these means - more involved. As evidence of authenticity it can even help sell the film. In the case of PdC, by sharing this sort of behind-the-scenes footage within the scene itself and not as a bonus track, Verrier utilizes theatrical elements which make the audience a partner in his game; as if we were able to help decide which lighting is better. Rehashing the discussion of whether we *take* or *make* an image,²⁸⁶ he shows that the scene is being constructed, before our very eyes, for the mobile phone. Personally, I support the approach that understands images as iconic constructions of thoughts, as an edition of reality and not as a magical decisive moment. Therefore, the fact that Antonin allows the spectator to see how he directs the scene is part of the product and connotes a meta-connivance relation between him and the spectator.

²⁸⁴ The idea of the Fourth Wall, created and made explicit by the philosopher Diderot is the imaginary wall that exists between the play and the public to set an imaginary boundary between any fictional work and its audience.

²⁸⁵ Fried, M. (1980). *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

²⁸⁶ Jaar, A. (2014). Exhibition *Tonight No Poetry Will Serve*. “You do not take a photograph. You make it.” Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, Helsinki, Finland.

One of Goffman's core analyses is the relationship between performance and life.²⁸⁷ Applying a theater metaphor to social life, he develops the idea that the social scene is a region where "representation" takes place. Its actors, audience, and props use this space to contradict the impression given in the representation. Goffman uses the term "front region" for the various elements with which the actors interact. This scenery or the "personal front", includes, status, clothes, facial expressions, gender, gestures, etc. In PdC, by showing part of their intimacy's "back region", the couple transforms this backstage into a "front stage" where the action is performed.²⁸⁸ In PdC both Antonin and Cloé have multiple roles, which are all equally valid. For example, Cloé is more girlish when in the toilet, more womanly in bed, and more of an inspiring muse when at her desk. The same can be said about Antonin: he is cameraman, actor and director. When filming with a mobile these sort of simultaneous double insides and outsides often occur, facilitated by the tool itself.

Again, referring back to the tensions between the exposable and the non-exposable, as previously discussed, an appropriation of intimate mobile footage occurs in a more explicit negotiation. The mobile turns out to be an intimate eavesdropping tool. What seems to be at stake here is not the documentation of reality, but the creation of a product, established by the aesthetic and lighting considerations rather than by a sexually iconic statement. The couple's performance for the camera connotes a creative exercise and a desire to narrate their lovemaking. Using Hillyer's terms, Williams (2004: 7) calls it the "porning" of domestic footage. In a more conceptual term, this affords an understanding of what Linda Williams calls "ob-scenity", meaning that something "off-stage" will disappear²⁸⁹ or even the "*on/scenity*", as Williams herself has named it in opposition to obscenity.²⁹⁰

Towards the end of the film, Cloé explains to Antonin that she has written her directions on a bill. He answers "But that's (not) okay! Damnit, you've written on the EDF paper! It was really...". By referring to the EDF (*Electricité de France*), the French

²⁸⁷ Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Williams, L. (2004). (Ed.). *Porn Studies*. London: Duke University Press, pp. 4-5.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 4.

electricity service, Verrier grounds the fiction to reality, but the tone of his voice belies the fact that he is playing for camera and gives the impression that he is acting badly. According to Goffman this moment would be a “false note”,²⁹¹ a break following a blunder by one or more actors. This “false note” produces a contradictory representation, questioning the common reality, causing a general malaise. In PdC the false note happens to be the tension between the inner self versus the social self, plus the assumption of a predefined reality that sets in and makes the spectator think that everything was scripted and then acted.

But because viewers are not guided in the way they should grasp PdC, since there is no title or opening or closing credits, the doubt whether it is a documentary film or a spontaneous fiction remains as a never to be resolved enigma. In the Pocket Films Festival, PdC was part of the documentary or feature films category. Nevertheless, this categorization seems inadequate and, as previously explained, all documentaries are fictionalized and therefore staged in some way.²⁹² According to the author, PdC stands somewhere between the category of documentary and that of documentary as fiction.

We could also make reference to the concept of “auto-fiction”, as writer Doubrovsky coined it in 1977, a sort of self-fiction in which the author’s and the narrator’s name is the same. The “I” becomes an autobiographical “I”. Are Antonin Verrier and his girlfriend, actors or are we seeing the real people? Did they act out this episode or not? The clarification between what is a documentation of real life and what is a fictional movie was somehow unveiled in the interviews I did with Antonin Verrier, but for the average viewer the answer remains a mystery. Verrier’s subjectivity is disguised in the author’s voice and therefore taken as truthful and trustworthy. This deliberate confusion that exists in PdC, opens the debate between fiction, reality, and documentary, and it illustrates the futility of labeling art (or even more, I’d say amateur images in a broader

²⁹¹ Goffman, E., Op. cit.

²⁹² Besson, R., & Leblanc, A. (2009, 26 Decembre). La Part de l’introduction, *Conserveries mémorielles* #6. Retrieved from <http://cm.revues.org/336>

scope) as fiction or reality. Once again we corroborate that objectivity is of no use when analyzing this film, or any other image for that matter.²⁹³

In the last part of PdC, natural light changes and a momentary pause in the image gives a stronger painting-like quality to the scene. The computer screen shines fluorescent white, enhancing a mirror effect (figure 29). While sitting at the desk, Cloé did not look at the camera. She knew she was part of the set, the decor, but in conclusion, she turns around towards the camera and shatters the romanticism, restoring eye contact with Antonin, and therefore with the viewer. She walks in the direction of the camera as is done in many amateur home videos. This is the first time that her genitals can be seen. However, she moves up close to the camera so quickly, that soon the close-up of her nude body is distorted due to the angle and fills the whole screen. Due to the small size of the mobile recording device, her body is seen from a very unusual perspective. Her jumping on the bed, before she collapses on top of Antonin and the cameraphone, composes the final scene.



Figure 29. Verrier, A. (2007). Cloé in Porte de Choisy [Pocket film, V600 Sony Ericsson]. Screenshot.

²⁹³ Daston, L., & Galison, P. (2008). *Objectivity*. New York: Zone Books, p. 378.

According to Antonin, who has a naïve way of techno-animism,²⁹⁴ it was due to manufacturer error that the end of his film did not fade to black but to a white frame instead, to a quiet nothing, something, which is not clearly visible yet it impresses our eye, as Didi-Huberman would say.²⁹⁵ The audio continues and the film seems open-ended, reminiscent of Berger's final words in *Ways of Seeing*: "to be continued by the reader..."²⁹⁶ Verrier told me that the moment he transferred the film to his computer through Bluetooth, the sound recording took precedence over the image. The fact that it continues to be heard over the white frame, gives the sensation of something that carries on, causing the spectator to imagine what will happen next, that which they will not see. Maybe "[...] it is the last image that is the most important, it is through that one which it [the film] continues."²⁹⁷ Nevertheless, even if the sound is to be interpreted as ambient noise, the film ends, and the location of the famous Porte de Choisy remains unresolved. The only thing the viewer knows about PdC is that it is the place where Cloé needs to go. But knowing where one wants to go is half of the task, the rest is just moving towards it. And again, as stated in the *Dogma95's* manifesto, with no opening or closing credits, it seemed as if we were facing raw cinema, where pixels work as brush strokes and were the author's amateur style is but in search of its own disclosure.

1.7. The Decision to Share and Screen

Let's turn now to the issue of shame, or lack thereof, for this French couple. During the screening of the film, Cloé had invited her friends but not her parents... as if there were limits to whom she would share this moment of intimacy with. In the projection room there was laughter, and embarrassment was expressed, sometimes aloud. The screening

²⁹⁴ Techno-animism, also called Shinto-technology, believes - among other creeds - that everything possesses a soul, and ignores boundaries between human, animal, spiritual and mechanical beings.

²⁹⁵ Didi-Huberman, G. (2005). *The History of Art Within the Limits of Its Simple Practice. Confronting images: questioning the ends of a certain history of art* (Chapter 1). (J. Goodman, Trans.). University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press. (Original work published in 1990). The original quote reads: "*Regardons, il n'y a pas rien, puisqu'il y a le blanc.*" p. 26.

²⁹⁶ Berger, J., Blomberg, S., Fox, C., Dibb, M., & Hollis, R. (2008). *Ways of seeing*. London: British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books. (First published in 1972), p. 50.

²⁹⁷ Didi-Huberman, G. (2005). Op. cit. Translation is my own: "[...] *c'est la dernière image qui est la plus importante, c'est elle qui le [le film] prolonge.*" p. 123.

of the film did not cause problems for Antonin or Cloé's jobs, either due to the fact that neither of their names appears in the cast list or because it is almost impossible to physically recognize them.

Beyond how and why this particular couple decided to make the film we must also examine their own selection process, one that began long before PdC reached the PFF jury. What made the couple decide to send PdC to the Pocket Films Festival? When and how did the couple decide to show this film? Antonin told me that they had decided to do so after having sent the images by Bluetooth to his home desk computer. It was after having viewed PdC on their larger home computer screen, that they felt that the images were worth submitting to the PFF. They both saw that something in cinematographic terms had happened, that there was a structure and story. Antonin and Cloé showed the footage to a filmmaker friend. This person encouraged them to present PdC to the PFF. PdC had been not conceived as a public film, it was actually a playful, experimental intimate pocket amateur video. Cloé was embarrassed about screening it publically. Initially, she did not want the film to be shown, especially because the couple was separated at the time of the PFF. And as it is very common for one or both partners to erase all digital traces of intimacy with a former partner after a break up; and as *half* of the film, Cloé's role and vote is complex.

Having, together, finally decided to show this film in public, the couple shares an ordinary morning in their private life. It appeared to be a biography, a reflection on the use of otherness within self representation, the alteration of the representation of the self, the intrusion of the figure of the other (in this case of a loved one) in their private intimate space. By making public this intimate amateur moment, the audiovisual production was legitimized and the intimate moment was publically confirmed as such. Sharing very intimate images, such as these, could be considered narcissistic and exhibitionist, as a desire for self-stimulation, self-shock, or as a need to break cultural conventions. These may be some of the reasons why Antonin and Cloé's mobile footage provokes mixed emotions. What is certain, is that this film pushed the limits of what was socially acceptable for public viewing, in a Film Festival in France, at that time, especially in the context of the Pompidou, a well-established cultural institution.

1.8. Conclusion

The analysis of both the Pocket Films Festival, as a dispositif and the pocket film *Porte de Choisy* as a case study, highlight some interesting facts on how the comprehension and *myths*, in Barthes terms, in regard to the cameraphone image, were being forged around those years. Iconically, it is interesting to see how each of our particular sharing worlds differs. It appears that for most, the idea of sharing their own intimate moments does not appeal. There are many intimate pocket films, but few people sharing their intimate images publicly, preferring to keep them for self-consumption or among a close inner circle.²⁹⁸ This was again, verified during my fieldwork, as for instance was the case in 2014, in a young adults mobile video creation workshop, led by Benoît Labourdette, in which I had the chance to participate. (2014, February 17). One of the exercises proposed to the participants, was for them to share some intimate footage: most of them, if not to say all, were very, very, timid.

In the voyeuristic game laid out in PdC, Antonin Verrier probably wanted people to reflect on the everyday images a young French middle class couple could produce with a cameraphone. It is likely that, after watching the film, the audience first reacted to the flouting of current social norms and only upon reflection would they consider whether the film had challenged those norms. It is the “[...] culturally structured set of norms”, which help us “differentiate what *can* be done - in a technical sense - and what can be done - in a social sense. [...] Norms are social conventions”.²⁹⁹ Through visual public statements, a critique of mainstream institutions can be made.

Through this analysis I have adopted Geertz’s thick descriptive method,³⁰⁰ which explains not only the behavior, but contexts as well, so the behavior becomes meaningful to an outsider. It enabled me to show how the couple’s cameraphone images emerged within a specific socio-historical context. I moved beyond the mere observation of

²⁹⁸ Porn amateur images shared online are not included in this study.

²⁹⁹ Chalfen, R. (1987). *Snapshot Versions of life*. Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, p. 44, emphasis in original.

³⁰⁰ Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays*. New York: Basic Books. Cf. Part I, Chapter 1/ Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture.

intimate instances, to elucidate the changing aesthetics, themes, and conventions of a moment. By documenting how a French middle class couple's intimate pocket film was shot and shared in 2007, it is possible to see differences in the technical possibilities that were available at the time and how they have changed. This study sheds light on the evolving relationship between mobile technology and the home mobile recording of intimate adult films. To begin with, it shifts perception away from the cameraphone as a being merely a simple gadget. It then delves into the subject of what can be shown in the context of a European Pocket film festival. Social patterns for what is supposed to be exposable are daily negotiations, and are on experimental territory, where the slippery field of content production attempts to push social norms.

In audiovisual practices, and especially today in visual applications, the images support more than *discourses*, in Hall terms. When intimate images - in this case mobile images - become public, they may also be seen as a public statement. So, when we share personal images, does intimacy become public? The neologism coined at a conference on McLuhan was "publicity", a hybrid between the words "public" and "intimacy". Another term: "extimacy", was revived by Tisseron,³⁰¹ following Lacan, indicating an externalized intimacy. From home videos, to personal blogs and now pocket films, many people are seeking an active role in defining what mobile image content means to them and subsequently, what mobile sharing entails.

These very questions arose in the time of the Handy cam or Super 8, but nowadays, the mobile's penetration into everyday life complicates the unease. Pocket films seem to transmit an amusing sense of familiarity. The types of situations usually portrayed are familiar to viewers, and therefore easy to internalize. By sharing and exposing images of their zone of intimacy, Antonin and Cloé made something strange *appear* familiar. This is probably where the strength of the pocket film resides.

³⁰¹ Tisseron, S. (2001). *L'Intimité surexposée*. Paris: Editions Ramsay.

Chapter 2.

Discourses and Myths Around Vernacular Mobile Image Mediatization

“The telecommunications story of the first decade of the twenty-first century is undoubtedly mobile.” Ling and Donner, 2009.

The prior part of this chapter sought to understand the complex constructions of private cameraphone images, especially when mediated for more collective viewing in arty milieus, and thus artistically and socially legitimated. These changing ways of perceiving those amateur images led, in an ever more globalized system, the way to more “shifts in the cultural attitudes to mediated intimacy”.³⁰²

I also demonstrated that the term intimacy had undergone many changes in meaning throughout different historical and cultural periods. However, these amateur mobile images were not always mediated in artistic circumstances. Therefore it is necessary to

³⁰² Tomlinson, J. (2009). *Globalization and culture*. Cambridge: Polity Press, p. 167.

compare the former chapter with other hierarchization processes and dispositifs. Thus, the following question arises: what are these other types of image hierarchization discourses, narratives and contexts that amateur cameraphone images underwent in order to legitimize their presence in the public sphere and engage prosumption? How did this increasing adoption and thus visual presence in the public media sphere potentiate vernacular mobile image production?

2.1. Methodology, Hypothesis and Theoretical Rationale

The aim of this second part is to focus on some of the *discourses and myths built around the mediatization*³⁰³ of amateur cameraphone images for hard news creation, in its historical and cultural complexities that sustained these gradual changes.

Describing the mechanisms by which vernacular private cameraphone images became the source of news scoops, as in an exclusive news item acquired by luck or initiative, a piece of news in the sense of the term that refers to newness, I reflect on what these narratives are and how they were built.³⁰⁴ In a post structuralists approach, I follow the scheme that signs (words) build up statements. These statements construct discourses. The discourses, become narratives and the narratives histories, which form the hegemonic talk that establishes the memories of society. I will begin with a timeline of the most important news that has been relayed, first, by the use of cameraphones, and then by smartphones. The corpus of cameraphone images for this analysis was selected through an *a posteriori* choice. They are all benchmark video images – I have only used cameraphone stills for the London case study, because, to my knowledge, no cameraphone videos were released publicly online. The cases chosen were situations that had been relayed by the Western mass media, and include specific instances of cameraphone images that were used in the mediatization and valorization processes of these events. However subjective, tentative and contingent it might be, this choice is a

³⁰³ The concept of mediatization is central to the understanding of the importance of media to culture and society. Cf. Hjarvard, S. (2008). *The Mediatization of Society, A Theory of the Media as Agents of Social and Cultural Change*. *Nordicom Review* 29, pp. 105-134.

³⁰⁴ Scoops related to celebrities are outside the scope of this research.

conscious act of boundary marking so as to facilitate the categorization of the icons that can make up a mobile visual corpus.

To analyze the cultural validation and normalization processes cameraphone images undergo when being appropriated and mediatized for news construction, each of the cases is a particular historical contextual study that echoes Rogers' theory. Focusing in on critical incidents may have its drawbacks, but I believe it enables the comprehension of different stages in the adoption usage patterns that the cameraphone, as a visual communicator and news-enabling tool, has undergone. These cameraphone iconic examples allow follow the mood of specific moments and the discourses and narratives that were constructed around them. As presented in the general introduction, I attempt to encompass Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations model by addressing the feeling of familiarity and the enhancement of this familiarity through the mediated usage of this amateur mobile iconography. But I also subscribe to the ideas of Roland Barthes, when he stated that there is a sense of mystification and fascination with this enhanced familiarity.³⁰⁵ More specifically studying mobile cultures, we should refer to *Mythologie du portable*,³⁰⁶ which describes all the many constructed myths and common discourses that surround this device in its early years.

Between 2005 and 2009 cameraphone images started to gain a global adoption and were therefore slowly able to offer greater visual contributions to news items. However, the legitimacy of cameraphone images as a cultural worldwide phenomenon carried many sociotechnical adaptation processes. The social *legitimation* and *delegitimization* of these cameraphone images was (and still is) negotiated and is a contradictory cultural process. For instance, in the last decade some specific historical media moments confirmed that images made with cameraphones, whether photographs or videos, in spite of their low quality, *could* end up being published as *hard news*. Hard news usually refers to fast-paced, up-to-the-minute news that is reported immediately as breaking news.

³⁰⁵ Barthes, R., & Guittard, J. (2010). *Mythologies*. Edition illustrée. Paris: Seuil. (Original work published in 1957).

³⁰⁶ Allard, L. (2010). *Mythologie du portable*. Paris: Le Cavalier bleu Ed.

I am interested in deconstructing the stories and the citizen journalist myths around the hard news that were released by the aid of the mobile device. What were the media cultural stages the device, but mainly its users, endured so as to reach the status of a potential tool for reporting to even become categorized as a storytelling-liberating tool? These cameraphone facilitated breaking news stories appearing on television, radio or Internet news sites and making the front pages of newspapers. Did this change the relationship citizens had towards event and hard news reporting? How? I would like to clarify that regardless of their subject matter some might refer to *hard news* as any news story that is heavily reported. For example, a subject like entertainment, usually considered *softer news*, can end up being hard news because of the way it is approached.³⁰⁷ Moreover, in this part I hope to unravel the relationships through which cameraphone images gain media visibility and can even go viral as they are reproduced online and *fished*, by traditional media sites. When mobile images are considered to be international breaking news and acquire massive circulation in the media, is it mainly because they were unattended, a sort of “black swan”?³⁰⁸ The black swan theory is the metaphor used by the essayist N. N. Taleb to describe hard-to-predict events of large magnitude and consequence and their strong impact and dominant role in science, finance and technology.

During the early 2000s many commentators, bloggers and scholars argued that technology was changing the journalism profession.³⁰⁹ Among them, some of the most outstanding supporters were Gillmor,³¹⁰ Rosen³¹¹ and Shirky.³¹² The latter observed that relevant filters and gatekeepers might only operate after the user-producer’s first publication. To define this hybrid between user-producer, professor in the Creative Industries in Australia, Axel Bruns coined the neologism “produser”.³¹³ He also put a

³⁰⁷ Personal communication with Uruguayan journalist Dario Klein, 19 May 2012. Klein works for the CNN as well as for many other well-known media channels.

³⁰⁸ Taleb, N. N. (2007). *The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable*. New York: Random House.

³⁰⁹ Goggin, G. (2012). *New technologies and the media*. Palgrave Macmillan, p. 98.

³¹⁰ Gillmor, D. (2004). *We the media: Grassroots journalism by the people, for the people*. Sebastopol, Calif: O’Reilly.

³¹¹ Rosen, J. (2006, June 27). The people formerly known as the audience. *PressThink*. Retrieved from http://archive.pressthink.org/2006/06/27/ppl_frmr_p.html

³¹² Shirky, C. (2008). *Here comes everybody, How Change happens When people Come Together*. London: Penguin Books.

³¹³ Bruns, A. (2008). *Blogs, Wikipedia, Second Life, and beyond: From production to produsage* (Vol. 45).

positive spin on the issue of news created by citizens who felt empowered by the mobile as a communication and mediatization tool. In this scenario it couldn't be guaranteed that people paid attention to that news, but it was proved that information could be shared by other means besides the traditional mass media, thereby circumventing established gatekeepers. In fact, for some enthusiastic supporters, the online rhythm and pace has partially changed the traditional journalistic model, shifting it from "filter, then publish" to "publish, then filter".³¹⁴ The so called "push and pull" strategy, as known in marketing, teaches us that there is information that is pushed to the audiences, as vertical, top down information, like advertisements for instance, like those *pushed* when one searches for specific data online. However, nowadays – information, provided by users, is also *pushed* towards the newsmakers who will later *pull* out (fish), what is interesting for them, like when the user sends it to a newswire platform. Thus, the push and pull theory now flows in a more complex and multidirectional way, both *top down* and *bottom up*. With regard to mobile images, could we conceive of a more a complete cycle of *publish-filter-publish-filter*? Deuze and Fortunatti³¹⁵ defend the idea that power flows in two directions between "[...] the owners, shareholders, business partners, editors and publishers of news organizations, and that of TPFKATA. (TPFKATA stands for: the people formerly known as the audience)".³¹⁶

The question being: how did the increase in visual vernacular mobile usage influence the practices of breaking and creating hard news? My hypothesis is that the usage of mobile images in the media lies not only in the ubiquity of the device, but rather in the increase in of the adoption practices of cameraphone imaging in the social media. For social media I completely adhere to, the Comparative Media Studies and visualist scholar, José van Dijck's explanation of what she understands social media to be. For her, in order to grasp the concept of social media, it is wiser to *distinguish the different types* of social media. Even though her four categories can somehow overlap, her classification clarifies

Peter Lang.

³¹⁴ Ibid., Chapter 3, p. 81.

³¹⁵ Deuze, M., & Fortunati, L. (2011). Journalism without journalists: On the power shift from journalists to employers and audiences. In: Meikle, G. & Redden G. (Eds.). *News Online: Transformations and Continuities*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 164–177.

³¹⁶ Goggin, G. (2012). *New Technologies and the Media*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 104–5.

the understanding and is as follows. A major type in this categorization involves/implies the *social networking sites* (SNS). As main representatives in this category she places: Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. A second category is the *user-generated content* (UGC), which principally aims at the creative side, be that amateur or professional. Examples are: Flickr, YouTube, Wikipedia and Myspace. Another group is formed of the *trading and marketing sites* (TMs), such as Amazon, Groupon and Ebay. Last, but not least, the *play and games sites* (PGS), such as the Sims Social, Farm Ville and AngryBirds.³¹⁷ It should also be noted that these social usages evolve alongside *collective* changes in habits and therefore can eventually gain more *cultural validation* for news creation.

We then consider, how does this relate to Rogers' adoption curve? Did more people using mobiles mean that it became more natural for amateurs to relay events by this means and then for the media³¹⁸ to relay those vernacular images? Are there examples to illustrate how this happened?

The following selection highlights six of the most outstanding examples among the early years of cameraphone and smartphone footage, which was relayed by the Western mainstream journalism. The examples do not exclude other similar mobile videos that could equally have been chosen, but are rather metonymies, a portrait of the evolution of mobile visual usages and their social validation for news creation. The proposed personal selection is not intended as a list of hard news cameraphone videos *per se* or to suggest a closed collection. Rather, the point is, firstly, to reflect on how we seek, discover and learn from this huge quantity of mobile visual data available online and secondly, and most pointedly, on legitimation and validation processes in media frames.

In order to better understand the cultural impact these images had, I have followed each case from its first online source. I tracked the way they circulated, focusing mainly on how the English speaking media reported each piece of this breaking hard news. It is

³¹⁷ Van Dijck, J. V. (2013). *The culture of connectivity: A critical history of social media*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 8.

³¹⁸ Here I refer both to social and traditional mass media.

important to highlight that I also relied on the Pew Researches, the Newsmuseum online archive and Time Magazine and carried out online interviews and exchanges when possible. Using Laïdi's terminology, this chapter concentrates on "global events",³¹⁹ which help schematize the process, a mobile video or photo undergoes in the transition from personal to public hard news. Subsequently we can attempt to discern a line of thought within a cultural media history approach: focusing on the study of the mass media in relation to modern society and cultural products. Lastly, I seek to find out when and why these mobile images were validated as pertinent images to be published in the mainstream media. Some of the underlying questions posed are: does the use of mobile imaging create a bottom-up structure of news making? Does this mean that a more bottom up mobile visual history can be constructed too? How did the soaring ubiquity of the *mobile habitus* condition not only the creation of news and events but then, eventually, also the writing of history?

2.2. The Sensation of an Immediate Reality: The Live Myth

Many factors can count towards the appropriation and usage of *mobile iconography* in the media, where " [...] a set of technologies, meanings, uses and practices align".³²⁰ This phenomenon may now be attributed first to the passing of time, second with contributing factors that range from technical user friendliness, and last, with the decrease in both cameraphone prices and mobile Internet connection fees. In any case, and before diving into the analysis, I would like to clarify that the above use of the expression mobile iconography does not refer to *iconography* as in Art History, but rather as a global term for mobile imaging production. I also draw on Frohlich and Fennell's use of the term "domestic iconography",³²¹ when they employ it to define what "refers to the use of visual and non-visual icons in mediating personal narratives".³²²

³¹⁹ Laïdi, Z. (2000). World Time as a Global Event. *Geopolitics*, p.7. Retrieved from www.laidi.com/papiers/globalevent.pdf

³²⁰ Gómez Cruz, E., & Meyer, E. T. (2012). Creation and Control in the Photographic Process: iPhones and the emerging fifth moment of photography. *Photographies*, 5(2), pp. 203–221.

³²¹ Frohlich, D., & Fennell, J. (2007). Sound, paper and memorabilia: resources for a simpler digital photography. *Personal Ubiquitous Computing* 11 (2), pp. 107–116.

³²² Ibid. p. 108.

The medium by which images are more frequently shared quite quickly, almost immediately, is via the internet in the western world. Despite the fact that there is always a time lag between recording, uploading, and diffusion, there is a pervasive sense of experiencing images in *real-time*. These feelings echo the well known *on live* myth and the shrinkage of time, the perception of “world time as a global event”.³²³ *On live* is the term used to describe artistic performances, such as concerts, that are attended in person. The term emphasizes an *on the ground* experience, both for the artists who act and the live audience who share a unique experience: they actually *live* the same moment in time. The phrase *live and direct* or the Spanish *en vivo y en directo* are other common expressions. These expressions come from the context of television, for shows broadcasted live, creating something that is not delayed, even though it is highly edited.

The audience of a live show is divided into two parts: those who attend the *live* show in person, and those who view simultaneous retransmissions, whether by radio, satellite, television or other telecommunication technology. *Live transmission* and *live broadcast* are both television jargon that have been imported into the web real time myth as *live stream* or *live streaming*. In 1996, Scannell, as quoted in Bégin (2011), remarked that: “[p]ublic events occur, simultaneously, in two different places: the place of the event itself and that in which it is watched and heard. Broadcasting mediates between the two sites”.³²⁴ Anyway, live stream is a falsehood: there is always a delay. As in any news relay in the photo or video sharing platforms, the upload speed is crucial. For instance, one of the reasons why the photo app Instagram (2010) has had a lot of acceptance is its speed: its uploading system is very fast. Since mobile experiences also fill gaps while we wait, it is as Mike Krieger, one of Instagram’s co-founders, puts it: “no one wants to wait while they wait”, or even more simply, “speed matters”.³²⁵

³²³ Laïdi, Z. (2000). World Time as a Global Event. *Geopolitics*, p. 7. Retrieved from www.laïdi.com/papiers/globalevent.pdf

³²⁴ Bégin, R. (2011, August 22). Dans la douleur des autres, *Revue Appareil, Varia*, Retrieved from <http://revues.mshparisnord.org/appareil/index.php?id=1259>

³²⁵ Krieger, M. (2011, Dec. 2). Secrets to Lightning-Fast Mobile Design, Instagram, Warm Gun 2011, *Measurable Design*, San Fransisco, Speech, [PowerPoint slides]. Retrieved from <https://speakerdeck.com/u/mikeyk/p/secrets-to-lightning-fast-mobile-design>

And even though most viewers know that all information is edited, one of the parameters that matters the most in this adoption/reception process is the *sensation* individuals experience when reading or watching news that has been relayed thanks to mobile recording. They *feel* “as if”³²⁶ this information was unadulterated and hence it is validated as true, a non-manipulated and thus real past. Many viewers believe in the transparency³²⁷ of these images, in their indexicality³²⁸ or at least do not concern themselves with this question of authenticity.

Another sensation raised by all the examples in this corpus, is that we are watching something unpremeditated, spontaneous, something that belongs to a category of being very close and *almost now*; some kind of raw news happening and being displayed again *as if* occurring in front of our eyes. All these feelings relate to embodied emotions and sensations that clash with the objective point of view professional journalists should exemplify. These images, that may come from direct witnesses and can therefore be considered evidence, do not guarantee an iconographic reliability or credibility. Skepticism comes hand in hand with the loss of credibility of traditional media. To this regard, the French philosopher Yves Michaud says

[...] The construction of visual reality, as the photojournalism reporters pretend to do claiming they do, is as artificial as the construction of any other social reality. We live in a world of very little direct experience, little knowledge, and which is generally rather more vague and chaotic, and one with many images.³²⁹

³²⁶ Zelizer, B. (2010). *About to Die. How News Images Move the Public*. New York, Oxford University Press, pp. 15-17.

³²⁷ Marin, L. (1989). [Introduction], *Opacité de la peinture. Essais sur la représentation au Quattrocento*. Paris: éditions de l'EHESS, 2006.

³²⁸ Gunning, T. (2008). What's the Point of an Index? Or Faking Photographs. In K. Beckman and J. Ma, (Eds.). *Still/Moving: between Cinema and Photography*. Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 23- 40.

³²⁹ Michaud, Y. (November 2002). Critiques de la crédulité, *Études photographiques*, N°12, pp. 110-125, <http://etudesphotographiques.revues.org/index321.html>, p. 124. Translation is my own: “[...] la construction de la réalité visuelle telle que la rapportent en prétendant la refléter les reportages du photojournalisme est aussi artificieuse que la construction de toute réalité sociale. Nous vivons un monde fait de très peu d'expériences directes, de peu de savoir, qui plus est en général assez flou et chaotique, et de beaucoup d'images.”

Four key concepts can be drawn from Michaud's words: pretension, construction, little direct experience, and many images. Discourse theory and analysis is an important field for us to include here since it is associated with the postmodern turn of Communication studies. Structuralists and post-structuralists such as de Saussure, Mikhail Bakhtin, Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault, argued that, lacking first-hand experience, a main method with which we come to know about the world, is through the medium of language. Having little direct experience as direct witnesses, with the many available images, viewers may construct reality through the *experience of watching* that reality through mass media channels and ideological institutions. In the last century, the experience of watching images of any event, and not really experiencing the event *per se*, was the most prevalent way of constructing both events and thus reality.³³⁰ But as a new century progresses, will this still happen? Intensifying after the 1980s, the real time information revolution, based on the fusion of computer and telecommunications, is very much linked to economic globalization, and has the perception of the acceleration time.³³¹

Thus, when discussing image diffusion mechanisms, writing about online news release, media, or even about the relationship between mobile image circulation, online web traffic and news construction; the task of writing about current affairs does not fit easily over time. Synchronic news communication dynamics have won over diachronic news communication and the need to freeze a moment in time becomes somehow even more relative. Therefore, and for all these reasons, this very analysis already lags behind these fast changing digital practices updates.³³² It will also lack a register of the very latest popular apps in the journalistic market and the most recent reflections on these matters, too. Consequently, this second part has passed through different versions from being an *in-real-time observation/reflection*, to *out-of-date*, to gaining historical approach. Nevertheless, there is historical value to providing an understanding of the discourses, narrations and stories behind these mediated events. Therefore, nowadays, and for media studies, a real time tracking of what happens proves to be of capital importance.

³³⁰ Sontag, S. (1977). *On photography*. London: Penguin Books.

³³¹ Laïdi, Z. (1997). *Le temps mondial*. Paris, Éditions Complexe, p. 14.

³³² As an example of the speed of update practice, in April 2012, the online version of *El Periódico*, a Spanish newspaper, decided to launch two different covers with two different events.

When doing research, when wishing to follow a faraway event, many images can, literally, appear before our eyes simultaneously, all at once. If History as a social science is something that studies the past, then trying to understand *real time* seems paradoxical. This is why in order to better understand the evolution of the adoption of the mobile images by the cultural industries and more precisely by the mainstream media, I have focused my analysis within a short period of five years; studying how these images were captured, shared and broadcasted at the beginning of the cameraphone image usage, both in the press and in traditional mass media for news creation. For these reasons this chapter focuses less on analyzing the topic of real time and more on understanding the meanings, the *legitimation* and *deligitimation* negotiation processes cameraphone images underwent so as to be considered possible-to-be-published in the main traditional media.

2.3. Cameraphone Images and Hard News Construction, a Timeline

Ahonen³³³ characterized the existence of seven mass media: print, music recordings, radio, television, internet and mobile phones. Starting from the late 15th Century, it was print: with books, pamphlets, newspapers, and magazines. Then, from the late 19th century: all music recordings. From the 1900s the focus was on cinema. From about 1910s it was radio and from about the 1950s, the television: the two broadcasting media par excellence. From about the 1990s, stress was on digital media, to end up on the internet and, last but not least, from about the 2000s, cellphones, cameraphones and mobile phones. The chronological timeline I have developed will facilitate the portrayal of how this “seventh mass medium”, has contributed to installing a news model that relies even more on a fictive real time, and which has a direct link with the different ways in which we interact with mobility and imaging. This is where cameraphone images enter the scene. The study of six of the most globally-noted sociopolitical and sociohistorical events that were recorded with the help of the cameraphone between July 2005 and June 2009, enable us to develop a history case study of *legitimation* and

³³³ Ahonen, T. T. (2008). *Mobile as 7th of the mass media: Cellphone, cameraphone, iPhone, smartphone*. London: Futuretext.

deligitimation based in the usages of mobile images in the mainstream media for hard news convenience.

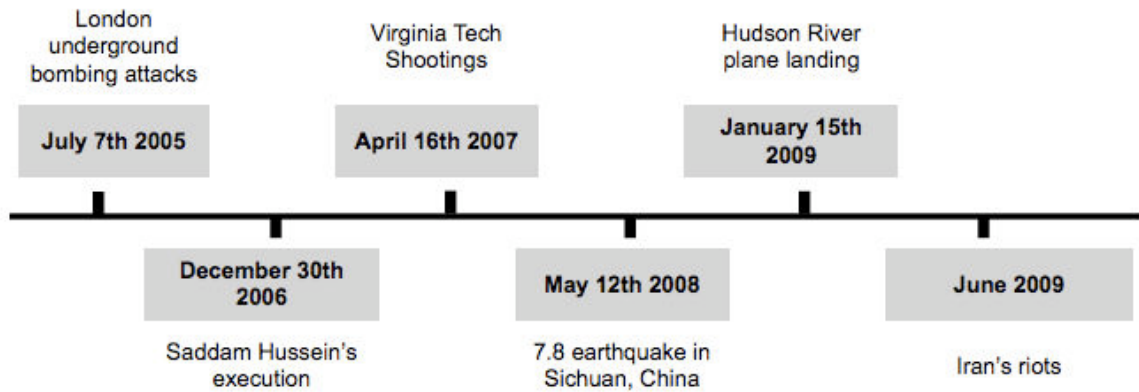


Figure 30. David, G. (2010). Benchmark cameraphone images that appeared in the mainstream media news and were considered as being hard news. [Timeline].

2.3.1. Forging the Innovation

Without doubt, until now one of the most outstanding flash events, or black swan events, in Western society of the twenty first century, was September 11, 2001. At that time, due to its expensive price, the use of the cameraphone as an everyday camera was not yet developed. Three years later, when the Indian Ocean 2004 tsunami occurred, it was mainly through digital cameras that people recorded the South Asian coastal devastations. A few cameraphones were used there too, but there is no public footage evidence that I have been able to access. According to Art History and Film Studies Professor Richard Bégin,³³⁴ at least one witness, Kalle Wideliuss was able to make cameraphone Tsunami footage. Skeptical and wanting to double-check this piece of information, I succeeded in contacting Wideliuss to ask about the video Bégin alludes to as being filmed by a mobile.³³⁵ Wideliuss confirmed my hypothesis: his famous video

³³⁴ Quoted in Sauv , M.-R. (2012, Oct. 15). Filmer les catastrophes avec son t l phone, *UdeMNouvelles*, Universit  de Montr al. Retrieved from <http://www.nouvelles.umontreal.ca/recherche/sciences-humaines-lettres/20121015-filmer-les-catastrophes-avec-son-telephone.html>

³³⁵ Ibid.

“was shot with a small digital camera”³³⁶ and *not* with a cameraphone. In any case, this tsunami was probably the first unforeseen event to make use of amateur digital footage to report and to create a collective online construction. Thus, if the Indian Ocean 2004 catastrophe was recorded with amateur digital footage (as opposed to, with a cameraphone), the very first unforeseen unexpected event recorded with a cameraphone happened in 2005.

On July the 7th, during the morning rush hour, four terrorist attacks hit the city of London.³³⁷ Bombs exploded on buses and in the capital’s Underground. Fifty-six people died and around 700 were injured. Due to the press’s lack of access to the subway system, the only available images of the bombed underground tunnels were some cameraphone stills that had been taken by passengers. A very dark cameraphone image taken by Eliot Ward will be the first metonymical example on my timeline. It represents what happened between mobile image creation and unforeseen events in England of 2005. The snapshot is very grainy, firstly because in the London Underground tunnel there was a lot of smoke and not enough light to take photographs properly, but secondly because at the time, not all mobile devices had built-in flash, or any *a posteriori* balance filter to edit the image.

Then, neither the popular Instagram³³⁸ nor any of the many other numerous photo apps available in today’s market existed. However, some cameraphones such as the 2 mega pixel Nokia N70 already featured independent flash, had 3G and were undoubtedly some of the most slick, expensive and desired phones of 2005. Although people may have already been looking forward to having and using cameraphones, it was not yet a developed market.

³³⁶ K. Wideliuss, personal communication, 20 October, 2012.

³³⁷ Dunleavy, D. (2005, July 9). Camera Phones Prevail: Citizen Shutterbugs and the London Bombings. *The Digital Journalist*. www.digitaljournalist.org/issue0507/dunleavy.html

³³⁸ Instagram is an application created in 2011 that was bought in April 2012 by Facebook for US\$ 1 billion. It has many filters that can change the colors of the photo, the saturation and add some effects. It has both a followers and a hashtag logic similar to Twitter.

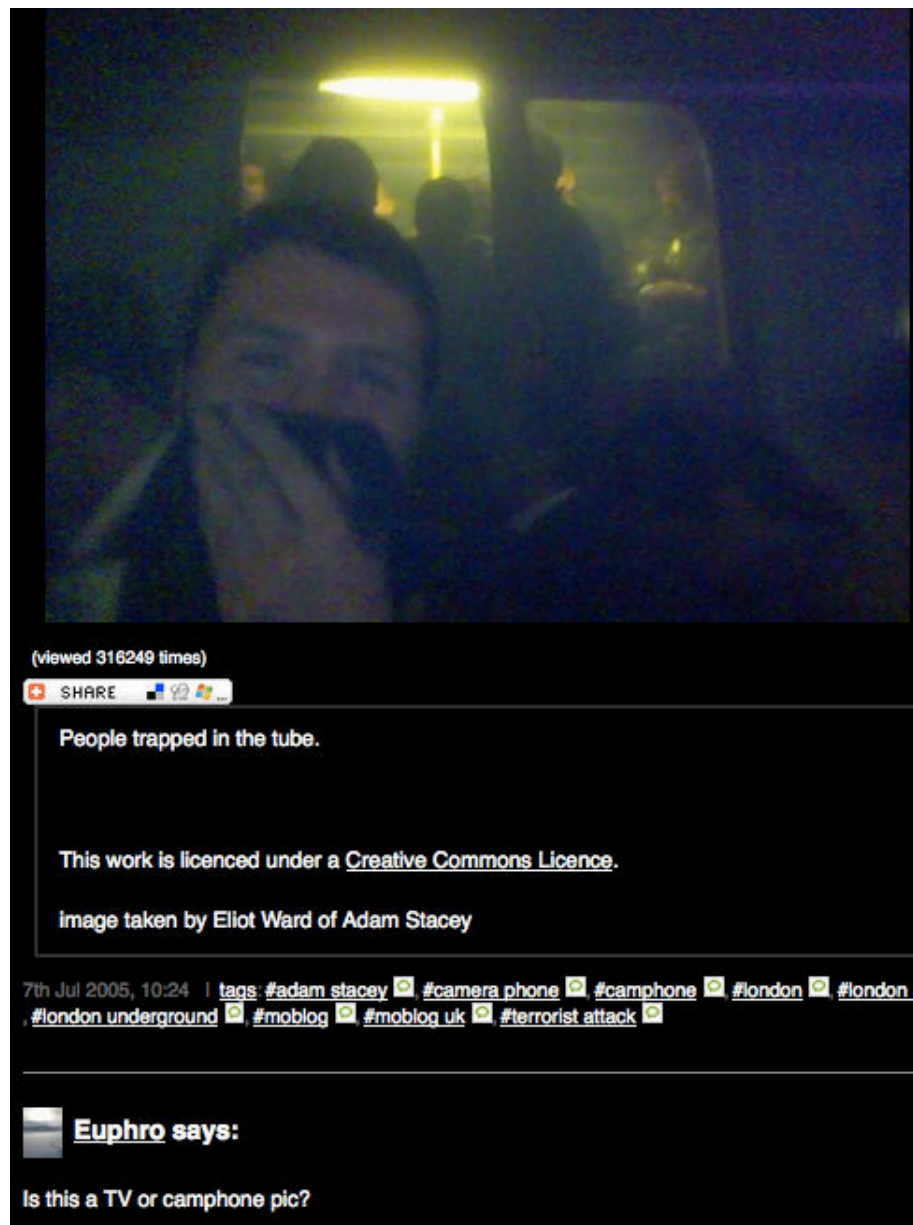


Figure 31. Alfies moblog, (July 7, 2005). The constative image is of Adam Stacey taken by Eliot Ward, London Underground bombing, trapped, (Creative Commons Licence). Euphro says: Is this a TV or camphone pic?" Screenshot detail. Retrieved from of <http://moblog.net/view/77571/>

Shot with Ward's Sony Ericsson V800 cameraphone, Adam Stacey's face appears in the foreground, looking at the camera and covering his mouth from explosion's fumes. The greenish light from the subway car provides a background to Ward's grainy image. The very first of the many comments posted in Alfies' Moblog,³³⁹ less than 20 minutes after

³³⁹ Ward, E. (2005, July 7). London Underground bombing, trapped, *Alfies moblog*, <http://moblog.net/view/77571/>

the image had been posted, came from someone under the pseudonym “Euphro”, who asked: “Is this a TV or camphone pic?”. The materiality of the image took over the content of it and the grainy image texture was associated with a typical case of bad television reception. The comment illustrates that television was still the first and most obvious choice of broadcasting device.

In spite of the dramatic and unforeseen situation, it seems as if the rapidity by which the image ended up online could have conditioned its later speedy circulation. Fifteen minutes after the 8:56 am blast, Adam Stacey sent the mobile photo to Alfies Moblog, a site that his friend Alfie Dennen (a creative technologist, artist and founder of several prominent websites based around mobile blogging) had created himself in order to post and share online mobile phone pictures and messages. As described in Rogers’ theory; Stacey, Dennen and Ward would fall into the “innovators” category. Innovators would be those also known as progressists or experimentals: those who dare to venture new innovations.

Ascertaining the habits of what people do with their images, and especially their personal mobile images, takes a long time. For instance, around 2007 the possibility of taking cameraphone images and uploading them online, was already technically possible. But, as it has been remarked “[t]he practice of ‘moblogging’ - telling an ongoing story through images uploaded from the phone - was supported in the design and promotion for feature phones such as the Nokia 7710”, the first Nokia phone with a touchscreen.³⁴⁰ However “[...] the practice of telling stories through uploaded images did not become widespread until smart phone cameras were paired with social media.”³⁴¹ An hour after the photo was posted, details regarding where and by whom the photo had been taken were revealed. Within an hour and a half, the picture had been sent to Sky, Associated Press, other news services and to anyone else who wanted to use it. Dennen, as quoted by O’Neill, settled the licensing issue with Stacey by text message. I transcribe his words

³⁴⁰ Chesher, C. (2012). Between image and information: the iPhone camera in the history of photography in L. Hjorth, J. Burgess, & I. Richardson (Eds.). *Studying Mobile Media: Cultural Technologies, Mobile Communication, and the iPhone*, pp. 98-117. London: Routledge, p. 105.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

I texted Adam about it, explaining that it was such an important image, it needed reach, and there was no time to fuss with AP and other syndication agencies. Without that image being first seen and picked up from my blog, it wouldn't have had the context, contact details, licensing and so forth for it to be taken seriously or bothered with by mainstream outlets at a time when things need to move quickly... However, the context is important too.³⁴²

Considering that the contextual information behind any image is as crucial as the image itself, I could not agree more with Stacey's words. Ward had put the photo out under a Creative Commons license. This allows anyone the right to use it in any way, provided that they attribute the image to its creator. Nearly ten years later, if one visits Alfies' moblog, the image has been viewed 314205 times (visited on the 21st of January 2015). Compared to the number of hits achieved in other sites, this number of views is quite low. This meant that by 2005 the practice of going to the first online source was not yet developed. It also demonstrates that online news sites did not refer to it either. Nowadays, when there is a piece of news with amateur/user generated CC images, the widespread norm is to provide the link, in what has been named "the link economy":³⁴³ a practice which was promoted by the role social media play in news signposting.

In the wake of the London bombings the BBC received thousands of photos. And "[i]t was precisely this quality that journalist were looking for when quickly sifting through the vast array of images e-mailed to them", said the BBC director, talking about the images they were receiving by email.³⁴⁴ For his part, Richard Sambrook, Director of Cardiff's School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies, and BBC journalist said

³⁴² O'Neill, R. (2005, May 11). Now we're all journalists, Creative & Media, *theage.com.au*, *The Age Business, World & Breaking News*. Melbourne, Australia, <http://www.theage.com.au/news/creative--media/now-were-all-journalists/2005/07/10/1120934123353.html>

³⁴³ Jarvis, J. (2008, June 24). It's a link economy, stupid. Part two of a seminar to The Guardian, *The Guardian*, <http://www.theguardian.com/media/video/2008/jun/24/jarvis.future2>

³⁴⁴ Downing, J. D. H. (2011). (Ed.). *Encyclopedia of Social Movement Media*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications. p. 97.

Within six hours they had received more than 1,000 photographs, 20 pieces of amateur video, 4,000 text messages, and 20,000 e-mails. People were participating in our coverage in a way we had never seen before. By the next day, our main evening TV newscast began with a package edited entirely from video sent in by viewers.³⁴⁵

In 2005, receiving 1,000 photographs from ordinary people was unprecedented and for that reason the BBC decided to expand their UGC team. In 2012, 1,000 photos of an event would be a small number but for the time it was quite a lot. Despite this fact most of the printed press used only two of the images: Eliot Ward's and Alexander Chadwick's. As I verified in the Newseum's³⁴⁶ online archives, only nine out of the 442 front pages from the 8th of July had used an amateur picture to portray the event. Out of this nine, eight used Chadwick's photograph, making it just a small 2% of the total front-page pictures used.³⁴⁷ This illustrates that in 2005 the mainstream media was neither ready for, nor did they know how to deal with, the so-called citizen journalism turn.³⁴⁸

By the 2000s and following developments in Photoshop software, image editing and *photoshopping* possibilities were increasingly familiar to the average news-reader, creating a certain distrust of photos as indexical documents. This skepticism was due more to the use of the retouching software, particularly in advertising, portraits and magazines, influencing and affecting the newer points of views towards novel

³⁴⁵ Sambrook, R. (2005). Citizen Journalists and the BBC, Winter, *Nieman Reports*. Retrieved from <http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reportsitem.aspx?id=100542>

³⁴⁶ The Newseum is a 250,000-square-foot museum of news based in Washington D.C, U.S.A, that offers visitors an experience that blends five centuries of news history with up-to-the-second technology and hands-on exhibits. Its online site is <http://www.newseum.org/>

³⁴⁷ Gunthert, A. (2009). Tous journalistes ? Les attentats de Londres ou l'intrusion des amateurs. In Gianni Haver (dir.), *La Photo de presse: usages et pratiques*. Lausanne, Antipodes editions. Retrieved from <http://www.arhv.lhivic.org/index.php/2009/03/19/956-tous-journalistes>. Reprinted in Gunthert, A. (2015). *L'Image partagée. La photographie numérique*. Paris: Textuel.

³⁴⁸ Robinson, S., & DeShano, C. (2011). Citizen Journalism as Third Places? What makes people contribute information online (or not). *Journalism Studies* 12(5), 1-16. Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/4869443/Robinson_S_and_DeShano_C_2011_Citizen_Journalism_as_Third_Places_What_makes_people_contribute_information_online_or_not_.Journalism_Studies_12_5_1-16

photojournalistic practices. Even though confidence in hyper-retouched photography decreased for average readers, low-resolution mobile images, like Chadwick's, were not likely to be found on the front pages of newspapers. Nevertheless, Ward and Chadwick's mobile photos were published for two main reasons: firstly because very few images taken from inside the London Underground were available; secondly, because these low quality, amateurish style, photographs were more readily trusted than edited photos such as those that were circulating in printed press. People empathized with these cameraphone still images, since they felt them to be authentic, spontaneous and therefore reliable documents: a *real* trace of what had happened.

As for the digital era, July the 7th 2005, or the London bombing attacks represent the beginning of the *citizen journalist discourse*. One of the foundations of these discourses is that of newspaper headlines, as the screenshots of four well-known sites and online newspaper headlines affirm (figures 32, 33, 34, 35). Cameraphones were reported as having played a major role in the London coverage, sparking a *more collective* journalistic bottom-up energy. The creation of Flickr groups, forums, and image sharing sites corroborated the emergence of this trend.



Figure 32. Owen, J. (July 11, 2005). "London Bombing Pictures Mark New Role for Camera Phones", Daily Nature and Science News and Headlines, National Geographic News. Screenshot detail. Retrieved from http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2005/07/0711_050711_londoncell.html

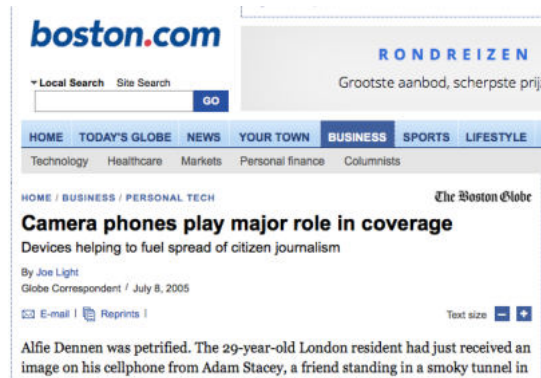


Figure 33. Light, J. (July 8, 2005). "Camera phones play major role in coverage", The Boston Globe. Screenshot detail. Retrieved from http://www.boston.com/business/personaltech/articles/2005/07/08/camera_phones_play_major_role_in_coverage/



Figure 34. Douglas, T. (August 4, 2005). "BBC NEWS, UK, Shaping the media with mobiles." BBC News Home. Screenshot detail. Retrieved from http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/4745767.stm



Figure 35. Seward, Z. M. (8 July 2005). "Phones Offer Snapshot Of Terror - Forbes.com." Information for the World's Business Leaders - Forbes.com. Screenshot detail. Retrieved from http://www.forbes.com/2005/07/08/london-camera-phones-cx_zs_0708cameraphone.html

These headlines exemplify the discourses that were being created around the cameraphone device as an image recording and potentially news-making tool. As an example, if a discursive approach were taken to analyze these homepages;³⁴⁹ it is as if these cameraphones were literally “playing major roles in coverage” (Boston.com), “shaping the media with mobiles” (BBC News) and “...offering snapshots of terror” (Forbes).³⁵⁰ A second reading of the same BBC News site shows a subtitle that is even more powerful than the headline: “Four weeks on from the London bombings, the news business in Britain has changed forever.” One could ask: How? Why? On the other hand, according to the National Geographic site (Nov. 7, 2005) it was not cameraphones playing the main role, but the London bombing pictures marking a new role for the cameraphones. In fact news headlines appear to be as-if axioms, not to be questioned: they are just titles of evidence. Indeed, it is the addition of the cameraphone image plus the textual legend that create the power of the discourse. The four here above screenshots, illustrate how both cameraphones and cameraphone pictures were being portrayed as if having an intrinsic power, or even as if they were animated.³⁵¹ Since these were the first cameraphone photos to be printed on the front pages of widely known newspapers such as the *Washington Post*, *The New York Times* (The U.S.), *The Morgen* (Belgium) and the *Calgary Herald* (Canada), they will probably remain in people’s minds as the first cornerstone vernacular images in mobile citizen journalism. In the case of the London bombings, cameraphones were being portrayed as the most up-to-date key media shapers in journalism.

In February 2004, Ludicorp launched Flickr,³⁵² the photo and later 90-second-video or long photo sharing site. At the time of the London attacks in 2005, the site was only one year old, but was already becoming one of the most popular online photograph

³⁴⁹ Fairclough, N. (1995). *Media Discourse*. London: Edward Arnold. And Fairclough, N. & Wodak, R. (1997). Critical discourse analysis. In: T. Van Dijk (Eds.). *Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction*. Vol. 2. London: Sage, pp. 258-284.

³⁵⁰ Moreover, this headline makes noticeable reference to the “The War on Terror”, which was the common term applied to an international military campaign led by the United States and the United Kingdom with the support of other NATO as well as non-NATO countries. Originally, the campaign was waged against al-Qaeda and other militant organizations with the purpose of eliminating them.

³⁵¹ Mitchell, W. J. T. (2005). *What do pictures want*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. See Chapter Vital Signs, Cloning Terror, especially page 15.

³⁵² Wilson, M. (2008, Apr. 9). Flickr Adds Videos Long Photos, *Gizmodo, the Gadget Guide*, <http://gizmodo.com/377684/flickr-adds-videos-long-photos>

sharing platforms. In March 2005, Yahoo acquired Flickr, and its only American image competitor was ImageShack. Confusingly Flickr was defined as a *photo sharing* site and ImageShack as an *image hosting* site. This probably had to do with the comments and user exchange possibilities each site had. Figure 36 is a table taken from an OECD³⁵³ report, which records the fastest growing web sites among U.S. at-home and at-work users from July 2005 to July 2006.

Firm	Type of Internet service	Number of unique visitors (in millions)	% growth of unique users from July 2005 to July 2006
HSBC	Bank	6.4	394
Sonic Solutions	Provider of digital media software	3.7	241
Associated Press	Press agency	9.7	234
ImageShack	Image hosting site	7.7	233
Heavy.com	Video sharing site	3	213
Flickr	Photo sharing site	6.3	201
ARTIST Direct	Online music platform including for emerging artists	0.2	185
Partypoker.com	Online gambling site	6	184
MySpace	Social network site	46	183
Wikipedia	Online community project	29.2	181

Source: Nielsen/NetRatings, July 2006, www.nielsen-netratings.com/pr/PR_060810.PDF. Shading indicates sites relevant to UCC. The term unique visitor refers to a person who visits a website more than once within a specified period of time.

Figure 36. Table taken from Vickery, G., Wunsch-Vincent, S., & Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2007). *Participative Web and user-created content: Web 2.0, wikis and social networking*. Paris: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD 2007, p. 25. Source Nielsen/NetRatings, July 2006.

Many Flickr groups were created to post both photos and images relating to the London blasts, as for instance the London Bomb Blasts Community Flickr group; and, even before the rise of the social media, or the later “Facebook era”, people were getting used to seeing and speaking about private amateur photographs as they became more public. White papers (such as Van House’s,³⁵⁴ Borenstein’s³⁵⁵ and Gunther’s³⁵⁶),

³⁵³ Being the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) based in Paris I had the opportunity to go and work with their archives. This table is taken from Vickery, G., Wunsch-Vincent, S., & Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2007). *Participative Web and user-created content: Web 2.0, wikis and social networking*. Paris: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

³⁵⁴ Van House, N. (2006). *Distant Closeness: Cameraphones and Public Image Sharing*. UBICOMP ’06 PICS Workshop (pp. 234-237). Retrieved from http://web.mit.edu/21w.789/www/spring2007/papers/vanhouse_distant_closeness.pdf

reports³⁵⁷ and books³⁵⁸ began and continued the citizen journalist discussion and myth construction that had then taken hold. Obviously this myth came hand in hand with the smartphone boom. Meanwhile, in San Francisco, U.S.A. the first Web 2.0 conference had just taken place and the idea of a more interactive internet, the so-called “Web 2.0” was gaining attention. However, people like Adam Stacey did not think in terms of citizen journalism. He said he had just wanted to take a picture of what had happened in order to show his friends and workmates. Expanding on the topic, the journalist and writer Dan Gillmor is of the opinion that many of the

...[amateur] image[s] made its[/their] way to wide viewership largely because traditional media organizations gave [them] a push. That will be less and less necessary as social media become the news-access tools of choice for a new generation that consumes, produces, and shares news in varying ways. Big media will always have a role, an important one for some time to come, but it's no longer clear that they'll be as overwhelmingly essential even in the 'distribution' arena.³⁵⁹

That very same year, another of the most outstanding events in the history of media and internet also occurred. On the 23rd of April of 2005, the first vernacular video was uploaded to YouTube. It was a very short video, shot by Yakov Lapitsky, one of

³⁵⁵ Borenstein, J. (2009). Camera Phone Images how the London Bombings in 2005 shaped the Form of News, *gnovis, Georgetown University's peer-reviewed Journal of Communication, Culture & Technology (CCT)*, Journal Vol. IX, Issue II Spring 2009. Retrieved from <http://gnovisjournal.org/2009/05/13/camera-phone-images-how-london-bombings-2005-shaped-form-news/>

³⁵⁶ Gunthert, A. (2009). Tous journalistes ? Les attentats de Londres ou l'intrusion des amateurs. In Gianni Haver (dir.), *La Photo de presse: usages et pratiques*. Lausanne: Antipodes editions. Retrieved from <http://www.arhv.lhivic.org/index.php/2009/03/19/956-tous-journalistes>. Reprinted in Gunthert, A. (2015). *L'Image partagée. La photographie numérique*. Paris: Textuel.

³⁵⁷ Sambrook, R. (2005). Citizen Journalists and the BBC, Winter, Nieman Reports. Retrieved from <http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reportsitem.aspx?id=100542>

³⁵⁸ Hoskins, A., & O'Loughlin, B. (2010). War and media: the emergence of diffused war. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

³⁵⁹ Gillmor, D. (2011, March 2). Rodney King and the Rise of the Citizen Photojournalist, *Media Active*, <http://mediactive.com/2011/03/02/rodney-king-and-the-rise-of-the-citizen-photojournalist/>

YouTube's founders; a personal video of himself at the San Diego Zoo.³⁶⁰ It was the very beginning of the idea of sharing online videos related to our private lives and thus broadcasting ourselves. The influences of this technology and the trends that came along with the possibility of self-mediation were also being facilitated by the increasing broadband market penetration. To continue along this line of thought, and thus always keeping the United Kingdom as an example, by December 2004 the number of residential broadband connections stood at 6.2 million, representing an annual growth of 90%. This technical advance facilitated online sharing.³⁶¹

However, in 2004/2005, 3G phones that enabled easy photo or video sharing were not yet widely available in the United Kingdom. This was due to several reasons such as a slow introduction of 3G by major mobile operators, and a poor selection of, little availability of, and the high price of, 3G consumer appliances. Throughout 2004 the choice of handsets was very limited. Those that were available were typically far larger and heavier than their 2G counterparts, and had severely limited battery life. Moreover, consumer demand for broadband mobile services was low. This was also due to the fact that Wifi hotspots were not yet common;³⁶² mobile operators were still trying to encourage consumers to use multimedia applications and products on their cameraphones; and picture messaging (MMS and posting them to SNS) was in its very infancy. However, as 3G penetration increased, devices improved and new 3G services were adopted. This technological background explains why few personal mobile videos of the London events can be found online. Presently, if doing YouTube research related to the 2005 London bombings, one encounters mainly links to photographic slideshows or photo tributes as online memorials. The footage that can be found was mostly filmed in the aftermath of the following days and by other types of camera. All the same,

³⁶⁰ Ten years later the video is still online and has been replicated many times, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jNQXAC9IVRw>

³⁶¹ MacDonald, M. (2005, September). Technical evaluation of the Scottish Executive Digital interactive Television (DiTV) pilot. (2006, January 12,). Retrieved from <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/89069/0021254.pdf>

³⁶² OFCOM (2005). Office of Communications, Independent regulator and competition authority for the UK communications industries, The Communications Market 2005, 3 Telecommunications, p. 95. Retrieved from <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/market-data-research/market-data/communications-market-reports/>

between 2005 and 2006 the only camera that increased its weekly use was the cameraphone.³⁶³

As terrorist events such as 9/11/01-New York, 3/11/04-Madrid and then 7/7/05-London came one after the other, the world-wide policy trend was *be aware, anytime anywhere*. In order to reinforce security measures, media and politics became even more entangled in the much-proclaimed fight against terrorism. Surveillance and cameraphones joined together in people's minds as technology of control.

2.3.2. Mobile leak and the politics of the (non)visual

It is in this context of socio-political fear that a second milestone within cameraphone imaging appears as an important historical event. The political scandal that ensued from the leak of the photos portraying the abuse of detainees in Abu Ghraib, was stunningly powerful and was considered as the first political image leak of the 21st century.³⁶⁴ “[It] will be remembered as the first event that made a place in history for digital photography”.³⁶⁵ As for videos, it is more likely that Saddam Hussein's uncensored cameraphone video execution will be remembered as the first event that made a place in history as a leaked political mobile video footage.

How and where was this video shared? In fact the cameraphone video of Saddam Hussein's execution had not only been recorded illegally but also posted on YouTube many times. It was quite debated-over footage. Because, while YouTube users were getting used to viewing happy amateur family videos, Hussein's final moments represented “the first great Shakespearean death scene of the YouTube generation”.³⁶⁶

³⁶³ Ipsos Insight, Baromètre API/IPSOS. (2007, January). *Baromètre photo: Tendances 2006*, vague 5 (2006, November). Retrieved from

http://www.sipac.org/pdf/2006_barometre_photo_API_Ipsos_27_p_extrait.pdf

³⁶⁴ Sontag, S. (2004, May 24). What Have We Done, first published in the *Guardian UK*, *Common Dreams*, <http://www.commondreams.org/views04/0524-09.htm>

³⁶⁵ Gunthert, A. (Nov. 2004). L'Image Numérique s'en va-t-en guerre, *Études photographiques*, N° 15, p. 124-134, translated by R. Forquy, Digital Imaging Goes to War, *Photographies* Vol 1., March 2008, p. 103-112, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/51348832/gunthert-abu-ghraib>

³⁶⁶ Kennicot, P. (2006, December 31). For Saddam's Page in History, A Final Link on YouTube, *Washington Post*, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2006/12/30/AR2006123000743.html#>

And, as all deaths, it symbolizes something that should not have been seen, that should have remained in a more private sphere. In the short history of cameraphone news, Saddam Hussein's cameraphone execution video acts as the second watershed case on our timeline, but is particularly important as being the first cameraphone audiovisual footage leak of a politically historical event recorded and shared by non-professionals. Moreover, in spite of being a political leak containing quite disturbing images, this footage was widely used by the printed press and mass media. It could also be born in mind that Hussein had refused to wear a hood. This fact rendered the neither retouched, nor blurred, footage and still images, even more spectacular.



Figure 37. The Sunday Denver Post front page (December 31, 2006), published in Denver, USA.

On the Newseum archived pages of December 31st of 2006, the count shows that out of 399 printed front pages of international newspapers, 78 used video screenshots taken from the leaked mobile video. That is to say, almost 20% of the world's printed press as archived in the Newseum site, decided to make use of the video by printing and publishing a screenshot. By way of explanation, it should be mentioned that screenshots do not need copyright authorization, since they work as if they were a quote from the entire video. Many American newspapers had decided to use images from former President Gerald Ford's last farewell as well, as is the case of The Sunday Denver Post illustrated here above (figure 37).

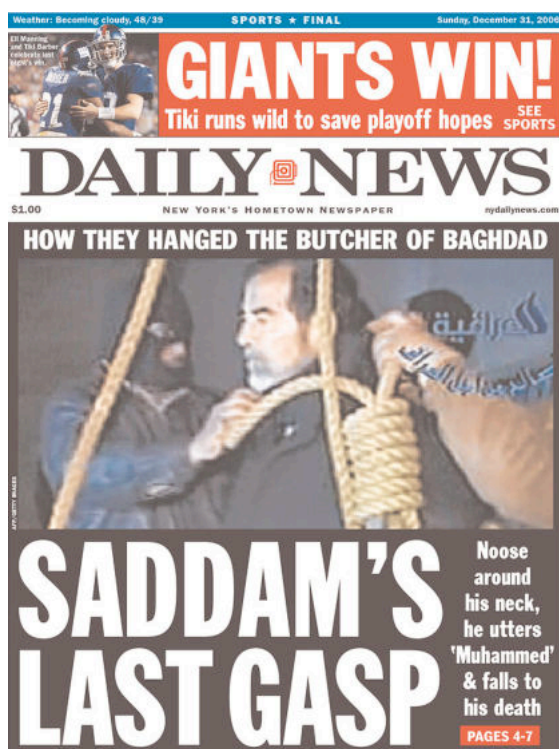


Figure 38a. Daily News front page (December 31, 2006), published in New York, USA.



Figure 38b. Winnipeg Free Press front page (December 31 2006), published in Winnipeg, Canada.

Other newspapers, such as the *Daily News* (figure 38a) chose to crop the photos. Others, like the *Winnipeg Free Press*, used a sequence of photographs to offer a sort of visual context, reporting and illustrating the series of events in chronological order and letting the footage's sequence show a timeline through the still images (figure 38b).

In all cases, the size of the images, their position on the page and their relation to the other images on the page - in other words their *intericonicity* - could be taken into account for further analysis. Based on Gérard Genette's definition of intertextuality, photography historian Clément Chéroux defines "*intericonicité*"³⁶⁷ as the iconic repetition between two or more images, appearing as if one is included in the other, as if quoted or with a familiar bond. In the same way that a literary work must be entered into a network of texts, as *intertextuality* to deliver its meaning, *intericonicity* refers to how important it is to grasp an image in a network of images. Wolfgang Iser³⁶⁸ defined intericonicity as reference to other works, and as paraphrase, pastiche or transformation of models. It should also be taken into account that many of those people who were reading the printed press had the moving footage still fresh in their minds and those viewing the video images, the still images in theirs.

2.3.2.1. Storytelling with Forbidden Footage

The story behind Saddam Hussein's video execution is as follows. The Iraqi dictator was convicted by an Iraqi tribunal for crimes against humanity for the murder of 148 Iraqi Shi'ites in the town of Dujail in 1982. So as to prove the fact of his death, his hanging was officially videotaped and shown to the world, but this official footage stopped after the noose was placed around his neck. However, another video, taken by a (still) unidentified eyewitness with a cameraphone, surfaced shortly thereafter, showing Hussein falling through the trap door in the gallows. Sounds of Hussein being taunted were audible on the tape, as well as the cracking sound of his neck breaking.

³⁶⁷ Chéroux, C. (2009). *Diplopie: L'image photographique à l'ère des médias globalisés : essai sur le 11 septembre 2001*. Cherbourg: Point du jour.

³⁶⁸ Arteni, S. (2003). *Painting as Polycontextuality, A Collage of Commented Reading Notes*, <http://www.stefanarteni.net/writings/Polycontextuality/Polycontextuality.html>

An Iraqi official was among the people suspected of having secretly recorded the execution with a mobile phone and disclosing the unauthorized video. He was arrested amid controversy related to the dissemination of these images. The mobile footage was first broadcasted by the pan-Arab satellite channel Al-Jazeera and then posted on the Internet, prompting a worldwide outcry and protests from the Sunni minority in Iraq, a faction to which Saddam Hussein belonged. One of his prosecutors, Al-Faroon mentioned the presence of “two government officials” who made the “official record” of the hanging with the help of mobile phones. *The New York Times* (as cited in the Marrakesh *portail marocain d'actualités*, 2007) reported that Al-Faroon stated in an interview, that: “one of the two men he had seen holding up a cameraphone, so as to record the video was Mowaffak Al-Rubaie”,³⁶⁹ a pivotal figure among Hussein’s main opponents. Al-Rubaie had also been one of the main architects of the U. S. - Iraq Status of Forces Agreement of 2008, which set the timeline for the U. S. withdrawal from Iraq and the rules of engagement for both sides.

The discourses constructed around Saddam Hussein’s death are developed in more detail and can be better understood through an important academic media reference, *The Arab, Media and Society Review*. In one of its articles, journalist Vivian Salama fully analyzes Saddam Hussein’s death coverage, supporting the position that his “execution had the potential of being a far bigger blockbuster than his trial or sentencing”.³⁷⁰ Since the released cameraphone video turned into a viral amateur video that circulated in the worldwide media, her remark proved to be true. Was it because people just wanted to see Saddam Hussein being executed? Or was it because it was a forbidden video? Probably it was due to both reasons, as well as, to some extent, the lure of a political scoop as gossip.

But despite the interest, networks on both sides of the Atlantic were posing deontological questions regarding what could and could not be shown on television and

³⁶⁹ Vidéo de l’exécution de Saddam Hussein: un suspect arrêté, (2007, January 3). *LeMag.ma, le quotidien maghrébin*, Broken link http://www.emarrakech.info/Video-de-l-execution-de-Saddam-Hussein-un-suspect-arrete_a10539.html

³⁷⁰ Salama, V. (2007). Death Video Phone: Coverage of Saddam Hussein’s Execution. *Arab Media & Society*, Issue 1, Spring, p. 2. Retrieved from http://www.arabmediasociety.com/articles/downloads/20070327122124_AMS2_Vivian_Salama.pdf

questions of what could, should or should not be posted on the web. “[...] The outbreak of videophone footage of Saddam Hussein’s execution poses a new set of questions for reporters and Internet users alike about the ethical codes of news dissemination and consumption”, wisely remarked Salama. Some even risked saying that “[...] broadcasting gives the audience what it ‘wants’ rather what it ‘needs’ ”.³⁷¹ Nevertheless, in light of the fact that other kinds of violent and pornographic images are constantly broadcasted and available online, these remarks seem nonsensical.

How was the cameraphone video leaked? It happened the very same day he was executed, on December the 30th of 2006. Meanwhile, many people were about to start celebrating the beginning of a new year. However, as known, the Arab world is not governed by the Western calendar, and in a world ruled by a globalized internet, time zones and geographical space matter little. Moreover, internet access enables one to feel one is “part of a global forum of opinion” expresses Salama.³⁷² At the Arab end, how the news broke is not completely clear. It is curious that it was not through Al Iraqiya³⁷³ – the Iraqi independent news media. Professor of Journalism at the American University in Cairo, Ibrahim Saleh, states that there were two networks: Alhurra and Al Arabiya³⁷⁴ reported as being the first ones to officially confirm that Hussein was dead. Since Alhurra is an American government-funded Arabic-language network, and Al Arabiya is owned by America’s top Gulf ally Saudi Arabia, the question to be openly raised was: who was calling the shots in Baghdad? Hisham Milhem, Al Arabiya’s Washington Bureau Chief, recognized having paid a heavy price for this coverage. He added: “Alhurra also has a large bureau in Iraq [so] it’s not such a surprise that we were able to break the news first”.³⁷⁵ Another key paragraph describes some more of its details.

It took some three to four hours before official photographs were released by the Iraqi government; meanwhile, America’s 24-hour networks – in particular

³⁷¹ Djerf-Pierre, 2000 as quoted in Hopmann, D. N., & Shehata, A. (2011). The Contingencies of Ordinary Citizen Appearances in Political Television News. *Journalism Practice*, Vol. 5, N°6, p. 660.

³⁷² Salama, V., Op. cit.

³⁷³ *Iraqi News* site in its English version, <http://www.iraqinews.com/>

³⁷⁴ *Alarabiya News*, <http://english.alarabiya.net/?PHPSESSID=m95oft1s0dl53pjl4899tt3uo4>

³⁷⁵ Arabiya’s Washington Bureau Chief Hisham Milhem as quoted in Salama, V., Op. cit. p. 5.

CNN, FOX News Channel, and MSNBC - offered live “as it happens” coverage before and after confirming that the former Iraqi dictator had been hung. Shortly after 10pm EST, CNN, FOX News Channel and MSNBC were all quoting Arabic media sources that the hanging had taken place. NBC was the first to break into regularly scheduled programming to announce that three “very credible” Arabic-language stations were saying Saddam Hussein’s execution had been carried out. CBS News broke in four minutes later but had independently confirmed the news. ABC was last to break into their scheduled programming, however the network had been airing a news program and so the entire focus on the show shifted to cover the execution.³⁷⁶

With regard to the passage made from Arabic to American mass media coverage, Salama observed that most of the non-Arabic speaking countries pick up news from the American channels. In addition to all this “[t]he mobile video version of Saddam Hussein’s execution offered viewers something that major television networks could not: a censorship-free look at the events that took place that late December morning in Baghdad”.³⁷⁷ It was also for that reason that the video hit the web and triggered a buzz. Like two sides of a coin, there was a vibrant yet controversial response from a more global blogosphere: some were celebrating and others were condemning the amateur video going viral. And, for better or for worse, small cameras embedded in phones are more easily hidden than bigger ones. Surely, Saddam Hussein’s execution is one of the most high-profile global political stories in which mobile internet video footage has taken the lead in the breaking of a piece of news. Therefore, Salama concludes that

Mainstream-media reporting soon came to focus on not the execution or the man, but the phone-recorded videos and their dissemination online. In this way Internet technology gives breathtaking power to those who routinely seek to circumvent the framing

³⁷⁶ Ibid. p. 6.

³⁷⁷ Ibid. p. 8.

techniques of governments and big media ... a new era of media consumption was born.³⁷⁸ [sic]

From a normative point of view, a new era regarding political scoops and leaks was being discussed.³⁷⁹ Therefore I link the historical event to cameraphone images as being a marketable good, as an asset, as a piece of information that could be sold, even should it be banned. Ethical questions linking cameraphones with surveillance - key debates, which had already been introduced with the London events - came back to the arena: "who is watching the watchers?"³⁸⁰ The answer is simple, continues Salama: "we are". There is no doubt that in a self-referencing mechanism, cameraphone users were learning to watch themselves watching. However, this type of biased thought does not make any reference to the fact that political governments were also benefiting from the ubiquity of the tool and in turn, were also watching the watchers (as well as the watched) in an increasingly vicious cycle. In order to reassure the Americans, some days after the cameraphone videos were released onto the internet, Mowaffak al-Rubaie - Iraq's national security adviser - told NBC News reporters that they had made arrests in connection with the leaked cameraphone images.³⁸¹ And, because information is revealed to and by unauthorized parties, this image-information leakage adds another layer to the image authenticity myth. Genealogically, this conception comes from "the myth of photographic truth"³⁸² and is intrinsically linked to the understanding of images as an objective objectivity.³⁸³

After the mobile footage was filmed and leaked, what role did YouTube play in the mediation of Saddam Hussein's execution? So as to understand how crucial YouTube's

³⁷⁸ Ibid. p. 9. (Emphasis added).

³⁷⁹ Koskela, H. (2004). Webcams, TV Shows and Mobile Phones: Empowering Exhibitionism. *Surveillance and Society*, 2 (2/3): 199-215. Retrieved from <http://library.queensu.ca/ojs/index.php/surveillance-and-society/article/view/3374>

³⁸⁰ *Qui custodiet ipsos custodes?* is a Latin phrase traditionally attributed to the Roman poet Juvenal from his Satires (Satire VI, lines 347-8). In English it is sometimes translated by "who watches the watchmen?", or "who watches the watchers?" and is often used today when discussing surveillance technologies and ethics and/or Surveillance Studies.

³⁸¹ Mowaffak al-Rubaie, who at that time was one of Iraq's national security advisers, as quoted by Salama. V., Op. cit., p. 10: "I can officially now confirm the arrest of three individuals in the case, the case being the release of the supposed to be *secret mobile footage of the execution*." (Emphasis added).

³⁸² Sontag, S. (1977). *On photography*. London: Penguin Books.

³⁸³ Daston, L., & Galison, P. (2008). *Objectivity*. New York: Zone Books.

function was, I propose to compare it with another amateur leaked video footage example from the 1990s. YouTube did not then exist, but in 1991 George Holliday (who happened to live near the scene) videotaped from a distance, racially motivated white policemen beating a black man: Rodney King. Strangely enough, Holliday was neither a journalist nor a media person, neither an innovator nor a geek, as Ward and Stacey's cases would later be. Why then did he have the reflex to videotape the whole scene? Being an Argentinean immigrant, who had left his country during a dictatorship, he had unfortunately been used to seeing these types of abuses. However, when seeing them again in the U. S. he decided, on the spur of the moment, to record what he was witnessing.

However, at that time, it was not that easy to share or broadcast amateur images publically. So Holliday then decided to hand the videotape of the incident over to the police in person, but was it evidently disregarded.³⁸⁴ Still with his videotape under his arm, he then went to KLTa television (one of the largest local newscasters among the Los Angeles' broadcast television stations), which broadcasted the footage on air in its entirety, thus making it the first station to air the amateur's infamous video. Just two days later the video became a media sensation - today it would be called a viral video - and a political media statement against racism was loudly heard.³⁸⁵ It is also interesting to remark that the video had been filmed the very day that Iraq accepted the terms of the United States and its allies to end the Gulf War, so the battle scenes were replaced by the television broadcasting of the video footage of Rodney King, surely as a form of distraction.³⁸⁶ Today, the full-length Rodney King video, by Holliday, can be found online, too; sometimes it may even be a video recording of a television screen image of a broadcast, which in turn was then uploaded to the web.

S. Hussein's video execution did not have all these mainstream media filters, nor any broadcasting strategy plans. Many other important political matters were surely at stake,

³⁸⁴ Cannon, L. (1997). *Official negligence: how Rodney King and the riots changed Los Angeles and the LAPD*. New York: Times Books.

³⁸⁵ Independent Commission on the Los Angeles Police Dept. (Los Angeles, Calif.), & Christopher, W. (1991). Report of the Independent Commission on the Los Angeles Police Department. Los Angeles: The Commission, Chapter 1, p. 7.

³⁸⁶ Turner quoted in Cannon, L., Op. cit. p. 22.

but with video hosting sites already a part of the internet ecology, it was somehow understood that neither the police nor the traditional media are needed in deciding what information to broadcast. Uploading the mobile footage to YouTube, Citizentube, Vimeo or any other social media site that enables video uploading, with as many tags and links as possible, can allow personal mobile images to access a worldwide audience. Mobile footage can be directly uploaded to the web where it has the possibility of gaining visibility among a broader circle.



Figure 39. newstylez, (Decembre 31, 2006). Saddam Hussein uncensored execution. [YouTube].
Screenshot detail. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zA_U4KVzI5k

2.3.2.2. The Hunger for Vernacular Mobile Videos

The web in general plays a crucial role in enabling video streaming, broadcasting, hosting and sharing. On it, information can be seen, commented on, aggregated, reproduced and remixed. Nevertheless, these examples demonstrate my hypothesis that, at that time, many of the amateur cameraphone images reached a massive number of people and gained visibility because they were reproduced on traditional media sites. This could happen either before or after their online publication, and has been proved

in the two previously mentioned cases and will be further validated in the following ones. Even as of 2015, many news sites host amateur videos but fewer are viewed on a widespread global level without using the mass media channels.

In the past, the dynamic news-making machine used to be fueled by journalists traveling to the areas concerned. Nowadays, in more general terms, information can also reach the journalist.³⁸⁷ Thus, it is important to emphasize that the information chain, as it is now, shifted when the real impact of web 2.0 finally hit. Journalists had, among other things, to rely more and more on the growing social media and social networking sites, not only using them to promote their work,³⁸⁸ but also to learn to find user generated content there. They also had to face the fact that the web was becoming both a mass media news source and a broadcasting site. In October 2006, Google added the largest video archive-hosting site to its empire by buying YouTube for the unprecedented sum of US\$ 1.65 billion in stock.³⁸⁹ “In less than a year, YouTube became an (independent) subsidiary of a commercial firm whose core interest is not content per se, but the vertical integration of search engines with content, social networking and advertising.”³⁹⁰

After the acquisition, and just one year after YouTube’s creation, the widely known *Time Magazine* named YouTube “Best Invention of the Year 2006”. But that was not all: YouTube was also named *Time’s* “Person of the Year”, the award bestowed by the editors on the person or persons who most affected the news and our lives, for good or ill, and it embodies what was important about the year. *Time Magazine’s* online archive is of great interest; it is possible to view all the covers, which are divided into six categories: U. S. Politics and Military Leaders, International Leaders, Business and Technology, Science and Medicine, Religion and Philanthropy, and Concepts.

³⁸⁷ Macé, E., & Maigret, E. (2005) (Eds.). *Penser les médiacultures*. Paris: Armand Colin, coll. Médiacultures, p. 52.





³⁸⁸ Jeanne-Perrier, V., Smyrniaios, N., & Díaz Noci, J. (2015). Journalism and Social Networking Sites. Innovation and Professional Transformation or Imposition of “Sociability”? Introduction, *Sur le journalisme, About journalism, Sobre jornalismo* Vol 4, n°1. Retrieved from <http://surlejournalisme.com>

³⁸⁹ La Monica, P. R. (2006, October 9). Google to buy YouTube for \$1.65 billion Search engine leader looks to bulk up in the burgeoning online video market, *CNN Money*, http://money.cnn.com/2006/10/09/technology/googleyoutube_deal/index.htm

³⁹⁰ Van Dijck, J. (2009). Users like you? Theorizing agency in user-generated content. *Media, Culture & Society*, 31(1), p. 42.

Selecting one example can easily show the number of covers published in a specific category.

TIME's Person of the Year, from 1927 to 2011

 Digg  Facebook  Twitter  LinkedIn  Email

TIME's Person of the Year is bestowed by the editors on the person or persons who most affected the news and our lives, for good or ill, and embodied what was important about the year. See who made the grade over TIME's first eight decades

Related

- Person of the Year 2011: The Protester
- Person of the Year 2010: Mark Zuckerberg

[More Graphics »](#)

The Covers

Select the top corner of a cover for more on a specific Person of the Year. Click below to sort the covers by:

- ☐ Categories
☒ Year

Categories

Select a category to see the frequency of a specific group.

- U.S. Political and Military Leaders
- International Leaders
- Business and Technology
- Science and Medicine
- Religion and Philanthropy
- Concepts

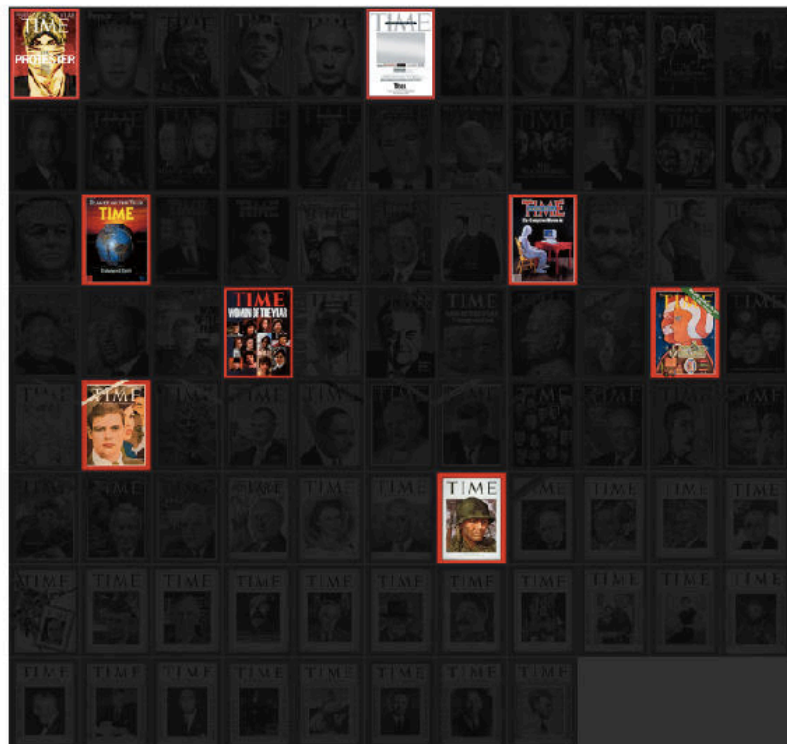


Figure 40. Time's Person of the Year, from 1927 to 2011, [Time Magazine's online archive], Screenshot.
Retrieved from <http://content.time.com/time/interactive/0,31813,1681791,00.html>

In the Time's archive YouTube falls into the Concept category. Out of the 85 total covers only 8 have been given to a concept, making it only a 9.4 % of the whole. One of them was the refined and trendy front page of December 2006, (See figure 41), which was addressed to a "You" reader as if s/he were a news controller or at least someone able to control the Information Age. A *you* that could technically be anyone. According to YouTube's statistics, around July 2006, 100 million videos were viewed per day and there were 65,000 new video uploads per day.



Figure 41. Cover Credit: Photo-Illustration for Time by Arthur Hochstein, with photographs by Spencer Jones Glasshouse. (December 25, 2006). Time Magazine Cover, vol. 168, n° 26. Screenshot. Retrieved online, <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/0,9263,1101061225,00.html>

In order to understand how social myths, in Barthes terms, are influenced through mass media, it is helpful to analyze how the cover of one of America's most read magazines visually illustrated this event. Hand in hand with the launch of social media, the first chapters of digital storytelling were being shaped. The possibility of sharing personal, amateur videos online, was gaining more and more currency. Posting a video on YouTube facilitates later sharing and opens its circulation circuits. It also gives the chance to those people interested in making comments, to visibly contribute and be read. Maybe the pronoun *you* that *Time Magazine* used could also be understood as a wink to a "YouTuber", the YouTube user. "It's about the many wresting power from the few and helping one another for nothing and how that will not only change the world, but also change the way the world changes".³⁹¹ Effectively, the user had a more visible

³⁹¹ Grossman, L. (2007, Nov. 1). Invention of the Year: the iPhone, *Time*, http://content.time.com/time/specials/2007/article/0,28804,1677329_1678542_1677891,00.html

cultural role in determining which videos would be seen. This meant that the user also carried a strong economic weight and significance. At that time the bet was still on changing the users' roles: in other words melding the content creator and the final content consumer into one person. "But ordinary citizens as actors obviously have less news value than elite sources, such as elected and influential politicians."³⁹²

As a matter of fact, in the news construction machine the top-down editorial decisions are not magically taken by a "you" - here positioned as the *Time* reader or "webactors", as previously discussed in the general introduction³⁹³ - but are still taken by news editors who are in charge of valorizing and reproducing hierarchies and thus deciding what piece of news is worth sharing (they are the gatekeepers). YouTube was not going to change how the world or the mass media industry worked. What YouTube enabled, was a change in the ways we are able to watch videos of our everyday life world(s) - about banality, about the nonsensical, about familiar and simple things. According to YouTube's own statistics page, by May 2012 over 4 billion videos were being viewed a day and 72 hours of video were being uploaded to YouTube every minute. By February 2014, the 72 had already passed to being 100 hours of video uploaded every minute. Moreover, not only is YouTube available on hundreds of millions of devices, but mobile makes up almost 40% of YouTube's global watch time.³⁹⁴

However, the source of Hussein's execution video has never been clearly identified. This shows not only the potential of the mobile as a new and powerful tool in audiovisual creation, but also the lack of control the authorities have *vis-à-vis* this image recording tool and the persons responsible for those images.

³⁹² Hopmann, D. N., & Shehata, A. (2011). The Contingencies of Ordinary Citizen Appearances in Political Television News. *Journalism Practice*, Vol. 5, N°6, p. 659.

³⁹³ Pisani, F., & Piotet, D. (2008). *Comment le web change le monde: L'alchimie des multitudes*. Paris: Pearson Village Mondial.

³⁹⁴ Also See YouTube's statistic page, http://www.YouTube.com/t/press_statistics



Figure 42. David, G. (2013). No photo, no cameraphone allowed sign, storefront of florist Hervé Chatelin's shop, Paris, private collection.

And, as seen in figure 42, the sign banning the taking of mobile photos, started to appear more frequently in public spaces. In efforts to disentangle Hussein's execution video enigma, many press conferences were held. For example, Munqith al-Faroon, another Iraqi prosecutor, who had also been present at the execution, denied a report which stated that he had accused the country's national security advisor of possible responsibility for the leaked video. In a telephone interview he had with the Associated Press, which was relayed by many other medias he said

I am not accusing Mowaffak al-Rubaie (the national security adviser), and I did not see him taking pictures...but I saw two of the government officials who were ...present during the execution taking all the video of the execution, using the lights that were there for the official taping of the execution. They used mobile phone cameras. I do not know their names, but I would remember their faces.³⁹⁵

³⁹⁵ Munqith al-Faroon as quoted by Hurst, S. (2007, January 3). Iraqi Arrested in Saddam Hanging Video, *Washington Post*, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/01/03/AR2007010300309_pf.html

People from *The New York Times* added that M. al-Faroon had said that “one of two men he had seen holding a mobile phone camera aloft to make a video of Hussein’s last moments up to and past the point where he fell through the trapdoor was Mowaffak al-Rubaie, Mr. al-Maliki’s national security adviser”.³⁹⁶ Al-Maliki had been the Prime Minister of Iraq between 2006 and 2014. Statements are contradictory and ambiguous and the source of the video has never been elucidated.

Mobile video recording, surveillance, and political power, are still more interrelated than commonly perceived. For example, not a month after Hussein’s mobile footage release, New York City’s Mayor Michael Bloomberg, in a move towards crowd-sourcing surveillance, outlined a new project to encourage citizens to send in cameraphone shots of any wrongdoing. In his State of the City Address, he said: “If you see a crime in progress or a dangerous building condition, you’ll be able to transmit images to 911 or online to nyc.gov.” Hussein’s video, plus Bloomberg’s call for mobile image creation and possible later conversion into hard news, show how cameraphone image uses were clearly shifting towards creating a much greater impact than that of a simple gadget that only produced amateur mobile images for self-centered practices. This occurred, not only because of their range of content, but also because of the appropriateness of the mobile footage. In other words, due to the speed of circulation and ease of sharing that was increasing over time.

2.4. When Mobiles Become Visible: Adolescence

As part of my fieldwork, in February 2014, I attended a three-day mobile creation workshop that Benoit Labourdette held for teenagers in the Ateliers d’Arts Plastiques d’Evry. After the first day, participants were required to record an intimate pocket film as homework. The second day started with the analysis of all the footage, the viewing was done on a school’s large screen. Most of the students brought their pocket films saved unto a flash drive or external hard drive and the transfer was quickly done.

³⁹⁶ Burns, J., & Glanz, J. (2007, January 2). Iraq to Review Hussein’s Execution. *The New York Times, Middle East*, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/03/world/middleeast/03iraq.html?ei=>

However, Rémy (18 years), who still had his in his smartphone. Therefore, the film had to be somehow transferred or copied from his personal mobile to the computer where all footage was being collected. Benoit asked him: “Do you have the mobile phone cable?” To what Rémy promptly answered: “Yes, of course I do, cause by bringing it I brought my entire bedroom.” His story represents the feeling many users have: that the mobile is a personal and distinctive contrivance. Rémy implies that his mobile phone cable is almost all he needs: as if part of the basics essentials one needs to feel safe and secure, like food and water; as if by coming to the workshop with his mobile he was coming with all his stuff in his backpack (music, photos, videos, contacts), or even more, as if by bringing it, he’d brought his entire bedroom.

It is true that appropriation, adoption or repudiation of incipient technologies such as the mobile, are often visually perceived from the perspective of adolescent apprised customers as they endeavor to follow trends on what is cool to wear, to listen to and even to do; some even try to set the trend for the rest to follow.³⁹⁷ Teenagers often belong to the early adopters or early majority, such as those teenage or young adult geeks, artists and business people, who in the early 2000s, quickly adopted the use of cellphones. This mostly occurred due to the introduction of a new technology being coupled with the youth years: a time of exploration and identity construction. Therefore, a teenagers and mobiles have often been associated.³⁹⁸

The use of mobile phones within teenage populations from diverse parts of the globe, has been studied by scholars, mainly from the areas of Mobile Studies, Media Studies, Anthropology and Sociology; such as boyd, Fortunatti, Ling and Pasquier, to name just a few. As for more collective usage of mobile phones by youth, a broad gamut of practices can be noticed. For instance it can range from coordination of cheerful flash mobs to recordings of happy-slappings (attacking an unwitting victim while others record the assault). Or nowadays vary from enabling selfies to sexting (a word coined to

³⁹⁷ Because I rest on the Pew Research Centre research, I will consider the same age divisions they make, these being between 12 and 17. The Pew Research Center is a nonpartisan think tank that provides information on the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world. The center conducts public opinion polling, demographic studies, media content analysis and other empirical social science research.

³⁹⁸ Goggin, G. (2013). Youth culture and mobiles. *Mobile Media & Communication*, 1(1), pp. 83-88.

name the act of sending sexually explicit messages or photographs, primarily between mobile phones). Many flipside mobile usages have been reported as caused or enabled by mobile dystopian purposes.³⁹⁹

Trying to find their own, new voice, teens are also sometimes even perceived as society's trendsetters. For example, they soon realized that texting was cheaper than making phone calls, and by sending SMSs found a new way to employ the cellphone.⁴⁰⁰ Mobiles of course, enable teenagers to keep in touch and can make them feel more independent, more grown-up, but at the same time this device also helps parents to stay connected and keep track of what their sons and daughters are doing: the so called mobile-mothering.⁴⁰¹ By 2009, in the U. S., remote parenting was already on the rise, as 64% admitted having looked at their child's cellphone content, such as address book, call log, text message or pictures, attested a Pew Report.⁴⁰² Mobile monitoring allows parents to carry out micro-coordination⁴⁰³ but also to put an electronic leash on their child that allows contact at any time.⁴⁰⁴ As a result some consider that many kids are "growing up tethered"⁴⁰⁵ by these type of devices. The statistics, especially those in the research of the Pew Internet and American Life Project, led by aforementioned researcher Amanda Lenhart, show that within the teenage American population, the taking or receiving pictures from their mobiles has constantly increased. As the following example

³⁹⁹ May, H., & Hearn, G. (2005). The mobile phone as media. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 8(2), 195-211, p. 203.

⁴⁰⁰ Koskinen, I. K. (2007). *Mobile multimedia in action*. New Brunswick, N.J: Transaction Publishers.; Rivière, C. (2002). La pratique du mini-message, Une double stratégie d'extériorisation et de retrait de l'intimité dans les interactions quotidiennes. *Réseaux*, n° 112-113, pp. 140-168.

⁴⁰¹ Rakow, L. F., & Navarro, V. (1993). Remote Mothering and the Parallel Shift: Women Meet the Cellular Telephone. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, Vol. 10, Issue. 2, pp. 144-157. It is interesting to highlight that this article was the very first article related to mobile phones and social changes.

⁴⁰² Lenhart, A. (2009, August 19). Teens and Mobile Phones Over the Past Five Years: Pew Internet Looks Back, "Pew Internet & American Life Project", Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project. Retrieved from <http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2009/14--Teens-and-Mobile-Phones-Data-Memo/1-Data-Memo.aspx>

⁴⁰³ Ling, R., & Yttri, B. (2002). Hyper-coordination via mobile phones in Norway. In J. E Katz & M. A. Aakhus (Eds.). *Perpetual Contact Mobile Communication, Private Talk, Public Performance* (pp. 139 - 169). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.; Rivière, C. (2002/2). La pratique du mini-message, Une double stratégie d'extériorisation et de retrait de l'intimité dans les interactions quotidiennes. *Réseaux*, n° 112-113, pp. 140-168.

⁴⁰⁴ Caron, A. H., & Caronia, L. (2007). *Moving Cultures, Mobile Communication in Everyday Life*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, p. 210.

⁴⁰⁵ Turkle, S. (2010). *Alone together: Why we expect more from technology and less from each other*. New York: Basic Books.

illustrates a feeling of more connectedness, but also of the development of surveillance, was being established; especially in urban areas, and this reaction was even gaining a footing among teenage populations.

On April 16th 2007, a senior undergraduate student, Seung-Hui Cho, aged 23, carried out attacks on the campus of Virginia Tech University, killing 32 people and wounding 25 others. Up to the moment of writing, this was the deadliest shooting incident by a single gunman in the entire United States' history. After that, the murderer decided to commit suicide. There had been two separate attacks, approximately two hours apart. On the spot, a student used his cameraphone to capture and relay footage of what was going on, in what turned out to be the most watched cameraphone footage of the incident. Walking through the large University campus (more than 125 buildings, 2,600 acres, and even an airport), Jamal Albarghouti (aged 24) was about to meet with his tutor, but after seeing policemen running in the area, he took his Nokia N70 cameraphone and started to film. As termed in Rogers' theory, Jamal would be considered an Early Adopter.¹

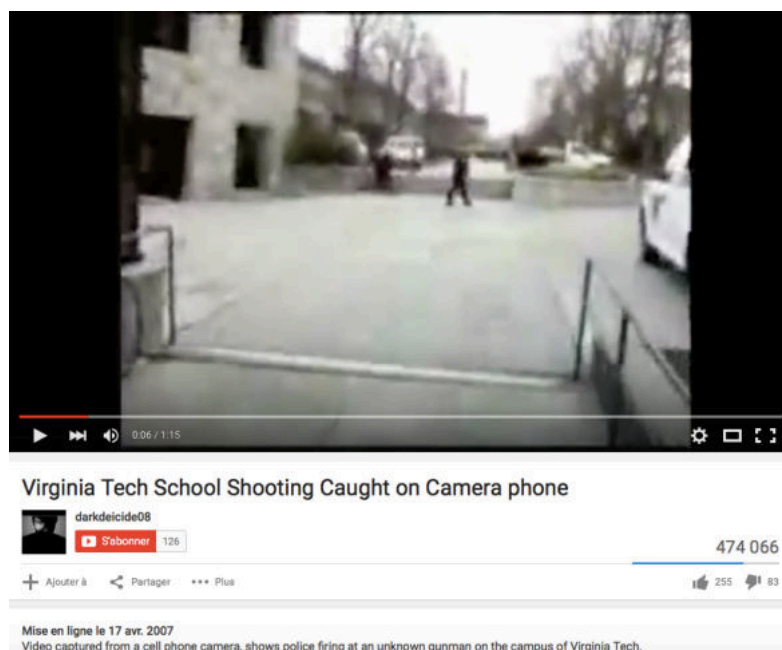


Figure 43. darkdeicide08's, (online April 17, 2007). Virginia Tech School shooting on camera phone. [YouTube]. Screenshot. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?index=22&playnext_from=PL&feature=Playlist&p=D6C14E6A566B26A9&v=iVPx6oWmtKY&playnext=1

Through email exchanges, Jamal told me that the police prohibited him from filming or getting closer to the scene (J. Albarghouti, personal communication, 28-29 July 2012).⁴⁰⁶ This constraint defined the framing and shooting limits of his visual record. It also illustrates that, even if there is no professional journalist, photographer or cameraman on the scene, amateurs usually have to deal with the police or authorities' directions. Still, they are the closest "live mobile images" that it was possible to shoot (ibid.). Mainly portraying the university parking lot, it is very hard to grasp what is happening in this one-take mobile video; still the gunshots can be heard and the seriousness of the moment is perceived. The footage is very shaky and not very illustrative, but at least the sound is clear and probably more touching than the security cameras videos. Nevertheless, without a better version available, the amateur video started to circulate on television and became popular.

When traditional media reporters interviewed Albarghouti he said: "I knew it was something way more serious than that, so I started taking the video".⁴⁰⁷ He also added that since he often visited CNN.com, he knew he could send his video to I-Report. Created in 2006, I-Report.cnn.com was conceived to take advantage of the newsgathering capabilities of citizens at the scene of notable events. Its success has inspired other similar sites to be created, which count today among CNN I-Report competitors. CNN When asked if he would do it again, Albarghouti answered affirmatively. "Why?", replied the professional reporter. Jamal answered that people need to get a better picture of what happened. But, in saying this, what did Jamal mean? In fact his answer again mirrors the notion that the discourses built around the citizen journalist concept, web actors, or producers (in Bruns' terms), were profoundly anchored in people's minds. In the early producers' years, the myth that everybody was technically being enabled to record daily events had already begun to circulate.⁴⁰⁸ The myth of the

⁴⁰⁶ Albarghouti and I exchanged emails through Facebook. It should be remarked that for this digital ethnography research, finding many of those who are actors and are still alive has been quite easy, and frequently done through Facebook, but Jamal is one among the very few people who replied helpfully to my queries.

⁴⁰⁷ *CNN.com International - Breaking, World, Business, Sports, Entertainment and Video News*. (2007, April 16). Student shot video of campus shooting, <http://edition.cnn.com/2007/US/04/16/vtech.witness/index.html>

⁴⁰⁸ Bruns, A. (2003). Gatewatching, not gatekeeping: Collaborative online news. *Media International Australia Incorporating Culture and Policy: quarterly journal of media research and resources*, 107, pp. 31-44.

citizen journalist was hitting again. Almost to the point of contradicting himself, he said he did not know that it was going to be as big an incident as it turned out to be; and he added that he was happy to have recorded the footage. Spontaneity and unpredictability, as a drive to film seems to be embedded in the reasons for mobile amateur recording. When a Canadian journalist asked him: “Why do you think these images are important?” Albarghouti replied: “the whole media is important”.⁴⁰⁹ What did the term *media* imply for Albarghouti? He was certainly speaking about social media in terms of SNS and user-generated content (UGC).

According to the Annual Report on American Journalism, the State of the News Media, one of the most important findings of 2007, was that the “[w]eb offers many ways to accommodate participation - everything from a simple e-mail link to having a story’s author post user content as a part of the story mix.”⁴¹⁰ However, traditional media gatekeepers still remained the same and continued editing in the old-school journalism way. The main difference was that journalists *needed* to gamble on *users’ participation* and engagement. To conclude the interview, Albarghouti said that what hurt him the most is knowing that the majority of the gunshots you hear in the footage correspond to people who died. In a country such as the United States of America, a place where you can easily buy guns online, these gunshot sounds represent and refer to the more serious issue of the arms and gun industry, much more than just their literal noise. Figure 44 is a screenshot that illustrates a moment from Jamal Albarghouti’s interview with professional reporters holding huge cameras and microphones. In the left side of the image, I circled Albarghouti’s hands; he is the only person holding a small cameraphone: the Nokia that had served to record the Virginia Tech footage. Today, Albarghouti’s cameraphone is housed at the Newseum.

Retrieved from <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/189/>

⁴⁰⁹ Jamal Albarghouti Interview. (2007, April 19). *Verge New Media*. Broken link, <http://blip.tv/verge-new-media/jamal-albarghouti-interview-208516>

⁴¹⁰ The State of the News Media 2007, An Annual Report on American Journalism, *Project for Excellence in Journalism*, Findings. Retrieved from <http://stateofthemedias.org/2007/digital-journalism-a-classification-of-news-websites-intro/findings/>



Figure 44. Interview to Jamal Albarghouti, (April 19, 2007), Verge New Media's video. [Verge New Media, broken link] Screenshot. His tiny cameraphone has been circled in green.

In context, when the Virginia Tech killing happened, Apple was just about to introduce the first iPhone, but in fact it had not yet been launched. Steve Jobs had already given a keynote presentation on January 9th 2007 introducing it, but it was not until June 29th 2007 that the first iPhone was released to the general American public. Surely, had its U. S. launch been earlier, chances are that there would have been many more firsthand mobile videos of the event. Not surprisingly in 2007, it was the iPhone's turn to be judged as the "Best Invention of the Year" for *Time Magazine*.⁴¹¹ However, as it was not yet launched on all continents, the November 2007 *Time Magazine International* covers had to portray something different. Therefore, as can be seen in figure 45, this was probably the reason why the iPhone only appeared on the November 2007 front page of the American *Time* edition.

⁴¹¹ Grossman, L. (2007, Nov. 1). Invention of the Year: the iPhone, *Time*, http://content.time.com/time/specials/2007/article/0,28804,1677329_1678542_1677891,00.html



Figure 45. Time Magazine Vol. 170, N° 20, (2007, November 12) [online archive], Screenshot, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/0,9263,7601071112,00.html>

During the incident, Jamal's video footage was the only mobile footage filmed in real time. It is nonetheless representative and can work as a metonymy that portrays that the use of the mobile device as video recorder was reaching a receptive, younger population.⁴¹² By 2007 Facebook was also creating a new social networking paradigm for personal information sharing, its adoption already embedded in the American university student populations. As for the figures: "in May 25, Facebook unveiled the 'Facebook Platform' and became the most viral software distribution system ever; and from 2006 to 2007 doubled its users - Facebook's total user base grew from about 15 million in January to 30 million in July. In December, it stood at about 58 million. Facebook added an average of 250,000 new users per day in 2007."⁴¹³ Facebook's growth indeed showed a great impact in the world's connectivity.

Daisuke Okabe, a cognitive psychologist who specializes in situated learning theory, together with the cultural anthropologist of technology, Mimi Ito, had already

⁴¹² Lenhart, A. (2009, August 19). Teens and Mobile Phones Over the Past Five Years: Pew Internet Looks Back, "Pew Internet & American Life Project", *Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project*. Retrieved from <http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2009/14--Teens-and-Mobile-Phones-Data-Memo/1-Data-Memo.aspx>

⁴¹³ Smith, J. (2007, Dec. 18). Top 10 Facebook Stories of 2007. *Inside Facebook - Tracking Facebook and the Facebook Platform for Developers and Marketers*. Retrieved from <http://www.insidefacebook.com/2007/12/18/top-10-facebook-stories-of-2007/>

predicted, “cameraphones were changing the definition of picture-worthiness”.⁴¹⁴ Their thesis did not specify whether the meaning was in personal or public photography, as it seemed to straddle both domains. However, yet again a front page newspaper comparison from the Newseum site shows that, in contrast to the number of screenshots taken from Saddam Hussein’s execution video used in the printed news, no newspaper used any screenshot whatsoever from Jamal’s mobile footage. This can be understood for a couple of reasons: firstly, professional journalists and photographers *were* able to arrive quickly at the scene and take their own, better quality, images. Secondly, the university had security camera systems, video surveillance, that could also provide other on-site images to be used by the printed press and other traditional media as needed. In addition to this it is crucial to remember that Saddam Hussein’s execution video has a political content and thus impact.

Jamal’s footage is a concession: by only recording the sounds of the bullets and the parking lot, he films what he is allowed to film, but at least he does it. In this matter, Daisuke and Ito’s definition of picture-worthiness, being one that closely echoes Timothy E. Cook’s definition of “newsworthiness negotiation”,⁴¹⁵ is of help. Cook, an American scholar of Mass Communications and professor of Journalism, defends the theory that news is a negotiation in the broad sense of the term. The term *newsworthiness* is usually understood as very much related to the present, as timely and proximal, something that should have exceptional importance and a possible future impact. As Lisa Gye states, maybe the terms “pictureworthy” and “newsworthy” have finally become interchangeable⁴¹⁶ or at least more difficult to define, to frame and therefore, to limit. Another significant norm is that news usually tends to be something conflictive that touches a great number of people, where later consequences, pathos and shock value are also central. All the same, social psychologist Gabriel Tarde, defends the view that one of the most important things about the news is not exactly its newness or

⁴¹⁴ Okabe, D., & Ito, M. (August 2003). Cameraphones changing the definition of picture-worthy. *Japan Media Review*. Retrieved from <http://www.ojr.org/japan/wireless/1062208524.php>

⁴¹⁵ Cook, T. E. (2005). *Governing with the news: the news media as a political institution* (2nd ed.). University of Chicago Press.

⁴¹⁶ Gye, L. (2007). Picture This: the Impact of Mobile Camera Phones on Personal Photographic Practices. *Continuum*, 21(2), pp. 279–288, p. 286.

actuality, but the fact that it triggers conversations.⁴¹⁷ A piece of news is not based in its veracity but in its dialogue and exchange, denoting an urgency and need to share in order to build a community.

Coming back to, and in respect of our case - putting aside the university surveillance camera images and all other media coverage that happened *after* the tragedy had concluded - Albarghouti's live cameraphone footage images were tagged as being amongst the more telling ones; probably because they were the only ones that offered a sense of an unfolding drama, a suspense scene, or as if it were a fictional moment to be captured for later discussion.⁴¹⁸ Almost just as cinema lovers (*cinéphiles*) might do after seeing a movie. Similarly, cameraphone images were (and are still), shared with friends and relatives to generate discussion, but were also beginning to be shared online, to start a larger-scale conversation with people that are not necessarily known to each other and thus to induce greater reception. According to Prieur, digital photos are used to tell stories about events, rather than about images. They have named these practices the "conversational use of photography".⁴¹⁹

The popularity that amateur mobile images can gain is due to many factors. But, when they are published in the mainstream news channels, usually they are weak in information content; in other words, their media narrative is weak. However, amateur mobile images were also circulating more, because an underlying sub-discourse was now taking hold in people's beliefs: *the myth of the smartphone as a news report enabler*. Despite this fact, none of the sites or blogs where Jamal's cameraphone video was broadcast had discussed its documentation validity, nor had they made remarks on its poor aesthetic qualities. CNN reporters used the following types of rhetorical discourse to introduce the footage: "...listen to how the shooting played on campus..." or "...please listen carefully..." as if having to enhance the soundscape rather than the images, as if its visual noise would validate its transparency and *ergo* its image authenticity/objectivity

⁴¹⁷ Tarde, G. (1901). *L'opinion et la foule*. Digital version - Paris: Les Presses Universitaires de France, 1989, 1st Édition. Collection Recherches politiques. Retrieved from http://classiques.uqac.ca/classiques/tarde_gabriel/opinion_et_la_foule/opinion_et_foule.html

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

⁴¹⁹ Prieur, C., Cardon, D., Beuscart, J.S., Pissard, N., & Pons, P. (2009). The photo as a conversation - a case study on Flickr. In *Proceedings of the WebSci'09: Society On-Line*, 18-20 March 2009, Athens, Greece.

where its voice-over description operates as if it were “neutral”.⁴²⁰ On the other hand, the Finnish sociologist Koskinen defends the position that “mobile multimedia restructures a sonic experience and gives people new means to observe and report their activities and experiences with the environment”.⁴²¹ Hence, not holding a discussion, taking its authenticity for granted and agreeing about the newsworthiness of this mobile video footage is another move towards the legitimization and construction of the cameraphone as an information-recording device.

However, this lack of discussion also facilitates and thus validates, the use of amateur cameraphone footage for media editing and remixing as needed. This is due to several reasons. Firstly, because rarely embedded with contextual data, such media have little information content; secondly, due to bad sound-quality; and thirdly, they do not have very much narration construction. All these factors justify the journalist’s decision to edit and add voice-over. Slowly but surely cameraphone footage continued to gain acceptance. It had the support of the news; media discourses were being created around it. But inconsistently, as time went by, the newsgathering process continued to adjust. More as an underlying meaning, these fluctuations denoted a lack of journalists’ knowledge of how to deal with copyright, censorship and everything related to amateur image mediation practices. In one word: *edition*. Anyhow, the traditional media still provided the rule of thumb. As blogged

CNN landed the pivotal clip - with police officers approaching a campus building in the near distance and frightening audio of gunshots - after it was submitted through I-Report. The network quickly vetted the clip, offered Albarghouti an exclusive contract and made a 10-second segment available to affiliates and other news outlets.⁴²²

⁴²⁰ Daston, L. & Galison, P. (2008). *Objectivity*. New York: Zone Books.

⁴²¹ Koskinen, I. K. (2007). *Mobile multimedia in action*. New Brunswick, N.J: Transaction Publishers, p. 71.

⁴²² Benson, J., & Eggerton, J. (2007, April 23). The Impact of Virginia Tech on the News, *TechZone360*, *Your Full Circle Technology Resource*, <http://www.techzone360.com/news/2007/04/23/2540281.htm>

That very year, according to the Annual Report on American Journalism of 2007, the most important findings in the journalism field were: the *user customization and participation*, the *use of multimedia*, the depth of the website (quantity of hyperlinks and archive material in news stories) and the *editorial branding*. In this last case three distinct elements were noted: firstly the range of sources and originality of the content; secondly the level of staff control over the editorial process; and lastly the use of bylines in top stories.⁴²³ These reasons confirm the editorial decision to use Albarghouti's footage, his amateur video being the only footage filmed on the spot. In this ecosystem I would also like to include the politically correct and strategic launch of Citizentube (April 2007) and just very shortly after - the YouTube mobile site (June 2007). Nevertheless, even if Citizentube did not succeed as a bottom up news and politics blog as it was supposed to be, these two pillar movements definitely impacted and amplified YouTube's commitment to amateur video uploading, crowd sourcing contribution and viewing.

Mitch Gelman, executive producer of CNN.com, is of the opinion that Jamal's moving images represent the very first time that original mobile footage comes from a teenaged witness and not from traditional news organizations.⁴²⁴ However, he forecasted that, due to the ease of sharing, and to online social networks, before sending personal images to CNN or any other traditional media, witnesses will increasingly share them with their personal network first. The traditional mainstream media will consequently have to try new ways to convince people to send their images to them first, some even dare to state that "rules of newsgathering will be redefined as a result", but it would have to turn into a conversation on how to motivate people to send it to CBS first.⁴²⁵

⁴²³ The State of the News Media 2007, An Annual Report on American Journalism, *Project for Excellence in Journalism*, Findings. Retrieved from <http://stateofthemediamedia.org/2007/digital-journalism-a-classification-of-news-websites-intro/findings/>

⁴²⁴ Benson, J., & Eggerton, Op. cit.

⁴²⁵ Benson, J., & Eggerton, Op. cit.

2.4.1. Developing a Larger Adoption

“Since 2008, mobiles have become the most widely spread technology on the planet”, stated Tomi Ahonen and Alan Moore in 2010.⁴²⁶ It is certain that mobiles are tools that enable contact in everyday life. Moreover, they are key in time of urgency, as a mode of communication, to make and receive calls, or locate persons in a disaster, danger, in need, or at risk. As such they have already been analyzed, in regard to the September 11 event⁴²⁷ and the Israeli bomb attacks⁴²⁸ - in both cases, as a collective and individual communication tool. In order to push the discussion further, this part of my work examines the practice of using the mobile as a cameraphone, as an audiovisual recording tool in emergency situations. In May 2008 a massive earthquake hit China in the Sichuan area. Hundreds of buildings collapsed, including elementary schools that had been built with improper materials. Around 70,000 persons died, around 20,000 were reported missing, 350,000 injured and around 4.8 million people were left homeless.

By the end of June 2008, the amount of netizens⁴²⁹ in China had reached 253 million, surpassing the United States and gaining first place in the world for number of users.⁴³⁰ This case will show that the mediation (or lack thereof) of these mobile earthquake images relied political parameters rather than just technological issues. Due to state censorship, images and information did not circulate as freely as it could have. The tremor was first reported on QQ (the largest social network in China) and soon after it was already on the well-known Western site, Twitter, even while the earth was still

⁴²⁶ Ahonen, T. T., & Moore, A. (5 February 2010). The Big Picture “All the Stats”, Total View to Mobile Industry, 2010 Edition. *Communities Dominate Brands*, <http://communities-dominate.blogs.com/brands/2010/02/the-big-picture-stats-view-to-mobile-industry-2010-edition.html>

⁴²⁷ Katz, J. E., & Rice, R. E. (2002). The telephone as a medium of faith, hope, terror, and redemption: America, September 11. *Prometheus*, 20(3), 247-253.

⁴²⁸ Cohen, A. A., & Lemish, D. (2005). When the bombs go off the mobiles ring: The aftermath of terrorist attacks. In K. Nyíri (Ed.). *A sense of place*. Vienna: Passagen Verlag, pp. 117-128.

⁴²⁹ As part of the Internet glossary and lingo, one definition of what a ‘netizen’ is could be: A citizen who uses the Internet as a way of participating in political society (for example, exchanging views, providing information, voting) and as a powerful communication medium for social change. They’d also deal with issues such as access, censorship, open access and free speech. In any case I am not quite sure whether the here mentioned CNNIC report wanted to address those users as netizens or just plain web surfers.

⁴³⁰ Survey Report by China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC), (2008, July 31). CNNIC Releases the 22nd Statistical Report on the Internet Development in China. Retrieved from <http://www1.cnnic.cn/html/Dir/2008/07/31/5247.htm>

trembling. In its 22nd Statistical Report on the Internet Development in China, the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) deduced that Internet would only increase.

Surfing the Internet with cell phone has become an important development orientation for network applications and will inevitably accelerate the popularization of the Internet. At present, 28.9% of the Chinese netizens accessed the Internet with cell phone in the past half year, and the amount of cell phone netizens has reached 73.05 million.⁴³¹

If almost 30% of the Chinese population were already used to surfing the web, 25% of the population were using mobiles.⁴³² Additionally, with the fact that “CCID (China Center for Information Industry Development) was also forecasting that sales of digital cameras in 2008 would top 10 million”,⁴³³ it was not surprising that within minutes, photographs and videos were uploaded *almost live* (as formerly discussed), long before mass media channels reported the events. This fact was acknowledged by intrinsic metadata such as image details, date, time and location, which could be determined exactly. However, in China the digital camera did not have a mainstream adoption impact for another two years: its price was still too high for the average final consumer.

In urgent and difficult situations, people did, and do, use their mobiles to communicate, by calling and sending text messages when possible. More than ever, in cases like these, mobiles can act as survival enabling devices. Among the hundreds of thousands of people who had used their phones to text and directly record their experiences are two students who filmed an amateur cameraphone video in their dorm room at 2:30 P.M., on the 12th of May, 2008.⁴³⁴ They did it at the exact moment one of the strongest earthquakes (8.7 intensity) was being experienced.

⁴³¹ Ibid.

⁴³² Gordon, J. (2005). The Mobile Phone and the Public Sphere. *The International Journal of Research into New Media*, 11 Number, pp. 5–12.

⁴³³ Xinhua News Agency. (2008, January 13). Digital camera sales to surge 30% in 2007, *China.org.cn*, <http://www.china.org.cn/english/business/239196.htm>

⁴³⁴ Zhao Zidong, 4128528877. (2008, May 12). “Earthquake at 14:28 on May 12, 2008, in Chengdu, Sichuan, Chi”, 1 min 50 seconds, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hW4AhBeIpp8>

Figures 46 and 47 are two screenshots taken from this cameraphone footage, which was posted on YouTube three days later. Importantly, the full transcript of the students' dialogue has been anonymously transcribed and translated into English, as can be seen.



Figure 46. Zhao Zidong, 4128528877. (May 12, 2008). Earthquake at 14:28 on May 12, 2008, in Chengdu, Sichuan, China. [YouTube]. Screenshot details. Retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hW4AhBeIpp8>

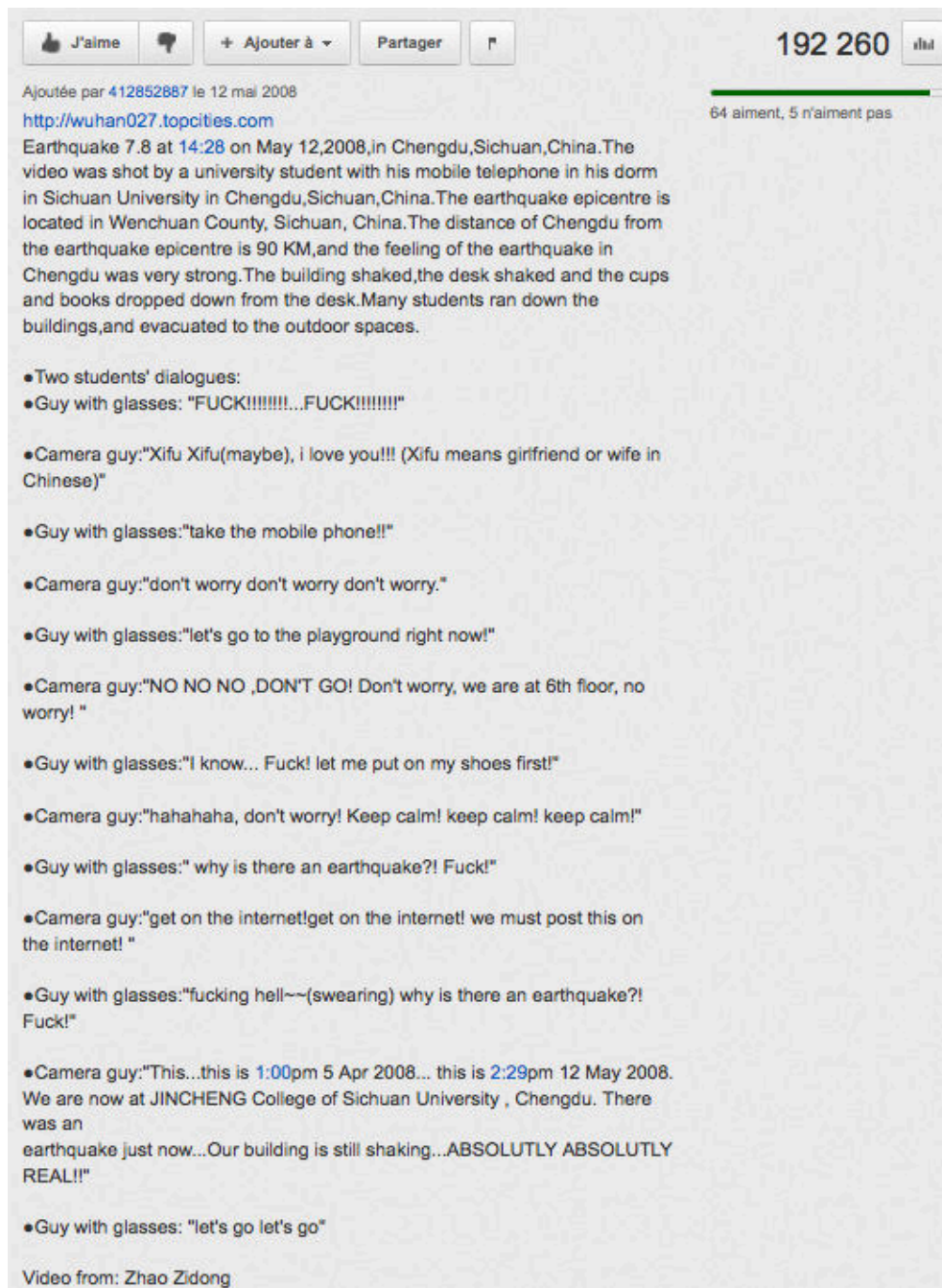


Figure 47. Zhao Zidong, 4128528877. (May 12, 2008). Earthquake at 14:28 on May 12, 2008, in Chengdu, Sichuan, China. [YouTube]. Screenshot details. Retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hW4AhBeIpp8>

Many of China's mobile phone networks were cut and telecommunications were difficult to establish. One of the first steps to recovery was the reestablishment of television and mobile phone networks - rural China's source of information and communication. [...] "We saw many people chatting on mobile phones, from teenage

girls in jeans to peasants in traditional Tibetan garb. Over 500 million Chinese use mobile phones, and China Mobile had their towers up and running quickly after the earthquake.”⁴³⁵ Some scholars believe that once people adopt social media in an emergency situation, they are more likely to integrate this action in their daily lives, “[e]vents like this one accelerate the pace of changes, of usages, because once people adopt social media in an unusual situation, they are much likelier to integrate it into their everyday lives.”⁴³⁶ It is therefore reasonable to deduce that, in order to think of using a cameraphone to film, sound record or even take a photo during extreme situations, the action *already* needs to be a reflex action (or a habitus in Bourdieu’s sense). In 2008, reporting earthquake information, delivering urgent messages, and coordinating emergency search and rescue resources, already relied on digital and mobile communication networks, and showed a strong *dependence* on mobile communication industries. However, on the other hand, it is thanks to people such as the Chinese artist Ai Wei Wei that the West also gets other views of what really happened.⁴³⁷

the Sichuan disaster is not the first nor the most wrongful. But all the details of this tragedy will be forgotten, and once again it will be like nothing ever happened. Eventually all this disasters will together create a bizarre miracle called civilization and culture.⁴³⁸

Few images were circulated in the rest of the world’s press and traditional mass media, for two main factors. Firstly, the political lockstep censorship within the Chinese system: it would not have been a positive stance for them to take, to openly and publically recognize the terrible conditions in which these schools had been built, and later, crumbled. Secondly, in most of China’s territory, the communication systems were severely damaged, disrupted or lost. “More than 2,300 cell phone towers were knocked

⁴³⁵ Fallows, D. (2008, August 5). No Longer in the News, Earthquake Survivors Face a Painful Recovery, *PewResearchCenter, Internet, Science & Tech*, <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/917/china-earthquake-survivors>

⁴³⁶ Shirky, C. (2008). *Here comes everybody, How Change happens When people Come Together*. Penguin Books, p. 298.

⁴³⁷ Casilli, A. (2010). *Les liaisons numériques vers une nouvelle sociabilité?* Paris: Éd. du Seuil, p. 266.

⁴³⁸ Wei Wei, A. (2013). *Weiwei-isms*. Larry Warsh (Ed.). Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 56.

down by the quake, according to China Mobile, the country's top carrier",⁴³⁹ because the physical structures of the stations were not fastened or properly attached.⁴⁴⁰ This means that even if amateurs were producing and exchanging mobile images, the traditional mass media was not using or circulating them. In a nutshell, with government censorship, if one of the core issues of debate was the poor construction of the buildings, leading to strong allegations of government corruption and laxity, few of the images were going to be disclosed. Some of the questions raised in the book, *New Media, Old News, Journalism & Democracy in the Digital Age*, edited by Natalie Fenton, are

Whether user generated content in the long run shifts the balance of power between journalist and reader or mainstream and alternative outlets is a question that cannot yet be answered. But current journalist and audience practices suggest there would be an incremental change in power dynamics if at all.⁴⁴¹

As days passed the CNN channel and the Telegraph Newspaper were relaying first-hand accounts. A lot of emphasis was put on images, giving more space to the visual. However, quite similarly to in the printed press, heavy recycling of images, within and between mainstream news sites, contributed to a visual homogeneity of content.⁴⁴² Figures 48, 49, 50, 51 and 52 portray the state of the communication offices and buildings after the quake. Images like these show another side of what was principally communicated by the traditional mass media. Because, despite the fact that more images were available, the narrative employed by the majority of the media was that mobile media were helping, (or at least) enabling people get the help needed. They were indeed facilitating information disclosure and diffusion, but in the general mass media,

⁴³⁹ Yardley, J. (2008, May 12). Earthquake in western China kills thousands, *The New York Times - Breaking News, World News & Multimedia*, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/12/world/asia/12iht-quake.4.12817996.html?pagewanted=all>

⁴⁴⁰ Ming, L. U., Hongjing, L. I., Zengping, W. E. N., & Jiayong, T. (2008). The Damage Characteristic of Mobile Communication System in the Great Wenchuan Earthquake, The 14th World Conference on Earthquake Engineering, Beijing, China, 12-17 October 2008. Retrieved from http://www.iitk.ac.in/nicee/wcee/article/14_S31-056.pdf

⁴⁴¹ Redden, J., & Witschge, T. (2010). A New News Order? Online News Content Examined. In Natalie Fenton (Ed.). *New Media, Old News: Journalism & Democracy in the Digital Age*. Los Angeles: SAGE, p. 184.

⁴⁴² Ibid.

the images of the re-building of the telecommunication systems and the problems they underwent, were hardly seen, if not completely hidden.



Figures 48 and 49. Ming et al. (2008). “Broken optical fiber cable that ran across enclosing walls.”⁴⁴³



Figure 50. Ming et al. (2008). “Outside wall of the communication machine room, inward collapse”.

⁴⁴³ Figures 48 to 52 are photographs taken from Ming, L. U., Hongjing, L. I., Zengping, W. E. N. & Jiayong, T. (2008). *The Damage Characteristic of Mobile Communication System in the Great Wenchuan Earthquake*, The 14th World Conference on Earthquake Engineering, Beijing, China, 12-17 October 2008. Retrieved from http://www.iitk.ac.in/nicee/wcee/article/14_S31-056.pdf



Figures 51 and 52. Ming et al. (2008). “Outside cross walls and cables damage of three floors of the traffic administrative bureau.”

Unfortunately, due to language constraints - I cannot read nor understand Chinese - it is not feasible for me to review the local press. As a small illustration, I thus compare how the different *Time Magazine* cover pages, journalistically speaking, treated the event.

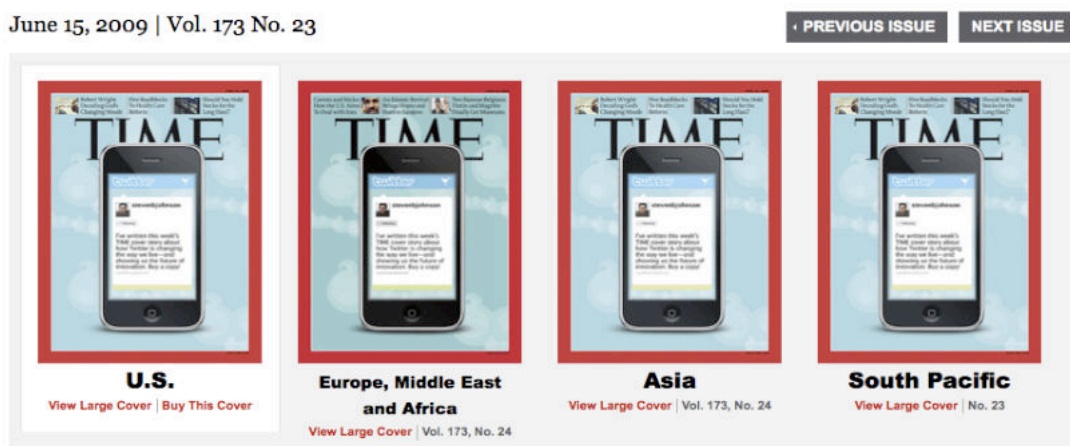


Figure 53. Time Magazine’s online archive, Vol. 173, N° 23, (June 15, 2009).
www.time.com/time/magazine/0,9263,7601090615,00.html

After checking their archive I found that, one month after the quake, on the 15th of June 2009 and on the front cover of all issues across the four continents, the editorial decision was to portray a photo of an iPhone with a tweet. This was meant as a representation and demonstration of the Twitter mobile app's increasing impact and of the weight it was going to bear in regard to globalization.

In a remarkable turn of events, despite the consequences of the earthquake, “in 2009, and for the first time, Internet penetration rates in China surpassed the global average level with over 298 million users.”⁴⁴⁴ In 2009 many sites were officially censored in China, for example Google, Facebook and YouTube. However, Twitter, being also one of the sites blocked by the “Great Firewall”, was used by a handful of people through Virtual Private Network⁴⁴⁵ (VPN) or other circumvention tools. Chinese have their own local Twitter version, and for micro blogging Baidu and Weibo are used instead. In a Sysomos research⁴⁴⁶ China accounted for only 0.23% of all Twitter activity in late 2009 and

[a]ccording to Sina, Weibo has a registered total user base of 358 million, and 36.5 million of them are active daily users. Twitter, on the other hand, has about 100 million active monthly users and a total user base of about 500 million. But keep in mind that Twitter is available worldwide, whereas Weibo still doesn't have a full English interface.⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴⁴ Hjorth, L., Wilken, R., & Gu, K. (2012). Ambient Intimacy: A case study of the iPhone, Presence, and Location-based Social Networking in Shanghai, China. In L. Hjorth, J. Burgess & I. Richardson (Eds.). *Studying mobile media: cultural technologies, mobile communication, and the iPhone*, (pp. 43- 62), p. 45. New York, NY: Routledge.

⁴⁴⁵ A virtual private network (VPN) is a technology for using the Internet or another intermediate network to connect computers to isolated remote computer networks that would otherwise be inaccessible. A VPN provides security so that traffic sent through the VPN connection stays isolated from other computers on the intermediate network. VPNs can connect individual users to a remote network or connect multiple networks together, Retrieved from Wikipedia, 20 September, 2012, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virtual_private_network

⁴⁴⁶ Evans, M. (2010, Jan. 22). The Top Twitter Countries and Cities (Part 2), *Sysomos Blog*, <http://blog.sysomos.com/2010/01/22/the-top-twitter-countries-and-cities-part-2/>

⁴⁴⁷ Jou, E. (2012, Sept 4). China's Sina Weibo And Twitter Compared, Kotaku Australia, *Kotaku Australia, the Gamer's Guide, Computer and video game news and reviews*, <http://www.kotaku.com.au/2012/09/why-sina-weibo-is-better-than-twitter/>

It is therefore important to note that, in a globalized world, the way in which information circulates or is blocked can be more important than its quantity of users.

In the social media, through the Twitter “retweets” button or on Facebook with the “share” option, users tend to share links by reposting what a friend has previously recommended: a link posted on his/her wall. This is called aggregation. When this is done, the circulation, importance and the impact or *buzz* an image, video or piece of information will have, is brought about by a bottom-up mechanism. When tweeting and retweeting there is social capital reflected.⁴⁴⁸ But, how does social capital affect reTweets? “Timing is related to making information quickly accessible – the earlier the information reaches someone the more value this person can get from it.”⁴⁴⁹ When talking about news this aggregation is very important. Time and reactivity speed again seems crucial. The following event is a case in point of the cultural impact of social media and how Twitter as a particular example, was gaining penetration, impact, and influence; not only to report personal life, but as a means for the mass media to follow events and trends in real time. These micro stories were used in the information chain and even used to try to circumvent political censorship.

2.4.2. Social Networks as Social Media start Setting Mediation Pace

After the smartphones adoption penetration, the effects of the broadband facilities and social networking sites became unquestionable. “The popularity of social media is undeniable – three of the western world’s most popular online brands are social-media related (Facebook, YouTube and Wikipedia) and the networked world now spends over 110 billion minutes on social networks and blog sites” (stats are for month of April 2010) assured the statistics company Nielsen in 2010.⁴⁵⁰ Moreover, in their Mobile Internet Report of 2009, Morgan Stanley anticipated that, due to five converging

⁴⁴⁸ Recuero, R., Araujo, R., & Zago, G. (2011). How does social capital affect retweets?, *ICWSM*. Barcelona. Retrieved from www.pontomidia.com.br/raquel/artigos/ICWSM_v7.pdf

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁰ Nielsenwire, (2010, June 15). Social Networks/Blogs Now Account for One in Every Four and a Half Minutes Online, <http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/newswire/2010/social-media-accounts-for-22-percent-of-time-online.html>

trends, mobile internet was becoming faster than desktop internet. This was due to: 3G, social networks (SN), through wireless Internet, video, VoIP and impressive mobile devices.⁴⁵¹

So, maybe the web as we have known it to now - one that is mainly built on Google's occidental hegemony - is not always going to rule as it currently does. Social media play on the mediation and sharing of our daily lives and have also been shown to play a key role in the diffusion of information and of images that are linked, not only to happy daily routine events but to unexpected and unfortunate events too. Followers and friends register as being equally important as other searching ranks, (such as Google can be) among weak, strong⁴⁵² and even latent ties.⁴⁵³ As previously seen, some mobile images are initially created with the intention of only sharing among a circle of personal, on line social network, friends in mind. As Dennen's and Albarghouti's cases illustrated, they can later end up being published and therefore find a more collective, public dimension.

This was the case when, on a cold wintery January 15, 2009, the US Airways flight 1549 had to ditch in New York City's Hudson River after some birds hit the engines of the plane. As studied in the former earthquake example, in a reflex act, Janis Krums (a nearby ferryboat passenger), took a picture of the sinking aircraft and posted it to his Twitpic account. Launched in 2008, Noah Everett founded Twitpic when he wanted to share pictures via Twitter. Both apps belonged to the same group. Twitpic was independent from Twitter until 25 October 2014, when it was acquired by the latter. At the beginning it only enabled photographic posts, but from February 2011 it also hosted videos, making it much easier to share videos too. The interest manifested in Krums' image, and the will to aggregate it, was such that, when about 7000 people attempted to

⁴⁵¹ Morgan Stanley Research. (2009, Dec. 15). *The Mobile Internet Report*. Retrieved from http://www.mobitechintl.com/pdf/MS_MI_Report_Setup_12.09.pdf

⁴⁵² Granovetter, M. S. (1973). The Strength of Weak Ties. *American Journal of Sociology*, 78(6), 1360–1380; Ellison, N. B., Steinfield, C., & Lampe, C. (2007). The Benefits of Facebook “Friends:” Social Capital and College Students’ Use of Online Social Network Sites. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 12(4), 1143–1168.

⁴⁵³ Haythornthwaite, C. (2002). Strong, weak, and latent ties and the impact of new media. *The Information Society*, 18(5), pp. 385–401. For latent ties I follow her description understanding latent ties as those “that exist technically but have not yet been activated.”

view his photo almost simultaneously, Twitpic crashed for a moment.⁴⁵⁴ With different titles and styles, cropping his image, giving it more or less sky or more or less water, many printed and online newspapers used and edited his image, both as if hard news and on the front page.



Figure 54. Different edition approaches of two printed newspapers, 2009, January 15.



Figure 55. Janis Krum, twitter @jkrums. (2009, January 15). Miracle on the Hudson, Twitpic 600 x 800 pixels, <http://twitpic.com/135xa>

The image caption reads: “There’s a plane in the Hudson. I’m on the ferry going to pick up the people. Crazy”.

In the drive towards media democratization, having your own distribution channel, whether it be blog, micro blogging, Facebook page, etc. can make you “more a publisher and not just a source”⁴⁵⁵ claim some technology savvy people. Nevertheless, knowing how to manage the degree of mediatization amateur images undergo is (still) necessary. For example in the Hudson River airplane ditching case, Janis Krums, unlike Jamal Albarghouti, didn’t contact any mass media or broadcasting channel such as a TV station or newspaper to let them know what he was witnessing. He just took his photo

⁴⁵⁴ Terdiman, D. (2009, January 15). Photo of Hudson River plane crash downs TwitPic, *Digital Media, Cnet news*, <http://www.cnet.com/news/photo-of-hudson-river-plane-crash-downs-twitpic/>

⁴⁵⁵ Myers, S. (2011, March 3 updated 2011, August 24). How citizen journalism has changed since George Holliday’s Rodney King, *Poynter.org*, <http://www.poynter.org/latest-news/top-stories/121687/how-citizen-journalism-has-changed-since-george-hollidays-rodney-king-video/>

and uploaded it to his personal Twitpic, enabling just his Twitter-followers circle to see it and to retweet it to their own Twitter networks if wanted. In little more than half an hour, or to be more precise, 34 minutes after having tweeted the image, Krums in person was being interviewed on MSNBC.⁴⁵⁶ The bridges between social media and social networking sites were being built. This example demonstrates the importance of the cultural industries in finding and understanding, more than ever, people's drives for sharing and exchanging, in terms of contributions to the cultural industries as symbolic goods. Therefore

...the question seems to be, if an eyewitness tweets a report of a news event and it is not picked up, echoed and amplified by news organizations, is it qualitatively different than an eyewitness account shared with even a large number of friends and acquaintances by word of mouth? ⁴⁵⁷

A scoop becomes hard news when taken and mediatized by the traditional mass media. Until then, no one *officially* knows about the reports, as was the case with the Arab Spring or the Occupy Movement, to name just a couple of more recent examples. Similarly as with Krums' photo "...in the minutes after...but *before he went on television to talk about it*, there was no obvious sign to most people that his photo existed."⁴⁵⁸ New tools and their usage have always been food for thought, in terms of any kind of industry and especially in actuality reporting. However, this mobile technology usage enhances reflection on the distribution and on the economic landscape around this amateur mobile content. Therefore, it also sheds light on the impact that the creation and sharing of mobile images might have on citizen journalism as an institutionalized way of reporting. Apart from some new journalism projects and programs that dare to use new reporting models and methods, for instance those being enhanced by the BBC⁴⁵⁹ and the one carried out by the PEW Research Center's Project for Excellence in

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁷ Mackey, R. (2009, January 16). Can a Tweet Be a Scoop?, NYTimes.com, *Breaking News - The Lede Blog - NYTimes.com*, <http://thelede.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/01/16/can-a-tweet-be-a-scoop/>

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁹ Evans, M. (2010, Jan. 22). The Top Twitter Countries and Cities (Part 2), *Sysomos Blog*, <http://blog.sysomos.com/2010/01/22/the-top-twitter-countries-and-cities-part-2/>

Journalism;⁴⁶⁰ the majority of the people are neither aware of how to, nor are they formally educated to, become news content providers; and in comparison to the amount of online surfers, it is a small group of bloggers who account for the majority of the data upload.⁴⁶¹ What rapidly started happening was that social network sites and media channels started to rely on one another more and more to spread news.

In order to help people deal with the reality of being “in the right place and at the right time” to report photographs and videos, new websites that host these types of content have been created. Sites such as Rawporter (2012) was one of the sites where one could sell photos and videos, and one of the many other similar sites that saw the light and encouraged people to be, or I should say *act like* web reporters, and help both small and large media outlets source amateur raw video and photos.



Figure 56. Rawporter site. (2012). Screenshot detail.

In the first version of its home page they proclaimed: “It’s like having an army of cameras on-location and on-demand [...] to get you the video and photos you need”. But, why would one want to become a Rawporter? Not just out of philanthropic desire.

⁴⁶⁰ Project for Excellence in Journalism (PEJ), Understanding News in the Information Age. n.d.

<http://www.journalism.org/>

⁴⁶¹ Anderson, C. (2004, Oct.). The Long Tail, *Wired*,
<http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/12.10/tail.html>

According to the site's *About* page as of 2012: it is *cash*. "Capitalize your information as media outlets are looking for first-hand footage, with videos and photos under copyright protection and still be able to share with friends, family and followers on Facebook and Twitter." In a liberal world, information and mobile images, in fact anything can be monetized and treated as commodity. In utopia UGC mobile images for news commodification would be wonderful, but the site neither created any news nor made any economic impact. According to David Copeland,⁴⁶² Rawporter was a brilliant, but poorly-executed idea, mainly because the site was clunky and did not work as it should, making it quite user unfriendly. In June 2014, the home page of the site announced that the site had "entered into an exclusive business partnership and will be joining a much larger organization. As part of that agreement we will be shutting down our consumer services." As of August 2015, nothing has been unveiled and only time will tell. However, in the ever-evolving media ecosystem, these types of site transformation, merger and acquisition are not uncommon.

On the other hand, after the global financial crisis that started in 2007 triggering numerous economic-socio-political problems, many riots arose all over the world. Therefore bottom up crowdsourcing sites begun to be used more, and gain fame. An example of this is Crowdvoice.org, a crowdsourcing online video curation incubator project, which tracks voices of protest from around the world by gathering and crowdsourcing, mainly mobile visual information. Its purpose is to archive, aggregate and collect, videos related to political issues. The average quantity of video uploaded to the platform per day/week/month depends on the events that occur. The posted videos usually come from places of political precarity, from anonymous senders. Since email addresses are the only piece of information provided, only the administrators can communicate or chat (if wanted) with people that send or aggregate images. Its main goal is to bring together and publish data from troubled and censored places.⁴⁶³ In June 2010 when the site began, it had a Facebook page where people could make comments,

⁴⁶² Copeland, D. (2012, February 22). Rawporter Is A Brilliant, But Poorly-Executed, Idea, *readwrite*, http://readwrite.com/2012/02/22/rawporter_is_a_brilliant_but_poorly-executed_idea#awesm=~oxVEPDIIEO3KFi

⁴⁶³ This information was collected both in a face-to-face interview and Skype interview done in September 2012 to one of Crowdvoices' founders and moderators, who, due to censorship issues must remain anonymous.

the page lasted around three to four months, but got spammed, was more easily traceable and therefore had to be removed. Later on, this page became active again, and by August 2013, 21112 people “liked” the page. In 2015 they were only 16,228. It is rare for a Facebook site’s likes to drop. What could this signify? Is it regret? Is it fear?

There is no way to answer this. In an interview, my informant tells me that the site’s viewers can swing from 10 thousand to 40 thousand per day. With regard to the number of its contributors, there is no way to know how many they are, since a single person can contribute many videos. The official site’s moderators number around six or seven. Curation is handled semiautomatically by key words, and then a second stage of manual, double-checking. Moderation and curation are the two main problems these kind of sites face. As for the origin of its images, the site has no way to use metadata to find whether images come from mobile phones or some other type of camera. Although, if really wanted, that information can be found through YouTube or other sites where the videos were initially hosted.

As in any subculture trend there is a relation between a website such as Crowdfvoice and mainstream traditional media. For instance, it was with the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) events that arose between December and January 2011 that the site came to be better known. But mostly, it was due to some American mainstream sites such as Mashable and TechCrunch which found and reported it. People who contribute to Crowdfvoice.org claim neither copyright, nor money, on the contrary, they want their images to be seen and do not complain about (copy)right issues. My interviewee told me that Bahrain was subject to heavy censorship, and, since February 2011 in particular Crowdfvoice moderators have to use VPNs to face and circumvent the right of expression problems. If a user deletes his/her video from the hosting site it will no longer be on Crowdfvoice since the site does not keep another archive in the cloud. Crowdfvoice has no economic subvention for it is important to diffuse projects like this one.

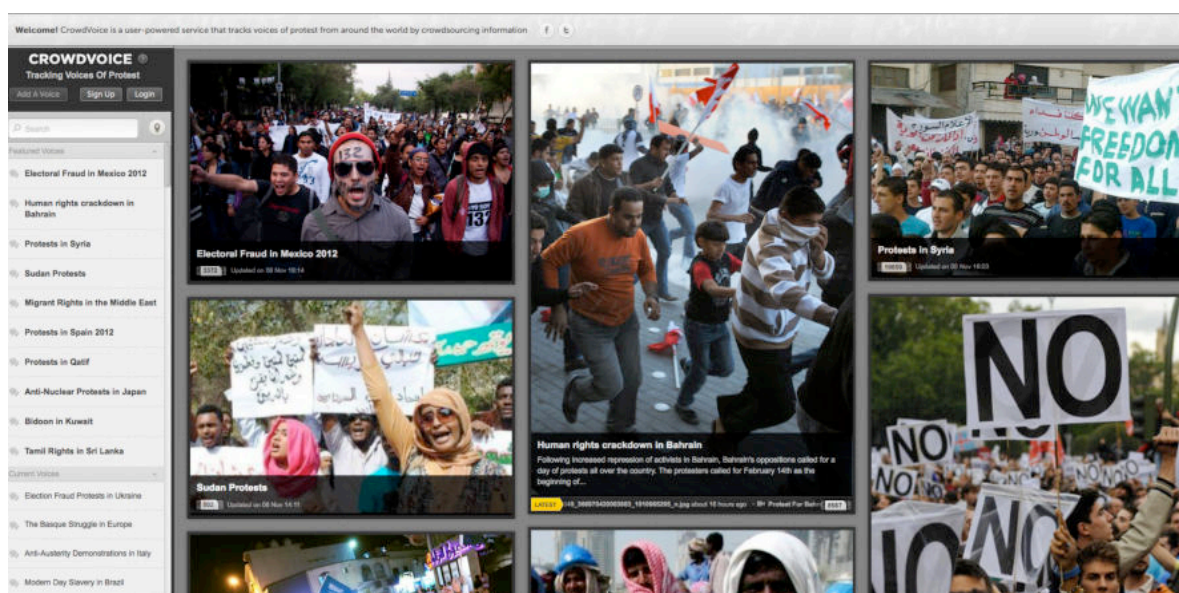


Figure 57. Crowdvoice.org, (Nov. 9, 2012). <http://crowdvoice.org>, Screenshot.

So, it seems as if there were two types of economies taking place. One more biased toward crowdsourcing, relying heavily on volunteer collective work, in the Crowdvoices.org spirit, and another, like Rawporter.com, that tended to be more in favor of a new liberal and capitalistic reporting system. In a video interview, Krums⁴⁶⁴ said he believed that if a service like Rawporter had existed way back in 2009, he may have received better economic compensation for his image; but since his testimony is in a formal, corporate Rawporter video, his words should not be taken for granted. Having said this, he also revealed that some media paid him but others had not. "If you think about it, we are now trained to overshare", Krums told Myers.⁴⁶⁵ He is probably right. Sharing with just a click is very easy, sometimes almost too easy (hypothetically that is one of the formal technical reasons why amateur videos and photos can go viral in few days). On the other side, sites such as Crowdvoice gamble on finding an economy model to survive. There are no economic standards yet.

Casting our minds back to November 2009, and returning back to Krums' Twitpic photo context, the mobile industry and economy at that time had already seen the

⁴⁶⁴ Rawport, Janis Krum's perspective on Media and Rawporter, *Rawporter™ An army of cameras on-location and on-demand*, n.d, <http://rawporter.com/janis-testimonial>

⁴⁶⁵ Myers, S. Op. cit.

creation of 100,000 applications.⁴⁶⁶ They were already on the market and more than 2 billion apps had already been downloaded from Apple's App Store (Apple Press Info), making it one of the largest retail stores in the online sales world.⁴⁶⁷ More precisely: "In the first six months, the store attracted more than 15,000 applications and 500 million downloads, and three months later (April 2009) those figures had doubled to 30,000 and 1 billion, respectively in November 2009, the figures reached 100,000 and 2 billion."⁴⁶⁸ Even though the term 'App Economy' had started coming into use, it was only in 2007, with the launch of the iPhone that the term became popular, and be understood as we know it today; and also come to extend to Facebook apps, and Android apps. In the prospectus for its initial public offering, Zynga (the world's leading provider of social game services) described the App Economy in this way

In order to provide users with a wider range of engaging experiences, social networks and mobile operating systems have opened their platforms to developers, transforming the creation, distribution and consumption of digital content. We refer to this as the "App Economy." In the App Economy, developers can create applications accessing unique features of the platforms, distribute applications digitally to a broad audience and regularly update existing applications.⁴⁶⁹

Some mobile applications are free, while others have a price and are usually downloaded directly from the platform to the target mobile device. There are many applications such as the Blackberry app world, etc., but the iPhone and the Apple App Store have played a major role in extending the universe of innovations which now come embedded in

⁴⁶⁶ Apple Press Info. (2009, Nov.). Apple Announces Over 100,000 Apps Now Available on the App Store, <http://www.apple.com/pr/library/2009/11/04Apple-Announces-Over-100-000-Apps-Now-Available-on-the-App-Store.html>

⁴⁶⁷ As reported in West, J. & Mace, M. (2010, June). Browsing as the killer app: Explaining the rapid success of Apple's iPhone. *Telecommunications Policy* 34, 5-6, pp. 270-286. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.telpol.2009.12.002> and to be more precise the exact citation is: "In the first six months, the store attracted more than 15,000 applications and 500 million downloads, and three months later (April 2009) those figures had doubled to 30,000 and 1 billion, respectively in November 2009, the figures reached 100,000 and 2 billion".

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁹ Mandel, M. (2012). Where the jobs are: The app economy, *TechNet*, LLC, p. 3. Retrieved from <http://www.technet.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/TechNet-App-Economy-Jobs-Study.pdf>

most mobile phones.⁴⁷⁰ It could also be argued that the apps represent the personal fetishization of the iPhone device⁴⁷¹ making it more distinctively personal. No two smartphones are exactly alike.

In December 2009 Google launched its Real-Time Search: a new feature that brings search results to life with a dynamic stream of real-time content from all across the web. The combination of these two factors - the booming application market and the real-time search availability - enabled the possibility to discover breaking news items the *moment* they happened, even if they were not that popular (popularity being the Google ranking method of preference). Google's step towards giving importance to Real Time Search verifies the trend and tendency towards its growing importance. These moves by Google underscore the importance that both real time and event consumption were acquiring.

2.4.2.1. Her Name was Neda⁴⁷²

The last milestone of our timeline and another sad case in point in the building of the narration and discourses of hard news event creation through mobile images, is the corpus related to the protests and riots that took place in Iran in June 2009, and to their vernacular mobile image sharing through SNSs impact. These protests were in response to the re-election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as President of Iran, the Iranian regime's answer to those events was swift and brutal, and revealed deep rifts within the governing class. With the second highest percentage of online population in the Middle East, just behind Israel, electronic media played a major role in the popular protests that rocked Iran. SMS, MMS and Internet connections were mostly forbidden, but Iranian people tried to skirt the rules, using mainly Google Video and Twitter to broadcast what was happening as best they could.

⁴⁷⁰ Burgess, J. (2012). The iPhone Moment, the Apple Brand, and the Creative Consumer: From the "Hackability and Usability" to Cultural Generativity. In L. Hjorth, J. Burgess, I. Richardson (Eds.). *Studying Mobile Media: Cultural Technologies, Mobile Communication, and the iPhone*. New York, NY: Routledge, p. 40.

⁴⁷¹ Hjorth, L. Wilken, R., & Gu, K. (2012). Ambient Intimacy: A case study of the iPhone, Presence, and Location-based Social Networking in Shanghai, China. In L. Hjorth, J. Burgess & I. Richardson, (Eds.). *Studying mobile media: cultural technologies, mobile communication, and the iPhone*. New York, NY: Routledge. p. 47.

⁴⁷² This part of the chapter is named after the CNN title given to the video aired on Neda's death.

In order to have a statistical overview of the Tweets of the first eighteen days of the Iranian movement,⁴⁷³ The Web Ecology Project 2009 is an interesting place to start. Some of the key findings of the report state, that from the 7th of June 2009 until the publication date on the 26th of June 2009, there had been 2,024,166 tweets about the election in Iran. People were really trying to circumvent censorship. During this period of extraordinary events, mobile use also had a dramatic impact on newsgathering practices. Once again, it is important to note that in exceptional situations, as noted in the previously discussed Chinese earthquake mediation case, it is not only the mainstream media who increase the quantity of use of these mobile vernacular images; in order to communicate directly with their own social circles users' and producers' reproduce and repost their own images. For example, in one of the videos of the Tehran protests I found online, a wounded man can be seen trying to pass his own mobile phone to one of the people in the crowd, (See figure 58), perhaps to let others know his fate.⁴⁷⁴ His gesture also represents the importance one can transfer to this personal communication tool: the mobile as a prosthetic device.⁴⁷⁵



Figure 58. Nobodyimportant10002, (June 20, 2009). Tehran Protests - Camera Phone - man shot by police. [YouTube]. Screenshot detail. Retrieved from <http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=F1imoqIq3zo>

⁴⁷³ Cf. *Web Ecology Project*. (2009, June 26). *The Iranian Election on Twitter: the first eighteen days*, <http://www.webecologyproject.org/2009/06/iran-election-on-twitter/>. The complete report of the first eighteen days can be found in this site.

⁴⁷⁴ Nobodyimportant10002. (2009, June 20). *Tehran Protests - Camera Phone - man shot by police*, (2 minutes 19 seconds), <http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=F1imoqIq3zo>

⁴⁷⁵ Haraway, D. (1991). A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century Simians. In *Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (pp. 149-181). New York: Routledge.

In the UGC philosophy, importance is given to a more informal and bottom-up way of gathering information: emails, micro blogging and mobile images. The events are made known, not only through the polite and aseptic phrases of traditional broadcasters; but also from the perspectives of ordinary people who help bypass traditional systems and media censorship, by creating and by circulating their own images. During the Tehran demonstrations, the most memorable example of mobile imaging was the murder of Neda Agha Soltan, a bystander in the protests. Recorded on a mobile; streamed almost immediately, and distributed worldwide. The mobile footage⁴⁷⁶ was first posted in Hamex Iranian's Facebook page⁴⁷⁷ and on YouTube under the pseudo of Feelthelight.⁴⁷⁸

The author, who has always used a pseudonym for political reasons, describes the experience of the event: as a doctor, tried to help, but unfortunately the impact of the gunshot was so fierce that the bullet had shattered inside the victim's chest and she died in less than two minutes. The anonymous person who uploaded the footage does not give names but lets viewers know that his friend, who was standing beside him shot the film. Hamex also wrote that during the Iranian Protest his Facebook page used to be his private one, but later due to the numerous visits and comments turned into a news portal.

Through Facebook and YouTube, like a message in a bottle, Hamex Iranian/Feelthelight also called on people to help spread the word to the rest of the world. (The original text can be read in figure 59). As Iran was under strong control and censorship of freedom of expression, asking web users to "please let the world know" can be interpreted as a direct cry for help, asking people, as a collective noun, to circulate this mobile footage as widely as possible.

⁴⁷⁶ Neda's death cameraphone video. (2009, June 20). *Hamex Iranian Facebook page*, (37 seconds), <http://www.facebook.com/video/video.php?v=89928823259>

⁴⁷⁷ *Hamex Iranian Facebook page*, <http://www.facebook.com/video/video.php?v=89928823259#!/hamedfrt>

⁴⁷⁸ Feelthelight. (2009, June 20). *Iran, Teheran: wounded girl dying in front of camera, Her name was Neda*, (40 seconds), <http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=bbdEf0QRsLM>

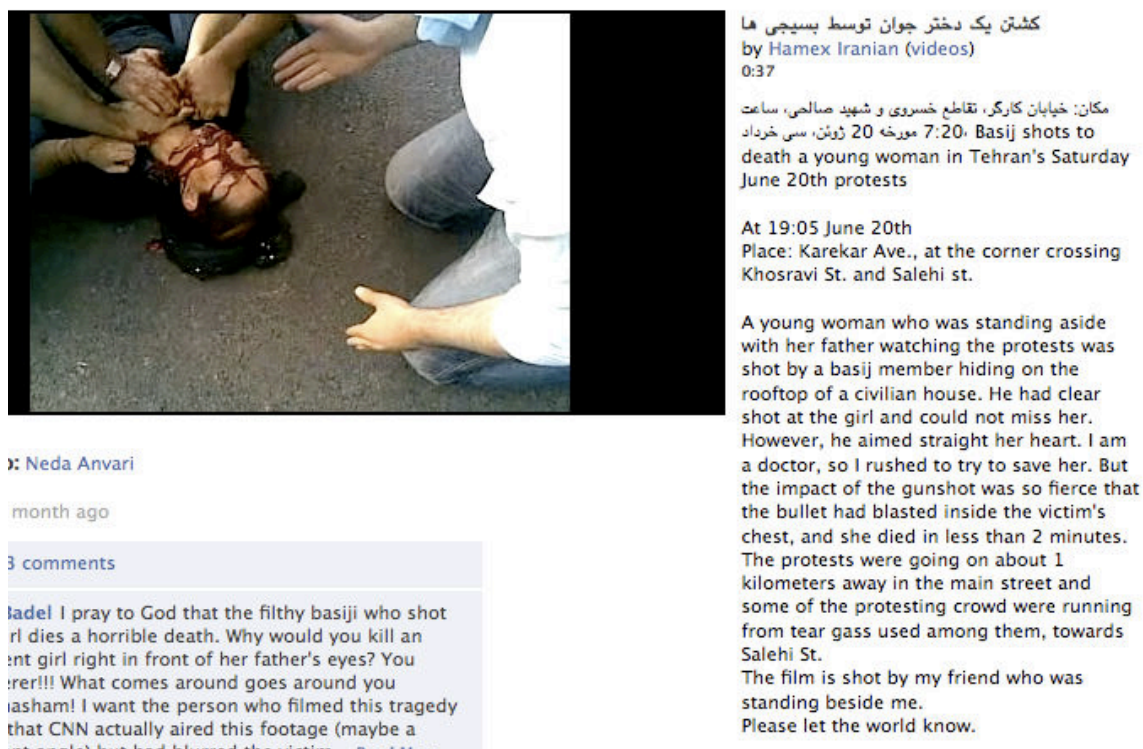


Figure 59. Hamex Iranien (June 20, 2009). Screenshot detail of the video and description of Neda dying. The video legend reads: “Baji shots to death a young woman in Teheran’s Saturday June 20th protests”. [Facebook page]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/hamedfrt?fref=ts>

And the wish came true. Among the heroes of the year, *Time Magazine* declared Neda second in the list (just after Captain Chesley Sullenberger, the pilot who landed the Airbus on the Hudson) stating that her death “... turned into probably the most widely witnessed death in human history.”⁴⁷⁹ It echoes S. Hussein’s death and the loop is looped.

It should be remarked that Neda’s video was not the only terrifying or moving smartphone image of the Iranian protest found online. Moreover, two different pieces of mobile footage of Neda passing away circulated. The one posted by Hamex Iranian/Feelthelight and a shorter one, uploaded by someone under the pseudo of Basij, which is only 16 seconds long.⁴⁸⁰ But then again, how did these images gain visibility in

⁴⁷⁹ Mahr, K. (2009, December 8). The Top 10 Everything of 2009, Top 10 Heroes, Neda Agha-Soltan, *Times Magazine*, http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1945379_1944701_1944705,00.html

⁴⁸⁰ A shorter footage of only 16 seconds long has also been circulating: Shot by Basij, 20 June 2009,

other milieus and not only online, helping the process of transforming Neda into an iconic martyr? In order to disseminate and create international demand the images need offline circulation too, and as formerly analyzed, events such as exhibitions, round tables and debates have been held world-wide. For example, from the 5th to the 16th of May 2010, almost a year after the event, the Green Ribbon Association, an association that fights for citizen rights and freedom, organized (in the well-known central building of what used to be the artist's squat at 59 Rue de Rivoli, Paris, France) a free exhibition composed mainly of videos and pictures taken during the uprisings. On the spot, I interviewed one of the young women in charge of it, who explained to me how they had gathered the images. She said

You know, everything is on YouTube. We started looking, and thanks to a pole or to another street sign we recognized the places, the streets of the city. First on June 20th, 2010 there were only two videos posted. Then a few days later, other people posted more videos of that very same fatal day's event. By following the web, we found the story⁴⁸¹ (Paris, May 2010. For security reasons the person's name must remain anonymous.)

These citizens had remarked that for the same event, several videos were circulating simultaneously. "For example, for the exhibition, we found six videos of the same situation viewed from different angles, - explained Sharpak (name changed) - With these views, we reconstructed the story cinematically".⁴⁸² Her sentences echoed in my mind, but it was not until 2012, when I discovered that a new free mobile application called Vyclone had appeared,⁴⁸³ that the multiple angle shooting became technically very much simpler. This app aggregates footage taken by friends or other people filming the same events. Apps like Vyclone may not be mainstream yet, but somehow, the creation

http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=fmi-LePl894&oref=http%3A%2F%2Ffr.wikipedia.org%2Fwiki%2FAffaire_Neda_Agha-Soltan&skipcontrinter=1

⁴⁸¹ Interviewed at the Anonymous exhibition, Ruban Vert Association, Paris, May 2010. For security reasons the person's name will remain anonymous.

⁴⁸² Daumas, C. (2010, May 4). Iran le peuple reporter. French newspaper *Libération*, pp. 30-31.

⁴⁸³ As for 2015 Vyclone, in its 2.13.14 version, is a free app, <http://vyclone.com/>

of apps like this one reflects the fact that software, apps and technology, are generally created with the aim of echoing people's usages and needs.

The Green Ribbon Association's physical exhibit is an illustration of how key images can be curated to contribute to the visibility of a more visual History⁴⁸⁴ construction. Even if in my opinion, online curation is probably more visible, or at least is more reactive; and consequently footage can be gathered more quickly and in a more effective way through online sites such as Crowdfunder. In any case, Sharpak added another conceptual layer to be taken into account. She explained that throughout the days of rioting, the films became more professional: they move less and achieve more sequenced shots. But unlike journalists' silent images, these mobile images are noisy, with incessant chatter and sometimes swearing. We even hear people insulting the police.⁴⁸⁵ What she means is that, because sound is not edited in vernacular mobile footage it becomes even more important than images, as was considered above in Jamal Albarghouti's footage.

In order to watch Neda's video on Feelthelight's YouTube page, viewers must sign in to confirm their age and are warned that: "this video has been age-restricted based on our YouTube Community Guidelines". A caption accompanies the video, and by clicking on it one is able to read these guidelines, which are quite blunt, and, in an imperative style part of these YouTube's editorial reads: "Don't Cross the Line". Even: "Graphic or gratuitous violence is not allowed. If your video shows someone getting hurt, attacked, or humiliated, don't post it. YouTube is not a shock site. Don't post gross-out videos of accidents, dead bodies and similar things." However, these two remarks are not strictly followed; neither by people who upload videos nor by YouTube itself. On one hand because it is extremely difficult to draw the line as to what type of images will be perceived as insulting and on the other, because YouTube is supposed to be a window for (free) expression and it may eventually turn into an alternative voice channel. Nowadays, videos of worldwide demonstrations, and many dramatic videos such as Neda's one, circulate online. However, sometimes there is political online censorship. For example in December 2011

⁴⁸⁴ Since I want to refer to the official history, History is here written with a capital H.

⁴⁸⁵ Daumas, C., Op. cit.

Iranian authorities announced having repatriated 90% of official websites and encouraged Iranian companies to do the same. The regime also regularly accuses the West of using the web for an ‘undeclared war’ to destabilize it, and [Iranian] Telecommunications Minister Reza Taghipour argued that Google and Yahoo posed a ‘threat to national security’.⁴⁸⁶

The morning after Neda’s death, #neda as hashtag was one of the top trending topics on Twitter, and by Monday, there were more than 6000 entries for her name on Google’s Persian language site.⁴⁸⁷ Worldwide television outlets like the BBC, CNN and Al-Jazeera, picked up the story, pressuring the Iranian government to take responsibility for Neda’s death. They refused to do so. After the Iranian government cancelled Neda’s funeral, protesters worldwide began pushing for more information about the killing. For many, awareness served as an ingredient that enabled a shift in consciousness. As Senft remarks

The “I am Neda” campaign was born, with posters of her bloodied face showing up in Iran and around the world. To date, Neda’s murder has inspired three full-length television documentaries, dozens of music videos, hundreds of Web tributes, and thousands of online postings. A search on Google for her name yields close to 700,000 results. Oxford University has established the Neda Agha-Soltan scholarship at Queen’s College for their graduate program in philosophy. Her death has even inspired an NGO called The Neda Foundation, dedicated to “raising international awareness of Iran’s human rights violations and providing support for victims.”⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸⁶AFP, Teheran. (2012, May 12). Iran curbs foreign – sourced email providers, *Al Arabiya News*, <http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/05/12/213652.html>

⁴⁸⁷ Kraidy, M. & Mourad, S. (2010). Hypermedia Space and Global Communications Studies: Lessons from the Middle East. *Global Media Journal*, Volume 9, Issue 16, Article 8. Retrieved from <https://lass.calumet.purdue.edu/cca/gmj/sp10/gmj-sp10-article8-kraidy-mourad.htm>

⁴⁸⁸ Senft, T. M. (2011). Sex, spectatorship, and the “Neda” video: a biopsy. In Koskela, H., & Wise, J. M. (2012). *New visualities, new technologies: The new ecstasy of communication*. Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate Pub, p. 191.

Above all, it was undoubtedly the virality and the reposts of Neda's footage that transformed an accidental victim into a martyr, and finally, and perhaps unfortunately – in a very short time – into a web icon,⁴⁸⁹ says Nathali Basten, who devoted her master's thesis and now a published book, to the analysis of Neda's figure and symbolism.⁴⁹⁰ The genealogies of representations and iconic cultural constructions are always quite complex and signify various parameters. It is true that one of the main reasons why Neda became a web icon is because the mobile footage of her death appeared in numerous different places, personal Facebook shares and Twitter retweets, many diverse contexts where both pieces of mobile video footage circulated. But there is something that should be underlined: Neda did not become a web icon *just because* her image was reproduced endlessly in avatars, reposted ad infinitum and appropriated online. On the one hand Neda got to be an icon because she symbolized the Iranian protests and the will for freedom in general: she stood out as an index, as a metonym of many others who had suffered a similar fate. On the other hand, and in addition to this, frames of valorization such as the Parisian exhibition, but mainly the traditional media establishment and the cultural industries; validated and therefore hierarchically ranked this mobile footage differently. I will only cite two very well known examples. The first one is a CCN report and the second one is the prize given at the 2010 World Press Photo awards.

2.4.2.2. Hierarchizing Neda

To begin with I will refer to the CCN report⁴⁹¹ done by Octavia Nasr, a journalist who used to cover the Middle East affairs. The report was uploaded on the 21st of June 2009 by CNN and can either be seen directly on YouTube or in the CNN's video archive page. In fact CNN was *the* American channel that broadcasted a professional edited remix of the mobile footage. Again, similarly to YouTube, the spectator is warned of the troubling images s/he is about to watch. The report itself starts with a black still frame and a clear warning sentence: "The report includes graphic content. Viewer discretion is advised", a voice-over reads this sentence as well. The tone of the video is

⁴⁸⁹ Basten, N. (2011). *(In)Visibility of Death: Neda - Constructions of Gender and Identity in the Media* (Master's Thesis). Grin Verlag, p. 39.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁹¹ Nasr, O. (uploaded 2009 June 21). Her Name was Neda, *CNN*, the video can be seen directly on YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b5KBrz1oxs> and in the CNN video archive page as well.

clearly stated and the audience is made aware of it as the show starts. Subsequently, the newscaster notifies us that “the cliché says that a picture is worth a thousand words”, as if this comment should excuse her of not exactly knowing what to say about the horrible footage about to be aired.

Schneider put it bluntly: “However shocking, private shots of disasters and catastrophes do not tell a story which could be printed”.⁴⁹² In this case the private image did not tell enough of a story for television broadcast to be in English so, there was a dilemma: how to transform a 40 second raw mobile video into an, almost, two-minute CNN ‘post-produced’ news report. The answer was quite simple: editing it and telling the story following a recipe that has proven to work: mystifying Neda. Here, I openly follow Barthes (1957) understanding of myth as a metalanguage, as something which is never arbitrary and which inflects or distorts images or signs in order to carry other meanings and that therefore alienates the history of the sign. Moreover, one of Barthes’ important remarks is that myths tend to take away the reader’s role in constructing meanings as if a statement of fact.

In order to do so, the CNN montage included: firstly, as shown in figure 60, some of the formal features of the footage; for instance the place where it was shot (Tehran, Iran), the fact that it was taken from an amateur video sequence, the date (June 20, 2009) and the CNN logo. In a short digression I would say that what Feldman called “assembling and orchestrating”⁴⁹³ is nowadays called *editing* or *montage* but is still done mainly “to govern the viewers experience of time”,⁴⁹⁴ to provide temporal rhythms. Secondly, in the image there is a clear circle, like a spotlight, framing Neda (still walking) and the man who was with her - some say it is her father, some say it is her music teacher - to indicate where viewers should focus their attention. The rest of the protesting crowd is somewhat hidden under a black layer.

⁴⁹² Schneider, U. J. (2009). Counter-Knowledge, An Update on Foucault in the Age of Mobile Communication in Nyíri, J. K. (Ed.). *Engagement and Exposure: Mobile Communication and the Ethics of Social networking*. Vienna: Passagen Verlag. (p. 103-108).

⁴⁹³ Feldman, E. B. (1967). *Varieties of Visual Experience*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid. p. 439.

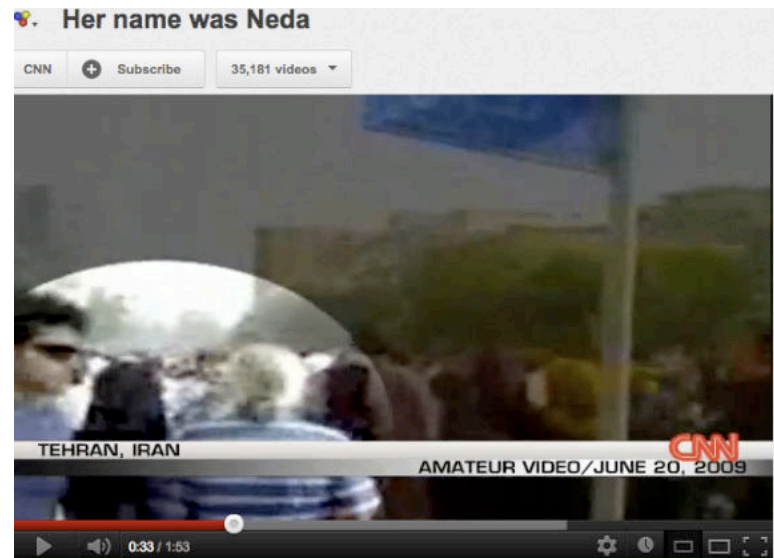


Figure 60. Octavia Nasr report, Her name was Neda, (June 21, 2009). [YouTube]. Screenshot detail.
Retrieved from CNN video, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b5KBrz1oxs>

A feminine voice-over translates what the man and passers-by were shouting, and acts to dramatize the scene even more, as black stills make the montage transitions. Since the footage was too short - 40 seconds, the editing concept was to repeat what they had. Therefore, in a sort of overlap,⁴⁹⁵ CNN video edited some images. Some are shown more than once in loop, there are also cut-ins,⁴⁹⁶ also some video frames are zoomed-in and out and, to top it off, some are panned over.⁴⁹⁷ Additionally, as a cut-away,⁴⁹⁸ the coverage report shows a screenshot taken from Twitter, illustrating how Neda had gone viral as an online avatar, then finally, to conclude the piece, a still image of Neda lying on the street, in a black and white photo that conveys a sense of timelessness, an eternal ephemeral present of her lying motionless. (See figure 61)

⁴⁹⁵ Overlap is the repetition of an action from an immediately preceding sequence at the beginning of a new sequence.

⁴⁹⁶ Cut-in is the insertion of a detail, usually a close-up, drawn from the main action of a film sequence.

⁴⁹⁷ Panning here refers to the following of the camera across a stationary object, in this case the chosen video frame.

⁴⁹⁸ Cut-away is the insertion of a detail, outside the main action of a film sequence.



Figure 61. Octavia Nasr report, Her name was Neda, (June 21, 2009). [YouTube]. Screenshot detail.
Retrieved from CNN video, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b5KBrz1oxs>

Once again we confirm that neither hard news nor mobile footage alone constitutes raw unedited news footage. Even if desired, immediacy is impossible: footage is always mediated and thus framed. The news industry machine mediates and remixes all events and pieces of information as would be done with any other commodity in the corporate media. In order to create a blockbuster news item, mobile coverage also needs to arrive to the viewer (the final consumer) as a heartbreaking cocktail, made up of journalistic techniques that involve *news framing* as a staged guide to allow easy understanding and consumption of information.

Probably one of the most fundamental differences between Neda's raw online video and the CNN edited one, lies in their social effects. But, in fact, if both can circulate online in a similar way, by being aggregated and reposted, then what is their real main difference in the effects they can generate? Two things. First the fact of *knowing* the video footage is raw and unedited. Although speaking about television of the early 1970s, Feldman, is again of interest. He realized that when "looking at a 'live' telecast, the viewer knows he is looking at a 'live' and this knowledge becomes a factor in his visual experience",⁴⁹⁹ transforming the spectator into a partner in what was actually seen,

⁴⁹⁹ Feldman, E. B., Op. cit. p. 440.

at that very moment in time and with no post-edition. As now most television spectators know that even a live television show is edited, the collective social perception *vis-à-vis* amateur raw mobile footage that circulates online in social media is different. When seeing a raw amateur mobile video or photo online, a feeling of authenticity arises. The second point I would like to raise is in regard to the support or rejection of CNN as a biased media channel. In other words, aggregating, or reposting the CNN edited video link could be seen as a sign of adhesion to CNN as an agent voice, representative of a mainstream television and thus to English media, or even to English as a colonization language. For this reason, many may have chosen to reject reposting the link so as to dissociate themselves from this agency.

However, because the cries in the raw footage of Neda's murder are in Arabic, so remaining incomprehensible to non-Arab speaking viewers, this particular CNN video (as well as versions in other languages), overcomes this barrier of agency and was highly circulated. The other important press valorization by a very well known mainstream channel was the prize given at the 2010 World Press Photo (WPP) awards, where the best worldwide press photos are chosen and awarded. That year the jury decided to give a Special Mention, to a frame grab taken from Neda's video. In general terms, the World Press jury considers an image for a Special Mention when it has played an essential role in the worldwide news reporting of that year and could not have been made by a professional photographer. In the WPP online site, in reference to the frame grab from the video David Griffin, one of the jury members of the *National Geographic* commented: "I am pleased that World Press Photo has provided an avenue for non-professional images that have a significant impact on the historical visual record." (WPP, 2 Dec. 2010). The frame grab is the close-up image in which we see Neda lying on the ground, and her bleeding face after having been shot in the chest. (Figure 62)

Jury appoints a Special Mention

Following the judging of the contest, the jury decided to name a Special Mention, recognizing a frame grab from a video posted on YouTube in June 2009 during the post-election uprising in Iran.

It depicts a woman identified as Neda Agha-Soltan lying on the ground after being shot in the chest.

Jury member David Griffin of National Geographic commented: "I am pleased that World Press Photo has provided an avenue for non-professional images that have a significant impact on the historical visual record."

The jury considers an image for a Special Mention when it has played an essential role in the news reporting of the year worldwide and could not have been made by a professional photographer.



© YouTube/Reuters

Figure 62. World Press Photo, (2009, February 12). The jury appoints a special mention to David Griffin and his YouTube frame grab. Screenshot detail. Retrieved from, <http://www.worldpressphoto.org/content/jury-appoints-special-mention>

To that end Neda's image had already become an icon, not only within the history of mobile footage, but her bloodstained one open-eyed face, in isolation, became a well-known photographic portrait. "[...] visual work often involves catching the sequencing of events or issues midstream, strategically freezing it at its potentially strongest moment of meaningful representation."⁵⁰⁰ In this case, the most impacting frame to freeze is undoubtedly the moment when blood runs out of Neda's nose spreading in a star shape over her face. Senft describes it quite touchingly

Blood is everywhere now. It crisscrosses the white, white face, making patterns across the nose, mouth, eyes. The woman's eyes are turned from the camera, and I am at liberty to watch the spectacle without her counter-gaze. A man crouches down to cradle her head. He's leaning over her now. Will he give her CPR? It

⁵⁰⁰ Zelizer, B. (2010). *About to Die, how new images move the public*. New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 158.

seems too late for that. The screams from the crowd grow. If I were, there, I'd probably be reverberating from the sound. Then nothing. The clip ends.⁵⁰¹

The mobile images of a dying Neda could be somehow linked to voyeurism or as suggested by the many who asked: “Is it a Snuff movie?” (a film that depicts the actual murder of a person or people, using no special effects).⁵⁰² To this debated question I would answer negatively. Surely, there is a drive to see *that* which should not have even happened. But a Snuff movie depicts murder for the express purpose of distribution and gratuitous entertainment or financial exploitation. Neda’s murder on the other hand was shot for documentary purposes, in order to create a record for political purposes. So, according to its definition, the resulting footage cannot be called a Snuff film. The footage also has educational and identity importance.

For all who argued online that viewing Neda’s death was wrong, far more maintained that watching (and forwarding) it was an important way to educate the world. As Joe Joseph of London’s *Sunday Times* put it, the Neda video “mark[ed] the moment when Iran’s repression emerged from the forest of newsprint and became personal. We are all Iranians now.”⁵⁰³

If YouTube viewers are warned that the footage might be disturbing, then, why do they watch them? Watching images has always entailed a scopic drive, a desire of seeing, as pleasure, even if the images are not supposed to be pleasant, they might even be chosen just because the viewer identifies with the image, feels empathy, wants the world to know. When browsing the web and viewing videos online, apart from friends recommendations and personal interest, more often than not, it is a still image that attracts the surfer to click, or not, on the video footage and makes him/her decide

⁵⁰¹ Senft, T. M. (2011). Sex, spectatorship, and the “Neda” video: a biopsy. In Koskela, H., & Wise, J. M. (2012). *New visualities, new technologies: The new ecstasy of communication*. Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate Pub, pp. 189–204.

⁵⁰² Ibid. p. 194.

⁵⁰³ Ibid. p. 192.

whether to watch the video or not. Speaking about online photography, photographer Paul Melcher calls it “the tyranny of the thumbnail”,⁵⁰⁴ and for the online videos I will call it the *tyranny of the videogram*. The World Press Special Mention prize illustrates pretty well how this logic and strategy is being understood. Aesthetically, the still image points back in time (as a past T moment) and encourages the viewer to find out what happened, where the footage could eventually become the explanation. On the other hand the moving image points forward to a different narrative question of what will happen next.⁵⁰⁵ Therefore, the still image of Neda dying summarizes both temporalities: as one looks at the picture, questions of what happened and what will happen arise simultaneously.

Archivist Fanny Lautissier wrote a blog post⁵⁰⁶ analyzing this World Press special mention, where French sociologist Sylvain Maresca commented that, the criteria to award this screenshot was not really photographic but based more on the impact it had on the represented event, since a political impact and documentary value had been added. In the award of prizes, one should not mistake the valorization of professional photographers, the aesthetic image quality and the possible political impact an image-icon can represent to the public.⁵⁰⁷ It should be noted that the copyright of the screenshot taken from Neda’s video is shared between YouTube and Reuters, two of the most important mainstream image platforms in terms of image circulation. Three years after these events, in January 2012 YouTube boosted its channel lineup with a Reuters partnership and celebrity news.⁵⁰⁸ The fact that these two well-known information

⁵⁰⁴ Melcher, P. (2009, February 3). The Tyranny of the Thumbnail, Black Star Rising, *Black Star Rising: Photography and Design*, <http://rising.blackstar.com/the-tyranny-of-the-thumbnail.html>

⁵⁰⁵ Dubois, P. as quoted in Martin, C. (2009). Camera Phone and Photography Among French Young Users, Mobile 2.0: Beyond Voice?, Pre-conference workshop at the International Communication Association (ICA) Conference, Chicago, Illinois, 20-21 May 2009.

⁵⁰⁶ Lautissier, F. (2010, February 14). La mort de Neda, une capture d’image distinguée par le World Press Photo 2009, *Photogrammes, Culture Visuelle*, <http://culturevisuelle.org/photogrammes/2010/02/14/la-mort-de-neda-une-capture-dimage-distinguee-par-le-world-press-photo-2010/>

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid. Translation is my own: “*Je remarque que les critères retenus par le jury pour attribuer cette mention spéciale ne sont pas photographiques: ce n’est pas la qualité de l’image qui se révèle décisive, mais son impact sur l’événement représenté. On lui reconnaît donc surtout une valeur documentaire et un impact politique. Manière de ne pas confondre cette distinction avec celles qui valorisent le travail des photographes professionnels, pour qui la réussite plastique de l’image constitue (ou devrait constituer) un critère décisif.*” Maresca in Lautissier 2010.

⁵⁰⁸ Cheredar, T. (2012, January 17). YouTube boosts its channel lineup with a Reuters partnership and celebrity news, *VB News*, <http://venturebeat.com/2012/01/17/youtube-reuters-channel/>

creators merged in an information partnership called Reuters TV, ensures that news is increasingly becoming a commodity comparable to any music video clip that we are used to watching on YouTube.

Coming back to the appropriation and diffusion processes of Neda's image, across all media, the conveyed message was almost the same everywhere: an innocent young woman had been unnecessarily shot and killed. Each context amplified its audience, adding more symbolism and meaning. The mobile images of the dying Neda were then no longer just a mobile video, but a symbol of Iran's Green revolution. Her image became a symbol of the government opposition. Her icon embodied a social experience. However, obviously, in Iran this mobile footage was not broadcasted as widely as on international television channels and popular Western internet sites. Therefore, anti-government activists who were not allowed to express themselves freely in any Iranian mainstream media or online, had to find ways to circumvent political repression and censorship and somehow let their own people know.

One of these ways was by mass circulating Neda's image by stamping Iranian banknotes with a photograph of her, bleeding. The Central Bank of Iran tried to take these bills out of circulation, but since there were just too many of them, they gave up. Most of them were stamped in green ink with a "V" for victory or with different slogans or sentences, but the ones with Neda's photo had been stamped in color.⁵⁰⁹ Here the bills operated as "that which is generally known, but cannot be articulated".⁵¹⁰ This example shows that people are always creatively inventing new ways to circulate images and express themselves no matter the constraints, and that the different impacts mobile footage can have extend much further than the roles we have previously imagined.

Regarding public image content uploading for current collective sharing, when a will to share a photo from a mobile device arises, smartphones that have image sharing buttons usually offer options such as: send it by email, send it by MMS, assign the photo to a

⁵⁰⁹ Thanks Estelle Blaschke for pointing out the link. (2009, Nov. 16). Exhibit Iranian banknotes uprising, *Payvand*, <http://payvand.com/blog/blog/2009/11/16/exhibit-iranian-banknotes-uprising/>

⁵¹⁰ Surin, K. (2001). The Sovereign Individual and Michael Taussig's Politics of Defacement. *Nepantla, Views From the South*, 2(1), pp. 205-220. p. 206.

contact, use it as screensaver, post it to Facebook, post it to Twitter, or print it. If it is a video, usually the default options may be whether to send by email, send by MMS, or post to YouTube. This means that sharing images is actually becoming easier, and more user friendly, evidently, so long as it is within those mainstream platforms. The described functions condition - in a clear and biased way - their hosting and circulating sites. This is probably one of the main reasons why professional mass media constantly search for news in these sites and tend to overlook other, less well-known hosting, sites. They simply know that these platforms are the visual repositories, the signifiers of a vast part of the symbolic connections people make. Connections underscored at the same time by both: capitalist ideologies of ownership and through what has come to be known as the “affective turn”.⁵¹¹

Within a certain European geo-demography, the relationship towards professional media has also shifted: millions of those YouTube users now know that if wanted or needed they too can be creators and not just receivers of inventive media.⁵¹² The fact of knowing that one can eventually perform an action, changes the approach towards that objective, even if the task is not finally pursued. However, as previously discussed in the Crowdsourcing.org example, it is true that a wider citizenry, increasingly often armed with mobile phones, is taking a much more interactive role in the creation of major news and events, as has been seen in the Arab Spring events (2010-2012). However, one of the most important effects that influences people to produce visual content is the fact that they are seeing others shoot with their mobiles and follow the trend. The late majority gets infected with the itch and, seeing *others do*, prompts *them to do* as well. In Rogers’ terms, these people recording the Iran riots could characterize the “late majority”.⁵¹³

⁵¹¹ Clough, P. (2010). The Affective Turn: Political Economy, Biomedicine and Bodies. In Gregg, M. & Seigworth, G. J. (Eds.). *The affect theory reader* (pp. 206-225). Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

⁵¹² Gauntlett, D. (2011). *Making is connecting: The social meaning of creativity, from DIY and knitting to YouTube and Web 2.0*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, p. 95.

⁵¹³ Rogers, E. M. (1983). *Diffusion of Innovations*, 3rd ed. New York: Free Press.



Figure 63. Nobodyimportant10002, (2009, June 20). Tehran Protests - Camera Phone - man shot by police, street demonstrators holding up their cameraphones. [YouTube]. Screenshot detail. Retrieved from <http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=F1imoqIq3zo>

It is also important to point out habits that *do not* change. In reference to new collective recording trends for example, in June 2007, Gunthert argued that “[t]his parallel activity does not change the general pattern of reception of the mainstream media”.⁵¹⁴ It only adds other sourcing possibilities, other layouts to our visual input-output stream. This flow is only altered when, in the absence of appropriate media, the visual platforms are requested as the first source of information as had happened in the Hudson River case.⁵¹⁵

In an attempt to understand the likelihood of obtaining image access, Michaud proposed a theory based on three main factors: first, the financial means to travel to places and the transportation opportunities on the ground. Secondly, the knowledge of the area and places that sets a dependency on guides and available informants. They had to be more or less competent or interested, more or less partisan and more or less professionalized press officials. Finally, given the risks of physical danger, the ability to

⁵¹⁴ Gunthert, A. (2007). L'image parasite. *Études Photographiques*, N°20, pp. 174-86, <http://etudesphotographiques.revues.org/index996.html>. Translation is my own: “[c]ette activité parallèle ne modifie pas le schéma général du pilotage de la réception par les grands médias.” Reprinted in Gunthert, A. (2015). *L'Image partagée. La photographie numérique*. Paris: Textuel.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid., p. 177. Translation is my own: “Dans le flux visuel, le mobile ajoute la possibilité d'avoir d'autres sources directes. Le schéma général du pilotage de la réception et usages de ces images mobiles par les grands médias change seulement quand il n'y a pas aucune autre [...] traitement médiatique approprié les plates-formes visuelles et réseaux sociaux sont sollicités comme une source d'information première.”

access events may be limited.⁵¹⁶ But Michaud's proposition was in 2002. Some years later and wanting to check the validity of what seemed to be dated parameters, I took the example of what happened on 12th of January 2010, when an earthquake struck unexpectedly and devastated the nation of Haiti.⁵¹⁷ Social networks, especially Twitter and Facebook, were filled with real-time messages and images of despair, sent by people who did not know what to do. Help for Haiti was quickly mobilized thanks to SNSs.

On the Web, mass media did not even bother to specify whether they were using professional or citizen journalists' images and apparently, image sources were not crucial either. Because the goal was to have information, images or anything that could let the world know the state of the country, and thus enable help as quickly as possible. Social networking sites were being used not only to report what was going on, but also to actively try to raise funds. The relationship between time and speed of information delivery were paramount. However, profiting from the rush to act, false pages to collect money for Haiti were also quickly created and with them problems arose. But, what was clear-cut was that for this event, as in all the aforementioned discussed cases, Michaud's theory was completely outdated.

2.5. Conclusion

First of all, I should start by accounting that it was my positionality that led this second part of the chapter to undertake a technological bias. To be precise, I do not think of history as something determined either by technology or by media. I therefore openly accept, having observed throughout these initial years, simply by the fact of the greater number of uses, and with the possibility of sharing those mobile images, the technological imprint the mobile has had in the media has been very strong. Consequently, I felt it was mandatory to study this phenomenon as well. I thus consciously assume that my own narratives and discourses can be understood as technologically driven. I consider it to be true that technological developments, of both

⁵¹⁶ Michaud, Y. (2002, November). Critiques de la crédulité. *Études photographiques* N°12, p. 116.

⁵¹⁷ Cf. Mentre, M. (2010, January 24). Haïti Deadline, *MediaTrend les nouveaux médias & les nouveaux usages*, <http://www.themediatrend.com/wordpress/?p=2382>

hardware and software, have a strong impact on mobile vernacular image creation and circulation.

During five years, between 2005 and 2010, due to the fact that more and more amateurs were starting to take and share their mobile images, many professionals, especially those from the journalistic milieu (both reporters and photographers), felt menaced by the increase in the use of the mobile as a visual recording tool and thus as a news creator and enabler. Moreover, as soon as mobile internet penetrated into everybody's everyday habits, this disdain continued to augment further. In the beginning the discourse deployed against mobiles was a mixture of fear and *geekiness*. In terms of news reporting, either you were part of the tech savvy group or you considered that possessing and using a mobile as an image-maker was gimmicky.

Firstly shedding light on some milestones examples, I demonstrate how, and why the mainstream media industries decided to validate mobile images, positioning them as hard news, and giving them central importance in the news chain. The study focused on the acceptance of the mobile vernacular images of these incidents as a means to trigger and to build historical events. Besides, it is important to bear in mind, that despite the uproar around social media, at least until now, it has mainly been the traditional mainstream media actors who have decided what is worth reporting as hard news - regardless of what might have an international impact, as was exemplified in the Saddam Hussein's execution mobile video case. The hidden relation between images, information and politics, the power of conveying information is still there.

Nowadays, if a special event happens, the practice of recording through mobiles continues: it is an action that is anchored in people's habits. As learnt, this is due to the increase in mobile and internet broadband adoption. Yet, the practice is no longer a problem or a menace to the traditional media. It is normal to use visual documents to create and build hard news, if needed. The discourse of the mobile as a liberation tool became obsolete. With the proliferation of mobile vernacular images as possible news creators, the professional journalists edit and make that mobile vernacular news readable and digestible. In an ever globalized world, this task became crucial. Does the use of the

mobile entail an end of the monopoly of the media? No. On the contrary, media need to be reliable and have a juridical warranty. As long as it is published on a trustworthy platform, it, seemingly, no longer mattered how, nor who, produced the image. Factually, the media environment has changed. “Only now, in the twenty-first century, are we witnessing changes in snapshot culture in which snapshots and snapshooters are having a clear public role – for example, in photojournalism.”⁵¹⁸ Time will tell how this practice develops.

The problem of leaked information, security, ethics, and the way mobile images can be shared, all renew concern. In fact, information, and its security has long been based on a perimeter defense focused, on a defined and controlled geographic area, for a given information system. However, with the massive advent of mobile devices and systems (portable computers, mobile phones, smartphones, tablets, wireless networks and forthcoming broadband service for mobile devices), companies, individuals, news chains, and governments, will see a large portion of their information system operations going beyond their physical borders. This loss of data perimeter control, combined with the massive advent of outsourcing systems, such as cloud computing, virtualization or green IT, forces us to rethink mobile communication, and the way images already circulate today.⁵¹⁹

As I was finishing writing, on June 17th 2015, YouTube launched a service named YouTube Newswire to provide “a curated feed of the most newsworthy eyewitness videos of the day”⁵²⁰ and to expose the most important eyewitness news videos. Even if the aforementioned Rawporter site did not work, Google’s YouTube Newswire seems to have the entire infrastructure needed to verify eyewitness footage of breaking news. At least that is what the latter proclaims, stating that the merge of

⁵¹⁸ Sarvas, R., & Frohlich, D. (2011). *From snapshots to social media: The changing picture of domestic photography*. R. Harper (Ed.). London: Springer-Verlag, p. 59.

⁵¹⁹ Keen, A. (2011). Digital Vertigo, *TEDxDanubia*, <http://www.tedxdanubia.com/videos/tedxdanubia-2011--andrew-keen-digital-vertigo>

⁵²⁰ Ma, O. (2015, June 18). Eyewitness video on YouTube: your window to the world, *YouTube Official Blog*. <http://youtube-global.blogspot.fr/2015/06/eyewitness-video-on-youtube-your-window.html>

YouTube and Storyful has officially launched the mining of the social web to create the world's first social media news agency.⁵²¹

⁵²¹ Vincent, J. (2015, June 18). Google's YouTube Newswire will verify eyewitness footage of breaking news, *The Verge*, <http://www.theverge.com/2015/6/18/8805569/youtube-newswire-verified-eyewitness-footage>

Part II.

Mobile Images Become Ordinary: The Users' Self- Legitimation Takeover

Introduction: From Peer-legitimation to Self-validation

As described in the first part, from 2007-8, with the social media and social networking boom, cameraphone images started to be more publically seen: celebrated in festivals, when needed they even appeared in the news, to subsequently achieve a greater online presence. On a daily basis, on sites such Facebook, Twitter and also exchanged with one's personal contacts, through mobile apps such as Whatsapp, Pick, etc., and even through the classical MMS method (a more private device to device sharing method), cameraphone images became routine, and apps a "social lubricant".⁵²² All the new smartphones were being manufactured with an imbricated ecosystem: an embedded camera, wi-fi and broadband technologies which were continually being developed. Therefore, many visual apps continued to flourish. It was in this entire dispositif of interrelated practices the ease of mobile-image share became standard and normalized.

It is in this transitional period that I continue my analysis of the practices. My two main questions are: How did the self-validation of personal mobile images evolve through, and hand in hand with, the social mobile networks adoption? And then, how did the process from peer-legitimation to self-validation operate? Consequently, this second part seeks to describe and analyze the unfolding development of *mobile image peer* and *self-legitimation*. Two complementary chapters form this second part. The first one deals with peer legitimation, both off and online. After doing a state of the field of the mobile social visual apps, I start by studying how Qik, one of the first online amateur mobile video platforms, emerged and evolved. Through participant observation carried out between 2010 and 2012, I analyze those early years of online amateur mobile video sharing, and draw an initial mobile vernacular video typology. Years later, all those topics became those ones tagged as *selfies*: #foodselfies, #petselfies or #pelfies, #feetselfies, etc.

Within the quest of mobile image legitimation, and amid the increase of the number of photo apps, the chapter continues examining two mobile collective photo exhibitions

⁵²² Hjorth, L & Pink, S. (2014). New visualities and the digital wayfarer: Reconceptualizing camera phone photography and locative media. *Mobile Media & Communication*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 40-57.

that help explore the concept of “Communities of Practice”, as developed by Wenger. The initial one was held in Madrid in 2010, it was the first Eyephoneography exhibit, and the second one was in Paris in 2012, a group of artistic French Instagrammer women called *Regards de Femmes*. These instances demonstrated that, always requiring public recognition, collective mobile photo institutional instances continue(d) to occur, but that the legitimation process towards mobile images was shifting to be, not only through traditional institutions, but also, perhaps, even more peer centered. Meanwhile, new mobile image sharing apps continually appeared: Instagram (2010), Grindr (2009), Tinder (2012), and Vine (2012), are but a few of the most well known ones. In 2012, Snapchat was launched to the public, and with it a new innovative way of sharing mobile images began: a lighter and ephemeral one.

The fact that the Snaps were *fleeting images* hindered my attempts to form an idea of an appropriate methodology to study its practices. In fact not knowing how or where to find Snapchat users, and wanting to study its adoption and reception by the Parisian public, the chapter continues in describing the abortive methodologies I tried. I started by creating a Google Alert for myself, but it proved to be language circumscribed: the alerts I received were only in French. Then, I checked Google Play Snapchat’s app store page, but its euphoric happiness demonstrated that this was not a correct methodology either. Subsequently, I aimed to find users in a Snapchat Facebook group, but only managed to interview only one of its members. All of the above trial and error process made me realize (and once again validated my belief), that the most suited methodology, to understand and study visual amateur practices, seems to be from within a more holistic and therefore group dynamic.

Mainly adopted by teenagers, and in an age of immediate attention seeking, the chapter moves on to interviewing two French teen focus groups. I examine their uses, treating them as emblematic figure of a less public mobile image appropriation. In what way did Snaps become normalized and a visible, yet somehow unnoticed, component of today’s mobile image-sharing iceberg? By analyzing this app, where the image reception is supposed to be transient, I study how a self-centered image became, not only illustrative

of multiple vernacular identity constructions, but also a call for fun, immediacy, ephemerality and everyday life.

After a peer-to-peer amateur validation, did a personal self-validation emerge? Could there just *be* an individual self-validation? Is the *no need/no will* to be publically validated genuine? Also, I tried to comprehend the implications behind those types of vernacular participation, the progress of true intimacy through mobile images, and also the space for oneself - all matters that were exploding as never before seen.

In the pursuit of legitimation, the rationale behind the fourth autoethnographic chapter is rooted in a simple, but (at that time) unresolved field observation. I wanted to understand the social paradox of being able, on a daily basis, to see such a huge number of private images, in my daily feeds, Facebook, Instagram, etc., but without really grasping their self-signification, and thus their broader social meaning. In reference to reading, British psychologist Anthony J. Marcel demonstrated that “if poorly skilled readers devote more attention to coding processes, he/she may lose consciousness of meaning (see 1983).”⁵²³ When scrolling my daily image feeds, more than often I felt and still feel the same: finding myself trying to understand the coding process, appreciating the esthetics and beauty, but also willing to grasp other unknown signs. Most of the time, understanding the story behind the image, even the stories of ones’ own friends are unclear. In other words: the reasons why they were taken, who were the people in it, etc., remain obscure. Often, for the public to whom the images are not directly addressed, the (significant) information that contextualizes the *primary* reasons of taking/posting/sharing mobile images rests unclear. Flicking through these images becomes then a scopic pulsion drive. However, I must underline that these types of unknown background circumstances, or lack of contextualization, are not new. When not properly archived, referenced or indexed, the scarcity of comprehension with analogic amateur images also happened. In fact, in any context, when a change of production/reception occurs, the coding/decoding becomes new. Even with the focus

⁵²³ Gallagher, S., & Marcel, A. J. (1999). The Self in Contextualized Action. *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 6(4), pp. 4-30.

groups, it was very hard to understand the in-jokes and implied occurrences my participants exchanged.

For this reason, the fourth chapter is an autoethnographic one. It begins by drawing a personal timeline from 2002 until 2010, my cameraphone years, and from 2010 onwards, my smartphone years. This allowed me to shed light on some of the exemplary archetypal and most private practices (in my case, only I could know what these were) that remained obscure when doing the focus groups interviews. This is the main reason I decided to ground my autoethnography study within my strong ties, friendship dyads. Many challenges arose at the methodological and epistemological levels of this decision. Nonetheless, I felt in a better position to describe more nuanced shades of private mobile image practices with an insider's eye and a reflexive approach. Studying empirical data is always muddy and murky; it has its benefits but also its limitations. Only by acknowledging them can this type of research be handled, especially because, as Oksman points out: when examining the use of the mobile phone in contemporary society, researchers are already living amidst the studied phenomenon.⁵²⁴

As the smartphone usages became everyday life practices, questions such as absence/presence, indexicality, subjectivity, instantaneity, couple teasing, self-portrait and sexting became comprehensive and more palpable issues, and key to many visual researchers. Inexorable narratives, they are key in this chapter. How are implicit factors worked out in mobile visual exchanges, if they are not crystal clear and explicit, yet supposed to be read in the image? These questions have to be, and need to be, articulated, even between strong ties. The chapter touches upon couple teasing, hot pics and sexting cases, and moves on to self-portrait construction, ending up by studying what a selfie is. Done in a retrospective way, this autoethnographic reflexive study announces the archeology of a selfie boom, and a transformation towards its relevance as a self-legitimation moment. To sum up, the fourth chapter analysis questions self-legitimation: interrogations that are used to reconsider terms such as validity, reliability,

⁵²⁴ Villi, M. (2010), *Visual mobile communication: Camera phone photo messages as ritual communication and mediated presence*, (Doctoral thesis). Helsinki: Aalto University School of Art and Design, p. 39.

and objectivity, in order to demonstrate whether the mobile vernacular image self-validation comes to full circle.

Chapter 3.

Mobile Visualities and Value Creation Through Peer Legitimation

3.1. State of the Art – Part Two

The first (and even second) generation of mobile scholars formed an uncommon and early prospective part of the academia. Social and cultural studies of camera phone use were relatively sparse but works were beginning to emerge.⁵²⁵ Names such as Ito, Katz, Sarvas, Fortunatti, Nyíri, Koskinen, Ling, Licoppe, van House, and many of those listed in the state of the art of mobile images, presented in part one, were its first representatives. But, as soon as smartphones begun to perform better, and mobile internet became cheaper, and therefore used on a global scale; social media and mobile media studies started to infiltrate - particularly the social sciences - academia in general. Doing mobile related research became more common, and spread to a vast array of

⁵²⁵ Kato, F., Okabe, D., & Ito, M. (2005). Uses and Possibilities of the Keitai Camera. In Ito, M., Okabe, D., & Matsuda, M. (Eds.). (2005). *Personal, portable, pedestrian: Mobile phones in Japanese life*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. p. 303.

social sciences and media communication topics. From telephones to tablets, from phablets to wearable devices, the ecosystem of mobile habits continued booming, and penetrated numerous scholarly studies that are still made in numerous and vast fields.

In this developing academic landscape researchers come from similar, or even diverse foci that are sometimes complementary, ranging through many different disciplines, approaches and methodologies. The former group are often similar but have diverse naming such as: mediated interpersonal communication studies and internet studies, but also digital anthropology, media anthropology, virtual anthropology/ethnography, cyber ethnography, digital ethnography, media ethnography, social media ethnography, web archaeology, netnography, technobiography, visual anthropology, and visual culture. Mobile studies, new media studies, infocom, web studies, media archaeology, computer mediated communication (CMC), and digital ethnography, all these all currently keep an eye on mobile social media, and continue to investigate its many possible facets.

In such a motive, changing, and broad field, keeping up with current research is both crucial and mandatory. Some of the most well-known journals (in English) to follow are: the Journal of Computer Mediated Communication, the International Journal of Communication, which is one of the only online open access ones; Communication and critical/cultural studies journal, the Journal for cultural research; Communication Studies, and New Media & Society. Also Media, Culture & Society, the Critical studies in media communication; Continuum: Journal of media & cultural studies, the Journal of Pervasive Media; Visual communication, the Journal for Cultural Research, Mobilities, Mobile media and communication, and Sexualities. As for the French spectrum, some of the most outstanding publications are Etudes Photographiques, Le Temps des Médias, Réseaux, InMedia and Hermès.

Because the abovementioned fields and journals became numerous and voluminous, it is not my aim to go for an exhaustive state of the art and enumerate what topics are discussed in each one. (Mobile media appears almost to be an excuse to gather miscellaneous research). Neither will it cover domains such as mHealth, mGaming, mLearning, or many other types of mobile practices that are currently under study (such

as wearable devices, or other sensory apps such as the oPhone, an olfactory app, which serves, to send and receive smells and perfume messages). Methodologically, even if disciplines are unlike, most of the approaches today used to study mobile or mobile visual related corpora, are ethnographical interviews, focus groups, surveys, plus a lot of personal reflection and personal biographical input. A few are quantitative studies, like the ones that Lev Manovich⁵²⁶ and his team did, as well as those that Tim Highfield and Tama Leaver, in the Department of Internet Studies in Australia undertook.⁵²⁷

This second state of the art seeks to consider theoretical and methodological questions on mobile visual practices. Some of the main foci that helped push thinking on Mobile Studies further, and so developed in this state of the art, are: firstly the topic of *conversation and connectedness*, and secondly the concepts of *network and emplacement*. In order to do so, I first start with some grounding articles and books, to then cover the related research after the apps' boom. To conclude, I also hope to contribute.

3.1.1. On Conversations, Connectedness and Mobiles Images

When trying to theorize some of its central topics (just to name a few: online/offline, private sphere/public sphere, absence/presence), mobile academics have confronted many overriding conceptual dichotomies that, over time have turned out to be more of dualities rather than dichotomies. In 2003, in conceptualizing core network mobile interactions, French sociologist and mobile researcher Christian Licoppe, identified two main ways of grasping telephone practices among close ties: the “connectedness”, and the “conversational” practices.⁵²⁸ He demarcated that “connected presence”⁵²⁹ as shorter exchanges, but as being more frequent, and also being more phatic SMSs, where the

⁵²⁶ SelfieCity. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://selfiecity.net/>

⁵²⁷ Highfield, T., & Leaver, T. (2014). A methodology for mapping Instagram hashtags. *First Monday*, 20(1). Retrieved from <http://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/5563/4195>

⁵²⁸ Licoppe, C. (2003). Two modes of maintaining interpersonal relations through telephone: From the domestic to the mobile phone. In J. Katz (Ed.). *Machines that become us: The social context of communication technology* (pp. 171–186). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

⁵²⁹ Ibid.

“anytime-anywhere”⁵³⁰ sensation gave users a social cohesion and a reassuring feeling. On the other hand, he defined the “conversational mode”⁵³¹ as a long open-ended mode, a more in-depth and personal one, only occasional, but that still contributed to provide the “connected presence” feeling.

The history of conversational mobile practices dates back to those synchronic/asynchronic computer mediated communications, mostly done on user nets and discussion boards, in forums, and by email and instant messaging; being carried out mainly by American scholars in communications. Those who were in computer-mediated communication (CMC), predominantly pioneered the earliest beginning of this literature. Accordingly, the conversational and connected mobile behaviors that Licoppe based his theoretical demonstration were texting and voice calling, practices, which as Campbell remarks, are, still for 2015, the most prominent uses.⁵³²

Among French researchers, Valerie Beaudouin soon realized it was with and through the digital supports, that for the first time, *the chats* (something that until now had been associated only with orality), were also being produced when written online. She remarked that the publishing and the online chat messages became perceivable at the same time.⁵³³ In relation to images, according to Beuscart, S. et al. “the conversational image”⁵³⁴ refers to the capability of sharing images in Flickr, and with your Facebook friends, and commenting and chatting over them. Naomi Baron asks: “Do mobile technologies reshape speaking, writing, or reading?”⁵³⁵ The linguist refers to three of the basic language skills only, but does not take into account the consideration whether mobile technologies reshape *audiovisual* ways of communicating. In a differing line of

⁵³⁰ Ibid.

⁵³¹ Ibid.

⁵³² Campbell, S.W. (2015). Mobile communication and network privatism: A literature review of the implications for diverse, weak, and new ties. *Review of Communication Research*, 3(1): pp. 1-21.

⁵³³ Beaudouin, V. (2002). De la publication à la conversation. Lecture et écriture électroniques. *Réseaux* 6/2002, (n°116), pp. 199-225. Retrieved from <http://www.cairn.info/revue-reseaux-2002-6-page-199.htm>

⁵³⁴ Beuscart, S. et al. (2009). Pourquoi partager mes photos de vacances avec des inconnus? Les usages de Flickr. *Réseaux* (n° 154). Retrieved from <http://www.liafa.univ-paris-diderot.fr/~prieur/Publis/beuscart-et-al-flickr-reseaux-2009.pdf>

⁵³⁵ Baron, N. S. (2013). Do mobile technologies reshape speaking, writing, or reading?. *Mobile Media & Communication*, 1(1), pp. 134-140.

thought, the Italian sociologist Barbara Scifo was one of the very first to advance the notion that MMS messages “... are already clear signals concerning the spread of a precise culture of communication and the birth of a new language.”⁵³⁶ Another one to forecast this concept was Daniel Rubinstein, in his article “Cellphone photography; The death of the camera and the arrival of visible speech”.⁵³⁷ But, to anchor Rubinstein’s and Scifo’s prospective statements, and in regard to these new cultural patterns, ten years of technological development were to elapse before today, as we finally see that Rubinstein’s “visible speech”⁵³⁸ has arrived. This now, as I will attempt to demonstrate, even becomes *invisible*. Gunthert claims: “we are *currently* witnessing the accession of photography to the universality of a language.”⁵³⁹ Mobile images also become exchanges of small talk. Moreover, personally, I consider that Baron forgot one of the most outstanding socio-technological and cultural changes that reshape basic language communicational skills: she forgot image based communication, and therefore I ascribe more to Scifo’s, Gunthert’s and Beuscart’s line. Additionally, in the new communicative channels, I would include that *all* mobile audiovisual-based communication such as photos and videos, but also extend it to gifs, emojis, emoticons, etc.; which, altogether are forming a new, visually based type of communication or language.

Studies such as Sarvas and Frohlich’s have also reflected on the diverse transitions from conversation to connectedness. In their book *From snapshots to social media: The changing picture of domestic photography*, the authors draw a historical line, starting from the printed albums, as a social and interactive function and remind us that they were a source of entertainment and stimuli for conversation.⁵⁴⁰ I also echo two key articles. Firstly, the one written by Palmer: “Mediating Visions of Social Space”, and secondly, Chesher’s “Between image and information: the iPhone camera in the history of

⁵³⁶ Scifo, B. (2005). The domestication of camera-phone and MMS communication: The early experiences of young Italians. In: Nyíri K. (Ed.). *A Sense of Place: The Global and the Local in Mobile Communication*. Vienna: Passagen Verlag, pp. 363–374.

⁵³⁷ Rubinstein, D. (2005). Cellphone photography; The death of the camera and the arrival of visible speech. *The Issues in Contemporary Culture and Aesthetics*, 1, pp. 113–118.

⁵³⁸ Ibid.

⁵³⁹ Gunthert, A. (2014). L’image conversationnelle. *Études photographiques*, N°31. Retrieved from <http://etudesphotographiques.revues.org/3387>. Emphasis is mine. Reprinted in Gunthert, A. (2015). *L’Image partagée. La photographie numérique*. Paris: Textuel.

⁵⁴⁰ Sarvas, R., & Frohlich, D. (2011). *From snapshots to social media: The changing picture of domestic photography*. R. Harper (Ed.). London: Springer-Verlag.

photography”. Palmer’s chapter is significant because it gives two main explanations for the success of the distinctive iPhone camera phenomena, a fact that is crucial to the understanding of the connected image. The first concerns the high-resolution color touch screen of the iPhone, and the *experience* of making a photo with it. The author describes the whole process: the artificial shutter animation, the noise, “the camera roll”. But mostly the last moments of the process are the ones that should be given special attention: emailing the photo, sending it through MMS, assigning it to a contact, remixing, using as wallpaper, tweeting, and printing it. These iPhotography actions are carried out as if they were games, and according to him they give “a strong sense that the world is readily available for visual consumption.”⁵⁴¹ Consequently, the most radical feature of the iPhone is that it contemplates photography as being more for information than representation. The photo sensor, is but one of the many “data collection features of the iPhone.”⁵⁴²

Spotting that the “iPhone Universe” is connected more to computing traditions - information, databases and algorithmic transformations - than to film and digital and mobile cameras; Chesher’s chapter follows media theorist, Lev Manovich’s, initial theories. For him, the amateur image becomes immediately transformable, transmissible, transcodeable, and taggable in real time.⁵⁴³ He considers the iPhone to be much more than just a simple re-invention of the amateur camera. He thinks of it as a disruptive technology, helping to create a new market, and a value network, eventually displacing the earlier technology in photography. In this precise case, iPhoneography – or, to be less brand centered, mobile photography in general terms - enriched photography in ways the market might not have expected. First, by designing for a different set of consumers, and later, by decreasing prices in the existing market.⁵⁴⁴

⁵⁴¹ Palmer, D. (2012). iPhone photography: Mediating visions of social space. In L. Hjorth, J. Burgess & I. Richardson (Eds.). *Studying mobile media: cultural technologies, mobile communication, and the iPhone* (pp. 85–97). New York, NY: Routledge, p. 87.

⁵⁴² Ibid., p. 90.

⁵⁴³ Chesher, C. (2012). Between image and information: the iPhone camera in the history of photography. In L. Hjorth, J. Burgess, I. Richardson (Eds.). *Studying Mobile Media: Cultural Technologies, Mobile Communication, and the iPhone* (pp. 98–117). New York, NY: Routledge, p. 99.

⁵⁴⁴ Gunthert, A. (2009, Nov.). Shared Images: How the Internet Has Transformed the Image Economy. *Études photographiques*, N°24, pp. 182–209. Retrieved from <http://etudesphotographiques.revues.org/2832>; Chesher, C. (2012). Op. cit.

If in 2005, the grounding book *Personal, Portable and Pedestrian*,⁵⁴⁵ symbolized the co-present challenging practice agenced through cameraphone images with a three “S’s” logic: share, save and store. Years later in the smartphone age, Chesher’s reflexions, as of 2012, back up the three “T’s” that stand for: transform, translate and transmit.⁵⁴⁶ I in turn, through this thesis, would like to propose other notions, and hence contribute to pushing this reflection further. Rather than an “S” or a “T”, as of 2015, mobile image practices can be tagged with three “E’s”: experimentation, excitement and ephemeral practices.⁵⁴⁷ Experience as the motivation for all sensing practices: talking, seeing, watching, sending, touching, hearing, liking, commenting, pinching, swiping, etc. Excitement could be characterized by the feelings of expectancy that drive the desire, not only to photograph, video, and to record life as it happens, but also to be hyper-connected in real time and to have, demand, even need, immediate responses. Lastly ephemeral⁵⁴⁸, for all that lasts only a short time; theses exchanges are transitory, short-lived, and possibly ordinary or banal, and, similar to an oral exchange, disappear in the flow of feeds.

Nowadays, mobile users jump between more visual conversational mobile practices to more visual connectedness practices without even thinking in those clarifying yet separated terms, that Licoppe used a decade ago. Mobile internet and mobile practices are constantly reshaping all formerly compartmentalized communicative channels. So, I underscore that mobile communicative practices are the exchanges made, not only through voice, and textual modes, but also through photography and video exchanges

⁵⁴⁵ Ito, M., Okabe, D., & Matsuda, M. (Eds.). (2005). *Personal, portable, pedestrian: Mobile phones in Japanese life*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

⁵⁴⁶ Chesher, C., Op. cit.

⁵⁴⁷ I am aware that this “experience sharing” concept is not new. The argument had already been sketched by the Palo Alto Research Center (PARC) in 2005. They argued that one way to facilitate this sense of “experience sharing” may be to place image sharing in an explicit conversational context, and that might not necessarily be most effectively done by using the obvious synchronous conferencing model and “have suggested an approach to sharing that draws users into interaction *using* images rather than *over* images.” (In Aoki, P., Szymanski, M. & Woodruff, A. (2005). Turning from image sharing to experience sharing. In First Workshop on “Pervasive Image Capture and Sharing: New Social Practices and Implications for Technology” (PICS), Ubicomp.).

⁵⁴⁸ Speaking about snapshot photography, Murray has defined it as: “...one dedicated to the exploration of the urban eye and its relation to decay, alienation, kitsch, and its ability to locate beauty in the mundane. Some have claimed that it is indeed a new category of photography, called ‘ephemera’.” Murray, S. (2008). Digital Images, Photo-Sharing, and Our Shifting Notions of Everyday Aesthetics. *Journal of Visual Culture*, 7(2), 147–163. In this terms mobile imaging continues but to increase.

(Skype, Facetime), and might also refer to those apps and mobile technologies that enable video conferencing as well.

Nevertheless, still today, mobile communication practices have particular characteristics; for instance, as known, they can be synchronic/asynchronic, they can be geolocalized, use hashtags, be only emoji⁵⁴⁹ stickered, or even gif animation based. These exchanges can be one-to-many, one-to-one, many-to-one and many-to-many. But, additionally, all the above-mentioned mobile communication methods can be mixed, creating new types of conversational-connected modes and thus different practices and uses. Therefore, *all* vernacular visual and mobile communicative channels and features become a major factor to mention when referring to the conversation-connection duo.

Often they are just *phatic* exchanges. Phatic expressions can be verbal or non-verbal but most of all what characterizes them is their social function. Rather than being informative, they serve to start a conversation, salute someone, just say goodbye or acknowledge the fact of listening. The term refers to small talk: conversation for its own sake. Phatic communication is the term coined by Malinowski, B. (1923) in “The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages”, and concerns those instances, of which the function is to perform a social task, as opposed to conveying information. However, they fortify social ties and establish and maintain the chance of communication. In Jakobson’s adoption of the term “Phatic communication occurs when, for example, comments are made about the weather (‘nice day’), inquiries about health (‘how do you do?’), or in an affirmation of some obvious state of the world (‘we won!’). The phatic function endeavors to keep channels of communication open and to maintain the physical, psychological or social contact. Phatic exchanges confirm that communication is in fact taking place (e.g. eye contact, nods, idle chat) and reaffirm connectedness.”⁵⁵⁰ Phatic, can also refer to conversational phrases that are employed to establish social contact, and to express sociability rather than specific meaning. Therefore, others, such

⁵⁴⁹ Gray, K. (2015, May 29). Emoj(il)literacy: toward a grammar of pictographs, presentation given at the Technoloteracies In(terv)entions symposium, Technoloteracies session.

⁵⁵⁰ Vetere, F., Howard, S., & Gibbs, M. R. (2005). Phatic Technologies: Sustaining Sociability through Ubiquitous Computing, Workshop paper, Ubiquitous Society Workshop, ACM CHI 2005. Portland, Oregon, USA.

as Wang et al. have preferred to think in terms of *phatic technologies*. “A phatic technology is a technology that serves to establish, develop and maintain human relationships ...where the essence of communication is relationship building not information exchanging”.⁵⁵¹

This means that the fact of sending minor, but repeated signs, also matters. In a similar vein, Rains et al. consider that: “superficial disclosures can serve to help maintain relationships and foster relationship development. Furthermore, new communication technologies have made trivial or superficial self-disclosure involving non intimate information, an increasingly valuable topic to consider.”⁵⁵² Throughout my research I have come to similar conclusions.⁵⁵³ Pertinently, Walker Rettberg states: “Digital self-representation is conversational and allows new voices to be heard.”⁵⁵⁴ The author discusses the different formats conversations might take, like a more visual chat, maybe in Twitter or Instagram through hashtags, and she proves how diverse online conversations are.

One of the other novel ways in which researchers, scholars, academics or anyone who would wish to conceptualize the notions of connectedness-conversation and relate it to mobile internet research, and thereafter to visual mobile research; is to think in two key symbol terms: the #hashtag and the @reply; for these logics have the connected and the conversation concept embedded in their communication dynamic. For instance, Bruns remarks that one of Twitter’s most enduring and distinctive communicative features, is

⁵⁵¹ Wang, V., Tucker, J. V., & Rihll, T. E. (2011). On phatic technologies for creating and maintaining human relationships. *Technology in Society*, 33, pp. 44-51. Retrieved from, https://www.academia.edu/2005465/Phatic_technologies_in_modern_society

⁵⁵² Rains, S. A., Brunner, S. R., & Oman, K. (2014). Self-disclosure and new communication technologies: The implications of receiving superficial self-disclosures from friends. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, pp. 1-20. Retrieved from <http://srains.web.arizona.edu/sites/srains.web.arizona.edu/files/RainsBrunner%26OmanOnlineFirst.pdf>

⁵⁵³ David, G. (2015). All What We Send is Selfie: Images in the Age of Immediate Reproduction. In Carvalho, J. R. & Tellería, A. S. (Ed.). (2015). *Public Private, Mobile and digital communication approaches to public and private*. Portugal: LabCom Books, University of Beira Interior. pp. 79-100. Retrieved from http://www.livroslabcom.ubi.pt/pdfs/20150707-2015_12_public_private.pdf

⁵⁵⁴ Walker Rettberg, J. (2014). *Seeing Ourselves Through Technology: How We Use Selfies, Blogs and Wearable Devices to See and Shape Ourselves*. Palgrave Macmillan. Retrieved from <http://jilltxt.net/books/Seeing-Ourselves-Through-Technology-full-book.pdf>

the use of the #hashtag and the @reply symbol.⁵⁵⁵ Currently imported to many other platforms (Facebook, Instagram, etc.) this logic can connect groups of users interested in the same topics (using hashtags) and then create conversation through the @reply symbol. In Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc., an easy way to follow any subject is by following hashtags. Prefixed by this symbol # - a hashtag can either be a word or a phrase. All the posts that have the same hashtag will belong to a specific feed, and thus the hashtags somehow operate as tags. They can become: (a) either part of the conversation to be conveyed, (b) either accompany the speech and therefore become “paradiscursif”⁵⁵⁶ elements, (that is, bound to compensate the lack of context and give the necessary information to the message understanding), or even (c) they are comments forming part of that speech and thereby are “metadiscursive”.⁵⁵⁷ Alternatively, they can also just be added to participate in in-jokes, and be only “contextually specific to the individual user”,⁵⁵⁸ as Highfield and Leaver defend.

To illustrate, in the Egyptian revolution one of the most famous Twitter hashtags examples was #jan25, which was created by a 21-year old woman under the pseudonym of @alya1989262. Making reference to that date, everybody started to tweet Egypt-related news with the #jan25 hashtag. The other very popular hashtag was simply #Egypt. These two hashtags demonstrate that often⁵⁵⁹ the principal tags are usually related to: localization (#Egypt), and time/date (#jan25). The localization tag refers to the place where the data was taken and not the place where it was uploaded, and the time tag refers to the *live*, to the time of recording and not to the uploading one. As it was defined early on by Kennedy et al., what consequently usually count are the “place tags” and the “event tags”,⁵⁶⁰ which brings us to the theory that Hjorth and Pink strongly second: “emplacement reasoning”.⁵⁶¹

⁵⁵⁵ Bruns, A. (2014). Media Innovations, User Innovations, Societal Innovations. *The Journal of Media Innovations* 1, pp. 13-27.

⁵⁵⁶ Cf. Moulin, C. (2012, January 8). Les hashtags, introduction, *La souris de bibliothèque*, <http://lasourisdebibliotheque.hautetfort.com/archive/2012/01/08/hashtags.html>

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁸ Highfield, T., & Leaver, T. (2014). A methodology for mapping Instagram hashtags. *First Monday*, 20(1). Retrieved from <http://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/5563/4195>

⁵⁵⁹ Today, even if there is a much more free use of hashtags, place and event tags still seem to be a mayor way of referencing tags.

⁵⁶⁰ Kennedy, L., Naaman, M., Ahern, S., Nair, R., & Rattenbury, T. (September 2007). How Flickr Helps us Make Sense of the World: Context and Content in Community-Contributed Media

3.1.2. From Network to Emplacement

In 2005, the concept of the “networked digital image”⁵⁶² was initially introduced into mobile studies by van House et al., and has since been of much help. The celebrated article outlined the social uses of the cameraphone pictures as a set of social uses of personal photography: creating and maintaining social relationships which range from constructing personal and group memory, to self-presentation and self-expression. Then another grounding article in the conceptualization of the networked image is: “A life more photographic: Mapping the networked image”. In it, one of Rubinstein and Sluis’s most clarifying remarks is that “the networking of the snapshot provides something which vernacular photographers have always lacked: a broad audience.”⁵⁶³

In turn, in his last book, Gómez Cruz calls it the “networked image”, and describes the concept in length and in depth: as the result and mix of an interrelation of technology, of photographic practices in everyday life.⁵⁶⁴ His theory helps conceptually ground all these social processes that craft the networked digital image. Moreover, especially in light of internet connection possibilities for smartphones, and the real time sharing of images, and adhering to the socio-technical network interaction perspective (STIN); in a similarly remarkable article, Gómez Cruz and Meyer comprehend photography as a socio-technical network that takes place when technologies, meanings, uses and practices, bring into line processes of mutual shaping.⁵⁶⁵ They defend the idea that the iPhone has ushered in a fifth phase in photography. The first phase in photography being around the beginning in the 19th century, then the second phase being between

Collections. In proceedings Fifteenth ACM International Conference on Multimedia, (ACM MM 2007), Augsburg, Germany.

⁵⁶¹ Hjorth, L., & Pink, S. (2014). New visualities and the digital wayfarer: Reconceptualizing camera phone photography and locative media. *Mobile Media & Communication*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 40-57.

⁵⁶² Van House, N., Davis, M., Ames, M., Finn, M., Viswanathan, V., & Hall, S. (2005). *The Uses of Personal Networked Digital Imaging: An Empirical Study of Cameraphone Photos and Sharing*. (Ed.). Gerrit Van Der Veer & Carolyn Gale. CHI 05 extended abstracts on Human factors in computing systems CHI 05 Chi 2005 (2005), pp. 1853-1856.

⁵⁶³ Rubinstein, D., & Sluis, K. (2008). A Life More Photographic. *Photographies*, 1(1), 9-28, p. 18.

⁵⁶⁴ Gómez Cruz, E. (2012). *De la Cultura Kodak a la imagen en red. Una etnografía sobre fotografía digital*. Barcelona: Editorial UOC; David, G. (2015). De la cultura Kodak a la imagen en red: Una etnografía sobre imagen digital. *Visual Studies*, Book review, (ahead-of-print), 1-2.

⁵⁶⁵ Gómez Cruz, E., & Meyer, E. T. (2012). Creation and Control in the Photographic Process: iPhones and the emerging fifth moment of photography. *Photographies* 5(2), pp. 203-221.

1900 and 1930. The third one, between 1930 and 1990, reached a massive audience. The authors categorize the fourth phase in photography, from 1990 until the present, with the digital arrival, and the last and fifth one as the mobile and iPhone photography⁵⁶⁶ phase. For them the iPhone, representing the mobile culture, has been able to engage very diverse populations, from different classes, each with a unique social meaning: professional and amateur photographers, the media, software companies, social networks, and general users.

However, questioning this mainstream network approach, Hjorth and Pink, challenge the conceptualization of cameraphone practices with the net(work) representation. According to them, rather than the networks idea, it would be better to think of “entanglement, emplacement and co-presence”.⁵⁶⁷ Indeed, currently, geotagging is - in most of the new mobile phone models - an embedded metadata, and many apps propose it too. It relates more to the place tag logic I was referring to above. Nevertheless, metadata takes a lot of time to compile and therefore, for research purposes, it is not yet easy to find or to collect. Consequently, same hashtag naming, or in other words “context-annotation-content”⁵⁶⁸ is very helpful for quicker targeted browsing and better archiving outcomes.

Ten years after his aforementioned seminal theory, Licoppe, himself, questions his own ideas and goes for a more “hybrid ecologies”⁵⁶⁹ approach. Just the title of his article *Merging mobile communication studies and urban research: Mobile locative media, “onscreen encounters” and the reshaping of the interaction order in public places*, tells quite a lot about his postures. He not only uses merging as main verb of the title, but also uses the quotation marks for the “onscreen encounters”, revealing a sort of ambiguity in defining onscreen encounters, whether we should speak about physical, time, or affective proximity. Moreover, he concludes

⁵⁶⁶ Gómez Cruz and Meyer called it “iPhone photography”, but I prefer to use the other shorter term also being used: iPhoneography.

⁵⁶⁷ Hjorth, L., & Pink, S. (2014). New visualities and the digital wayfarer: Reconceptualizing camera phone photography and locative media. *Mobile Media & Communication*, 2, pp. 40–57.

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁹ Licoppe, C. (2013). Merging mobile communication studies and urban research: Mobile locative media, “onscreen encounters” and the reshaping of the interaction order in public places. *Mobile Media & Communication*, 1(1), pp. 122–128.

What is to be highlighted is the ways users manage mobile technologies and the actions they afford as well as other activities, which are relevant to the situation of use as a whole. The management of mobile communication in context requires the ceaseless interweaving of different activities on a fine-grained temporal scale.⁵⁷⁰

In a similar line of thought of reconciling spaces, and avoiding dialectical dichotomies, de Souza et Silva and Frith's book *Mobile Interfaces in Public Spaces: Locational Privacy, Control, and Urban Sociability*⁵⁷¹ concentrates on "location". They defined it as a set of geographic coordinates used to access data through mobile devices. The first half of their book draws a historical line of portable devices such as books, walkmans and iPods, to understand and intelligently shift towards reflections on how this urban mobile device connects, not only people, but also people to places. In a bustling Location-Based Social Networks (LBSN) apps ecology, their book stands out as one of the foundation monographs on the topic.

Subsequently, I propose a final question that stems from this: Should we still cogitate visual mobile practices in a conversational and connected mobile mode as in Licoppe's early visionary way? The answer seems evident. Even though practices differ from user to user, nowadays, and with the mobile internet and smartphone penetration, mobiles are more frequently perceived and used as computers rather than as telephones, or, as Radhamany Sooryamoorthy bluntly puts it: "the mobile phone has lost its *raison d'être* as a phone."⁵⁷² It is thus high time we reflect *beyond* this conversational/connected mobile practice differentiation.

All this leads beyond the networked image and the networked self, and offers insight into other ways of understanding today's vernacular conversational-connected mobile

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 126.

⁵⁷¹ de Souza e Silva, A., & Frith, J. (2012). *Mobile Interfaces in Public Spaces: Locational Privacy, Control, and Urban Sociability*. New York: Routledge.

⁵⁷² Sooryamoorthy, R. (2014). Inside the mobile world and outside the Internet. Review Article. *New Media and Society*. Vol. 16, No. 1, pp. 165-170.

images and related practices. To conclude, I would like to state that the mobile field has gained complete scholar legitimization: numerous anthologies and collective books have been published, the latest and most remarkable being the almost exhaustive anthology presented in the 559 pages of *The Routledge Companion to Mobile Media*.⁵⁷³

3.2. The Early Years of Online Vernacular Mobile Videos: Qik (2008-2009)

After part one, in which I explained private usages of vernacular mobile videos, first in the PFF, and then in some of the most famous vernacular mobile images that had been relayed by the mainstream press and channels; finding other ways of viewing and sharing domestic videos was always, and still is, at the center of my research. This led me to study Qik, a site that had just been launched in its alpha version in December 2007, and in public beta in July 2008. Qik was the first mobile video service to support Facebook Connect (in April 2009). It also had the possibility of transmitting live. In January 2011, Skype bought Qik for the sum of 150 million US dollars, but as the Qik video-messaging technology had already been incorporated into Skype, on April 30, 2014, Qik as such, retired from the market. This meant that all Qik mobile phone apps ceased to work, there would be no more software updates provided and Qik apps were removed from all app stores. It also meant that the links (urls) to Qik videos would not work anymore. On the other hand, as time passed, through the Skype platform, video exchanges became easier and faster, and currently the site even enables people to leave video messages.

Going back to its beginnings, Qik's Achilles' heel was probably that most of the mobile videos were posted with no or only feeble viewing privacy restrictions. Therefore, the selection of the audience, to whom images were intended to be addressed, was not at all well managed. For instance, the following transcript is taken from a Qik video, shared

⁵⁷³ Goggin, G., & Hjorth, L. (2014). *The Routledge Companion to Mobile Media*. New York; London: Routledge.

by the Martin family.⁵⁷⁴ It illustrates how people were a little bit ignorant, and troubled by the fact of displaying and sharing online their personal home mobile videos.

J : “Mind if anyone sees your videos?, they won’t know it is us.”

V : “Which videos?”

J : “These little videos.”

V : “I don’t mind. I am just saying I don’t want no one know who I am.”

J : “They are in crazy countries far away, she says.”

V : “Yeah, it could be in...”

J : “Can you hear me Kim?” - “he says he doesn’t care if it’s private or not.”

V : “Well, unless some Texans...”

J : “You can take the private off; can you see daddy?”

Even if I knew nothing about these users, i.e. who they were, why they posted those images, to whom, what for, etc., I was able to watch their images with no constraint, and somehow even feel very familiar with them in a *strange intimate* way. Yet, still, it was impossible to properly understand the significance of these Qik mobile videos without further contextualization, interviews or more insight into their uses. However, the fact that they were public did not mean that they had a uniform context.⁵⁷⁵ As Orgad remarks, “Relying only on the observable representational level of online activities was not sufficient on its own to explain the significance, and capture the complexity of these activities.”⁵⁷⁶ My lack of understanding of the range of choices and purposes behind the mobile videos posted on Qik spurred me on, as I watched the platform and began composing my field corpus. Either interviews, or some other type of

⁵⁷⁴ This video used to be on Qik’s platform, but no longer exists. Moreover, in its beginnings Qik enabled users to have a history and even favorite list of the videos they watched. This allowed users to watch the same videos again without having to search for them one by one under the user’s name. It was a kind of trace of what one had watched. Nevertheless, as part of the sites’ changes, one day its settings changed and this feature no longer existed. I emailed Qik asking for help in order to find the Martin’s family video link, but the answer I got was “I am afraid I cannot answer that question as we are unable to divulge such information as of now to our users.” (4th March 2009, personal communication.).

⁵⁷⁵ boyd, d. (2009). A Response to Christine Hine, In Markham, A. N. & Baym, N. K. (2009). *Internet inquiry: Conversations about method*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications, p. 31.

⁵⁷⁶ Orgad, S. (2009). How Can Researchers Make Sense of the Issues Involved in Collecting and Interpreting Online and Offline Data?, In Markham, A. N. & Baym, N. K. (2009). *Internet inquiry: Conversations about method*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications, p. 43.

social methods (questionnaires, autoethnography, focus groups, etc.), seemed mandatory in order to explore what usages were behind and supporting the share of vernacular online image.

But, apart from the more private and technical uses, undoubtedly, these online everyday-life self-representation productions portrayed symbolic activities. If most of the Qik videos were posted online, but rarely commented on or liked online, it was clear that the platform was mainly a displaying and hosting place, and not (yet) a social networking site, as probably would have been the expected *zeitgeist* of that time. But, technology and practices do not always move at a synchronic pace. The fact that most videos had few comments and likes, denoted that the site functioned mainly as a video reservoir and that, more than probably, the platform instigated oral (or written) exchanges elsewhere.

Correspondingly, many of the Qiks were just phatic videos. This is characteristic of, and frequently employed in, home mobile and pocket videos. In 2008, dazzled by the possibility of watching thousands of UGC videos, I found myself viewing endless hours of footage of unknown people, observing scenes that ranged from pets; like getting familiar with Otto, *rosana's* dog (this user used to post daily videos of her pet - see figure 64); to even viewing people doing labor and live streaming it.

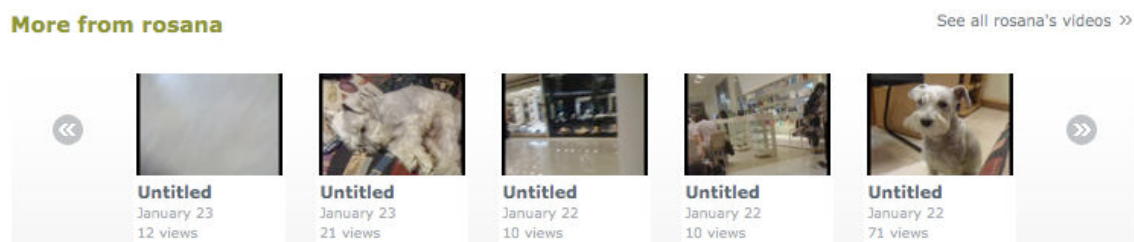


Figure 64. David, G. (November 26, 2008). Screenshot detail of the first snippets of the Qik videos starring Otto [rosana, Rosana Hermann, Qik page]. broken link, <http://qik.com/video/618466>



Figure. 65. David, G. (November 18, 2008). How the Popular cloud of tags at Qik used to look like. Screenshot.

As figure 65 illustrates, Qik worked as a flexible and messy mobile video-sharing platform, where there was no proper indexing. Key words were structured only by size, not even alphabetically. The bigger the size of the word, the more mobile videos tagged with that key word were to be found. In this type of setup, one way to analyze Qik could have been through its users, or by studying their images by albums. Studying amateur images through albums has been one of the most frequent ways to analyze and normalize amateur images. However, each user profile being very different in its own way, not only in content but also in form, geographical place, culture, age, gender, etc., this approach would have been very arduous. Moreover, similarly to the pocket films I

had watched in the Pocket Film archive, Qik videos had no average duration. This fact was mainly governed by the preference of the user and the quality of the internet connection. In terms of each user's activity, 25% of Qikkers⁵⁷⁷ are *active*, that is to say they produce at least one video per week.⁵⁷⁸ I often observed attempts to use the service, often unsuccessful, with no sound, fingers on the frame, with no editing - drafts that served as tangible proof of the will to see how Qik worked.

After regular ethnographic online observations, principally on the content of the mobile videos, I tried to understand the way in which the site worked, its interface. But, still having very little information on the, multiple, further usages these mobile videos might have had, I tried contacting its conceivers and founders. However, having no positive reply to my queries, I nearly gave up on understanding how this online mobile visual sharing growing phenomenon worked (70,200 videos posted in January 2009, already around 1,391,900 in March 2009). It was 2009, and the online and offline practices were still mainly perceived as two binomials and separated actions. Reflections on how to make sense of data collection, and interpretation of both online and offline practices as interlinked and complementary actions, were starting to emerge.⁵⁷⁹

There is an underlying question: whether shared or not, how could these personal images be comprehended? Just by viewing them, can we really discuss private images that are not addressed to us? These corpora of personal images are, for a Visual Cultural Studies researcher, intellectual enigmas. How is it possible to discuss, and analyze personal images? André Gunthert remarked that

Bourdieu didn't see the intimacy in the amateur pictures because he had asked that the photos be shown to him... the real private photography, is the one we do not show, the one that there is no need to show, just to share it with those we love, and then keep in a corner, as a relic of happiness.⁵⁸⁰

⁵⁷⁷ Qikkers referred to Qik users.

⁵⁷⁸ J. Fu, personal communication email, 11 November, 2008.

⁵⁷⁹ Orgad, S., Op. cit.

⁵⁸⁰ Gunthert, A. (2012, July 29). Les photos qu'on ne montre pas, *L'Atelier des Icones, Culture Visuelle*, <http://culturevisuelle.org/icones/2469>. Translation is my own: "*Bourdieu n'a pas vu l'intimité des photos*"

A related, yet paradoxical feature, created a drawback in my fieldwork. I found myself trying to study private intimate mobile videos, but, in order to do so, I discovered that: each time I had to find vernacular mobile images, they were publicly shared, either screened in Mobile Festivals, or alternatively online, but I always lacked understanding of the meanings, value and sense their creators wanted to convey through them. The absurd tension between willing to analyze private, semi-private or even intimate vernacular mobile images, but only being able to find them in public places, was constantly present throughout all my work. Yet still, I sought to explore and comprehend their ways of being shared or *non-shared*, their circulations or *non-circulations*. I began to then look more thoroughly at the ergonomics of the platform. For instance, this screenshot portrays what its home page used to look like in 2008.

The design of Qik's homepage was divided into four. Three-quarters were filled with images and only a quarter with text, giving a different weight to the images. The center of the page showed a geolocalization snippet. In the left upper part of the screen, behind a white silhouette of a person, and framed by a greenish yellow lemony, fun and attractive layout, a live Qik video appeared. (See figure 66). However, every time a new video was being uploaded, it was this same frame which hosted different images. It helped to give the impression that the images were completely interchangeable, unlike YouTube, where videos are shown in a blank page, have no frame, and are less underscored. In addition, since the images were interchangeable, in this context it could mean that all images are potentially a scaling factor.

amateur, parce qu'il avait demandé qu'on les lui montre. J'ai pu l'apercevoir parce que je n'ai rien demandé. La vraie photographie privée sont les photos que l'on ne montre pas, que l'on n'a pas besoin de montrer, juste de partager avec ceux qu'on aime, et puis de garder dans un coin, comme une relique du bonheur."

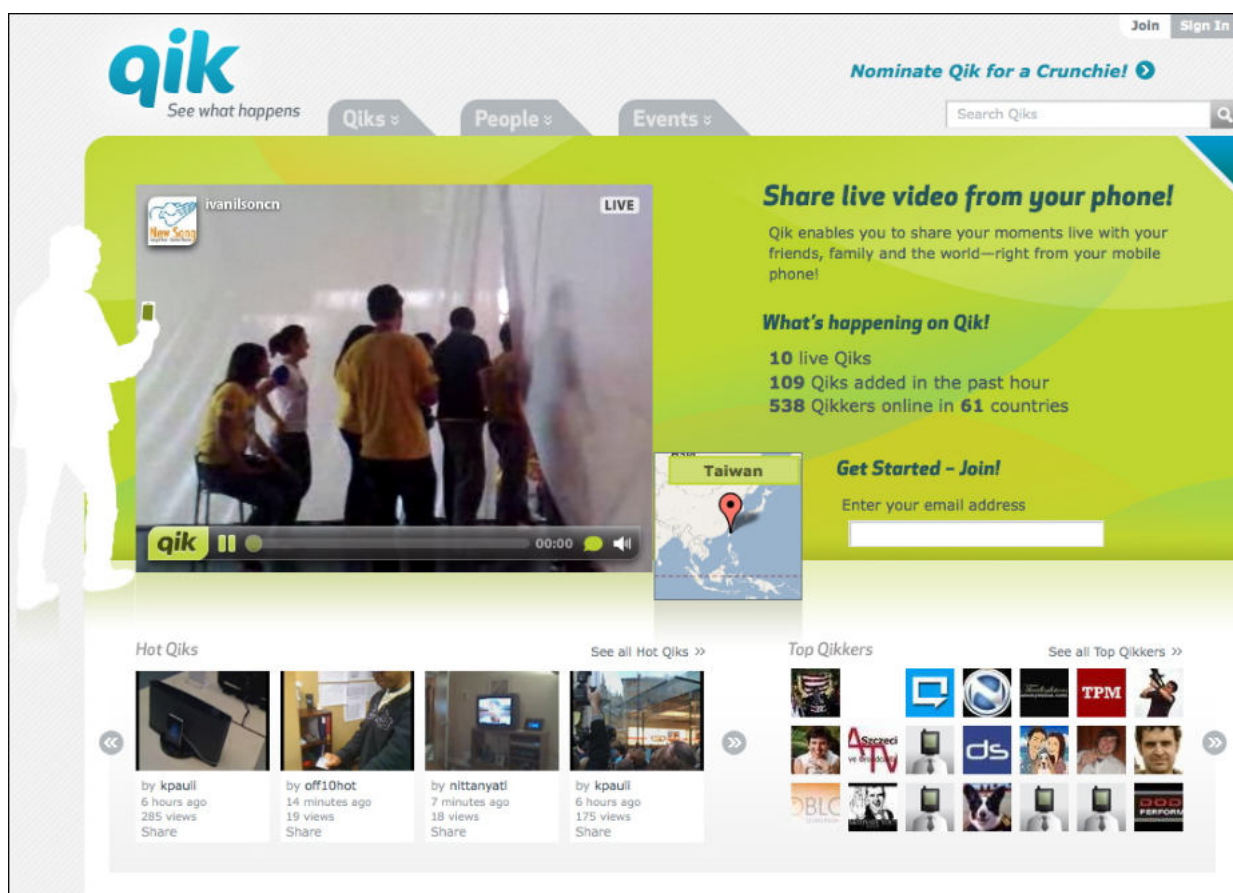


Figure 66. David, G. (December 6, 2008). Qik home page. Screenshot.

However, this does not mean that all images are equal. Qiks⁵⁸¹ were divided in different categories: all, hot, and featured. (See figure 67).

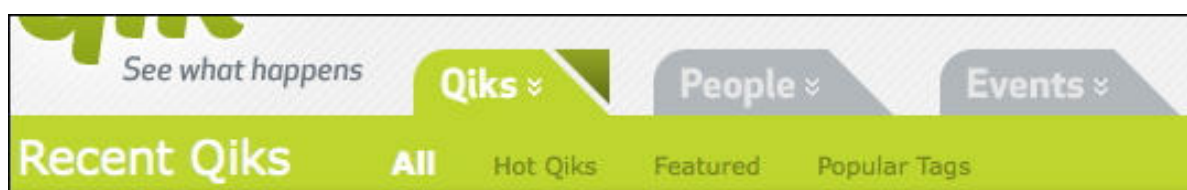


Figure 67. David, G. (December 6, 2008). Qik home page detail. Screenshot.

⁵⁸¹ The videos uploaded or streamed to Qik were called Qiks.

Not understanding their classification, I emailed Qik and asked for taxonomy clarification. The following is the transcript of both the questions and the answers I had emailed and received from Jane Fu, a Qik employee

What is for you a Hot Qik and how do you label one as such?

“We define Hot Qik by number of views”

What does “Featured” mean?

“Featured is not well defined, we mean to let our users feature whatever they like.”

Why do some things appear as live and others do not, while sometimes having the same posting time?

“LIVE is whole the streaming is still going on, while non-live means the users have stopped streaming.”⁵⁸²

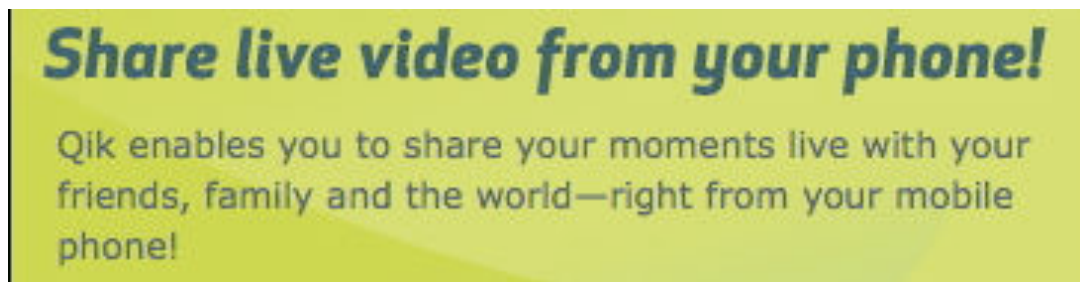


Figure 68. David, G. (December 6, 2008). Qik home page detail. Screenshot.

Jane Fu’s answers explain the shaky indexation, and reveal the freshness of the site. It could also be remarked that, on Flickr and YouTube, home pages are uploaded in their totality, whereas in Qik, due to technical parameters it was only the mobile video itself that changed inside the frame. As figure 68 shows, the verbs in its home page promoted the chance to: “share”, “enable”, “get started”, “join”, “embed” and “see as it happens”. Verbs that enhanced interaction around the iconic productions, but verbs such as *discuss* and *talk* were not part of the narrative of the site.

⁵⁸² J. Fu, personal communication email, 11 November, 2008.

3.2.1. Typology of mobile vernacular videos

As an even stronger shift towards sharing everyday life and the ordinary, the trend of recording with mobiles and sharing what one was experiencing had begun. In February 2009 André Gunthert, Audrey Leblanc, and I, organized at the National Institute of Art History of Paris (INHA) a Study Day (*Journée d'études*), called *La Materialité des Images*, where I proposed a first typology of mobile vernacular videos from this online mobile platform I had been observing: Qik. The site was just six months old, but already stood out from the rest because, differing from YouTube, it only hosted mobile videos that were User Generated Content. Nowadays it is valuable to compare the taxonomy of usage patterns I had proposed, because it will help recall the ten recurrent genres of mobile videos that I had tracked in the site way back in 2009. Most of its topics seemed very banal; almost too banal. At that time, most of those topics were not yet discussed in the media, as they later were. But, as Chalfen puts it “how have we structured our behavior to produce structured views of our lives? We find patterns of shots.”⁵⁸³

The ten main subjects were

1. Food

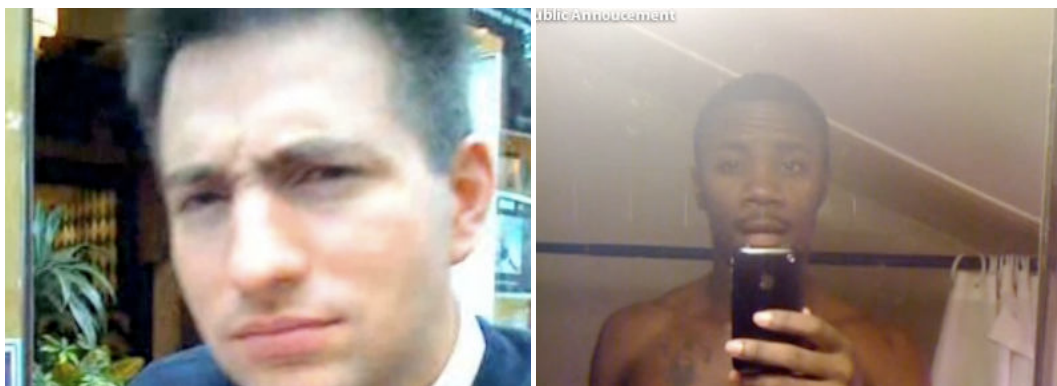
Surprisingly, people started to upload what they ate for lunch and dinner. Nourishment became an identity marker, almost as a proof of existence, I eat therefore I am. Sometimes, it also concerned the celebration of going out. Several years later, various restaurants realized that customers were uploading photos of their dishes, and aided and empowered their clients to do so, even asking them to hashtag the restaurant's name, and offering discounts; while some other fancy eateries felt the need to banish the new practice labeling it as improper etiquette.

⁵⁸³ Chalfen, R. (1987). *Snapshot Versions of life*. Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, p. 48.



2. *Self-mediation* - from 2013 onwards, and after having been considered the word of the year, this practice of self-representation and share began to be called *selfie*.⁵⁸⁴

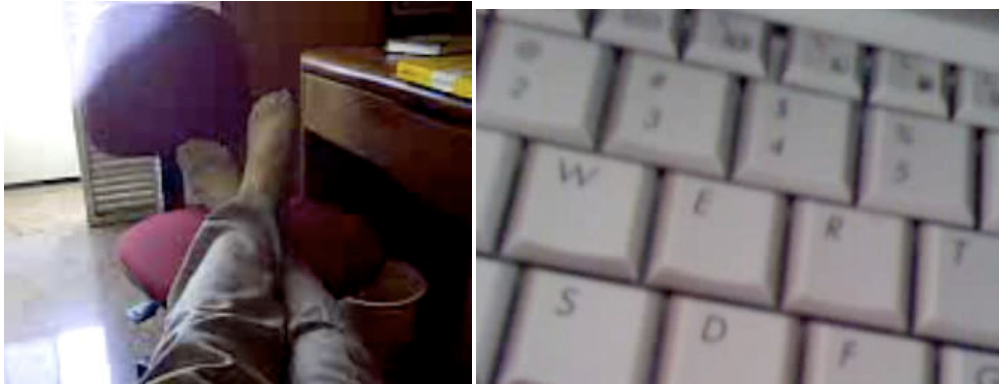
At that time fewer smartphones had a front facing camera, therefore, and facilitated by mirrors, many of the self-shots were taken in the privacy of the bathroom.



3. *Feet*

As part of the embodiment of this self-mediation, everyday objects, mainly those that were at arm's distance (for example keyboards), and parts of the users' body were one of the most shot themes. The subjective smartphone shot and gaze was clearly beginning to emerge.

⁵⁸⁴ Selfies will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.



4. Holidays

As characteristic of vernacular images, vacations became one of the hit themes of smartphone short mobile videos too. Sometimes even associated with the postcard metaphor.⁵⁸⁵ These mobile videos referred to moments when people were travelling, and profiting from the newness of being able to live stream and share their experiences in real time. The act of sending an outlandish small hello to family and friends became more frequent.



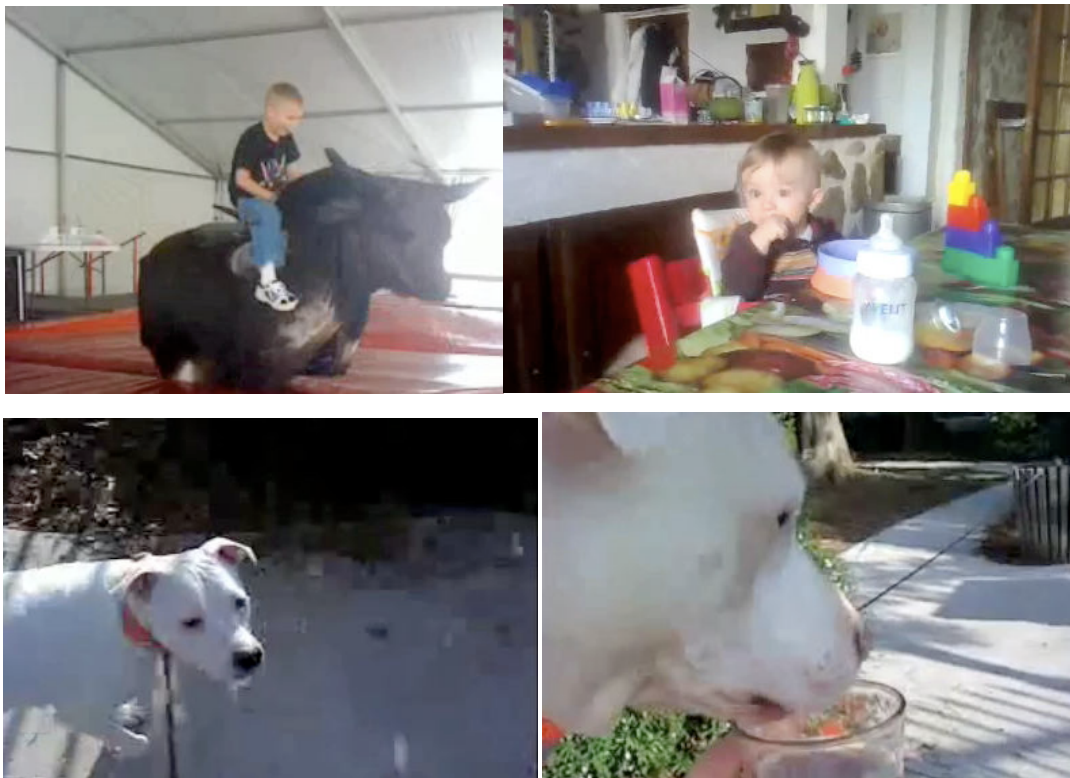
5. Children and 6. Pets

Not surprisingly, some of the most outstanding online “social objects”⁵⁸⁶ are probably images of kids and pets. It is possible to see them grow, eating and playing. But, what is

⁵⁸⁵ Hjorth, L. (2005). FCJ-035 Locating Mobility: Practices of co-presence and the persistence of the postal metaphor in SMS/MMS mobile phone customization in Melbourne, *The Fibreculture Journal*, issue 6, mobility. Retrieved from <http://six.fibreculturejournal.org/fcj-035-locating-mobility-practices-of-co-presence-and-the-persistence-of-the-postal-metaphor-in-sms-mms-mobile-phone-customization-in-melbourne>

⁵⁸⁶ Simon, N. (2010). *The Participatory Museum*. Santa Cruz, Calif: Museum 2.0. Chapter 4: Social Objects. Retrieved from <http://www.participatorymuseum.org/chapter4/>

a social object? “A social object is one that connects the people who create, own, use, critique, or consume it”.⁵⁸⁷ Whether in the real world or the virtual, social objects have a few common qualities. According to Simon they have to be: personal, active, provocative and relational. People have to feel a *personal* connection between them and the object.⁵⁸⁸ *Active* relates to the sense of generating action, they can be either animated or unanimated objects (for instance darts, or a car that splashes many people). Even if *provocation* is not a predictable characteristic, social objects ought to be provocative because they must incite discussion; and *relational*, because they explicitly invite interpersonal use requiring several people to be involved. Before this online sharing, especially images of pets, were scarcely seen, either as publically or, as commonly, as they are now. Nowadays, images of cats, and especially lolcats are very common online funny and affective currency.



⁵⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid.

7. *Special events*

Like birthdays, weddings, or even rarely, special sad events – not necessarily happy ones, like this baby in hospital care.



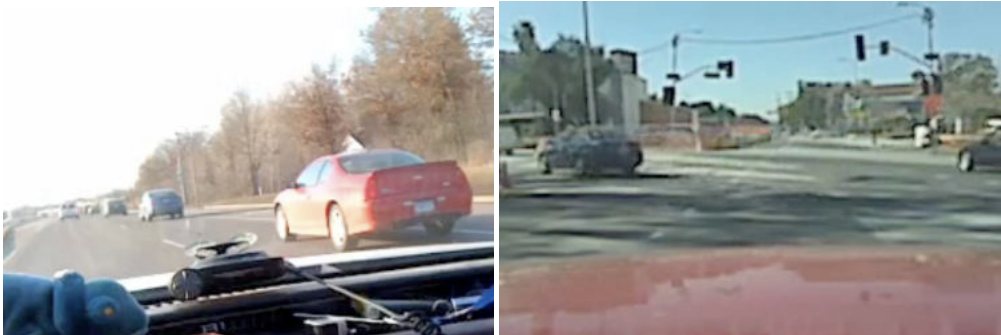
8. *Screens*

As a means to record other screen displays, the mobile phone serves to record and help memorize.



9. *Cars and mobility*

Intrinsic to the mobile spirit, cars represent independence, mobility, and also became somewhere where many users started to film and create mobile films while on the move.



10. Collective demonstrations

In 2009, the amateur mobile videos that denoted the witnessing of collective demonstrations were not as frequently seen as they later were. It was still the time when press articles were arguing about the citizen journalist myth that had then taken hold, and that were previously discussed in section one. Obviously, this myth and practice came hand in hand with the smartphone boom, and the slow but increasing adoption curve of visual apps such as Qik. In 2010, the sharing of amateur street demonstration images became particularly visible with the Arab Spring, and soon came to be part of a larger and global movement, as a way of recording many other worldwide political events.



Figure 69. David, G. (end 2008 - beginning 2009). The ten previous Qik topic related video screenshots were taken from diverse Qikkers (Qik user accounts), personal collection.

The fact that more people were getting hold of smartphones, unleashed the recording of, and fascination with, mobile images that depicted self-expression, self-presentation,⁵⁸⁹ different lives and faraway places. Everyday life came to be more frequently displayed online. These images suddenly appeared in huge numbers, and were available for viewing in real time. Yet, I still lacked, and so needed, much more data about those visible yet opaque mobile videos. I contacted Qik's human resources and customer services, and many emails were exchanged with Qik employees. I kept on trying to get a reply, and in October/November 2008 I contacted Jane Fu (Qik Product

⁵⁸⁹ Gye, L. (2007). Picture This: the Impact of Mobile Camera Phones on Personal Photographic Practices. *Continuum*, 21(2), pp. 279–288, p. 282.

Specialist) and Meng Kiat, in March 2009.⁵⁹⁰ I also succeeded in contacting Alex Motrenco, its Russian director. But none of them answered. I even emailed Bhaskar Roy one of Qik's founders, yet still my questions remained unanswered. On the 6th of April 2010, I had asked them the following 15 questions by email.

1. How many videos are uploaded each day?
2. How many videos are downloaded each day?
3. Can you keep track of where people mainly embed their videos?
4. How many are empty accounts?
5. How many groups are there?
6. How many contacts does a typical user have?
7. How long is a video, in average?
8. Why/ how did you decided to change the page design, the color code?
9. Why is the place map now always present?
10. Percentage of comments done
11. How many videos are added in Qik each month since its creation?
12. Countries' percentages
13. Technical explanation of how Qik works
14. Since there are no advertisements, how does the site make economic profit?
15. How are the deals with the telecom operators done?

Probably due to the company's confidentiality, or being symbolic of a lack of interest in academic research, or perhaps an illustration of the weak links between academia and this specific mobile company (or the research and industry in a broader sense); neither the quantitative nor qualitative questions that I raised succeeded in provoking a response.

⁵⁹⁰ On 4 March 2009, one of Meng's answers was: "I am afraid I cannot answer that question as we are unable to divulge such information as of now to our users."

3.3. Communities of Practice as Mobile Playgrounds: From Artistic Venues to Mobile Apps

Even if the aforementioned 10-topic taxonomy illustrates a selfie archeology, a proto selfie-moment - the legitimation of anybody's and everybody's life as picture worthy of recording - was still not a mainstream practice. In an anchoring and grounding moment, groups of peers who have the same centers of interest, have always demonstrated how key they are in identity construction. Sociologist Etienne Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder defined

Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis.⁵⁹¹

Communities of practice function as learning partnerships, as a social connection that focuses on similar curiosities. They are a place where people can engage and learn, sharing their knowledge on the learning itself. It subsists in the way individuals socially organize their discussions, and exchange experiences. The community of practice group can be short-term or long-term valued,⁵⁹² helping to improve skills, reduce costs and access information faster. It also includes less tangible outcomes, such as trust or an increased ability to innovate,⁵⁹³ a crucial fact in these adoption and legitimation processes.

Based on this theory, the following cases examine three different periods and situations of mobile communities of practice, enabling a sequential and comparative study that was done every two years. The first case studies an offline artistic event defined as an Eyephoneography exhibition that took place in Madrid in 2010. It was the first

⁵⁹¹ Wenger, E., McDermott, R., & Snyder, W. (2002). *Cultivating communities of practice: A guide to managing knowledge*. Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard Business School Press.

⁵⁹² Ibid. p. 16.

⁵⁹³ Ibid. p. 15.

European mobile photo exhibition. The second was the *Regards de Femmes*' collective group exhibition in Paris, held in 2012. This *Community of practice* group illustrates the importance of Instagram practitioners to steward knowledge, and exemplifies the significance of a social forum to a larger possible scope of practitioners.⁵⁹⁴ The last case I develop in detail is the study of two teenager focus groups. In fact, even if they are not artistically driven as both former community of practice groups were, my hypothesis is that close friend groups (can) work as (if they were) a community of practice as well.⁵⁹⁵

From a more offline artistic drive to a more app dynamic, these groups serve “to strengthen and reify social bonds and to demonstrate cultural and group membership”,⁵⁹⁶ and illustrate that significant amounts of photographic content is shared on these mobile social networking sites. Therefore, I will discuss in detail how the role of a mobile social networking site can be central in the shaping of identity, and thus be snapshot and domestic photography.⁵⁹⁷

3.3.1. Offline: Eyephoneography, Madrid 2010

In 2010 whilst doing fieldwork, I travelled to Madrid to visit Spain's first Eyephoneography exhibition. Eyephonography is a pun on the phonetics of “eye” and “I”. Iphoneography is the art of creating photos with an iPhone. Eyephonography is a series of exhibits and activities around mobile photography and the work of international mobile photographers. Not far from the Museum Nacional del Prado, The Hub, a hip up and coming setting, hosted this *avant garde* mobile event. I had previously exchanged emails with the event organizer (personal communication, 16th September 2010). Rocío Nogales was the Eyephoneography's administrator, and also the person in charge of their Facebook page. Because usually *vernissages* are not the best place to have long chats or interviews with the artists or exhibition organizers, we had a

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid. p. 12.

⁵⁹⁵ Aziz, F. (2014). Transactions visuelles, *Études photographiques*, N° 31, Printemps. Retrieved from <http://etudesphotographiques.revues.org/3388>

⁵⁹⁶ Sarvas, R. & Frohlich, D. (2011). *From snapshots to social media: The changing picture of domestic photography*. R. Harper (Ed.). London: Springer-Verlag, p. 94.

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid.

very brief and informal encounter. Therefore, Rocío invited me to join them the day after, in a “collective photo-walk” she had organized; but staying in Madrid just for a weekend, I had to decline the invitation.

Four mobile photographers exhibited their work and the vernissage resembled a typical art opening: cocktails, and trendy people engaged in small talk and admiring the exhibits. Prints were hung on display, available for purchase, and postcards of the photographs were sold as well. I remember being unimpressed by the exhibit, the small size of the prints, the off-circuit, unknown space, and I felt that by being hung, the images now transformed into pictures and lost their specificity, their mobility, as they were fixed on walls, decontextualized and recontextualized; as Berger put it, its meanings multiplied and fragmented into many other meanings.⁵⁹⁸

At that time mobile photo sharing sites were not yet popular, neither in Spain, nor France where I live. It was only around two years after I had begun to use photo-sharing apps myself that I was able to appreciate what I had experienced way back in 2010. The transition from viewing the mobile images, no longer on the device but hung on the walls, was a very significant step in the acceptance and adoption of the mobile as a photo-recording tool. Similar to the cultural validation line that the Pocket Films Festival provided to the pocket films, this first Eyephoneography exhibition belonged to the mobile photography cultural enhancement. How did the making of mobile phone photography become more accepted, shifting from the artistic or pseudo artistic margins to the mainstream? Throughout the years, and as time passed, mobile photos became more accepted and its creations exalted.⁵⁹⁹

⁵⁹⁸ Berger, J., Blomberg, S., Fox, C., Dibb, M., & Hollis, R. (2008). *Ways of seeing*. London: British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books. (First published in 1972), p. 12.

⁵⁹⁹ Halpern, M., & Humphreys, L. (4 November 2014). *Iphoneography as an emergent Art World*, Prezi presentation, <https://prezi.com/w2vt-6xpsrnn/iphoneography-as-an-emergent-art-world/>

3.3.2. Online: Regards de Femmes, Paris 2012

Paris had to wait two full years for something similar to the Madrilenian Eyephoneography exhibit to take place. It was in 2012, from October to November, that the first Paris Mobile Photo Week took place. Eighteen artists, Instagrammers, iphonographers, iPhotographers, were all hanging their shots and having their first moments as artists in the Bastille Design Center. It should also be mentioned that around the same time, the well-known exhibit, Paris Photo, was also taking place. Scheduling Mobile Paris around Paris Photo demonstrates the will to inscribe the mobile photo trend in a larger photographic mainstream track.

Moreover, there was another collective group called *Regards de Femmes* that was exhibiting too. *Regards de Femmes* was a group of 10 women in their 30-40s, all amateur Instagrammers, sharing the same passion: to be iPhone photographers. The creation of the group was lead by the French mobile photographer Eloise Capet, who organized and curated the exhibition. With around 3000 followers, also known in Instagram under the pseudo of @tsubame33_, already recognized world wide through many mobile photo festival awards, she is also the president of the MOBAG Paris Association, Mobile Art Group of Paris. Eloise talked to me about how she perceives her mobile creations, about playing and performing, about having emotions captured and conversations embodied. She sees her mobile and its apps as a post-production lab that she carries with her everywhere. To December 2013, the initial *Regards de Femmes*' members had met four times, trying to keep a once monthly frequency. Each time the meetings were in their own homes or at their parents' homes. This demonstrates the intimate level of relationships. The interviews I did were held in Paris during their exhibit (7th of December 2012) in the locality of a surrealistic huge private space called Flatteurville, For some of the participants, it was the first time they would meet offline. All of them agreed that having this opportunity to meet, and share a full weekend together was something extraordinarily enriching. This joins the "onlife" concept that supports the view that the online groups are to be intertwined with the offline life.⁶⁰⁰

⁶⁰⁰ Gómez Cruz, E. (2012). *De la Cultura Kodak a la imagen en red. Una etnografía sobre fotografía*

Regards de Femmes had a Facebook group and an Instagram feed that they used when there was a collective venue to add. They had got to know each other through their images and by commenting through the app, as well as in real life. Each of their stories reveals not only a desire to take photographs, but also to communicate through the platform, to meet people, to belong to a group, and be part of a movement that was born in their pockets. This belonging forged more than one strong friendship. For example, at the beginning Audrey, Celine and Meredith started as reciprocated followers. They later began to comment and chat, and realized they lived not far from each other. Audrey and Meredith lived just a few blocks apart.

“We shopped in the same shops, bought our groceries in the same grocery stores, are more or less around the same age, have the same passion (Instagram), but did not know each other, just for this, Instagram is fantastic.” “I remember the day we met”, “Yes, me too”. “We had been chatting until I said, look out of the window”, “Then she popped her head out and I took the photo of her looking down from the window and she took mine standing outside in the street. It was hilarious.” (dialogue between Audrey and Meredith)

Celine, pseudonym Noremi78 is 34 years old. She lives in Marseille, as part of a couple and used to work in import-exports but is currently on maternity leave. She tells me that she has always loved taking photographs but mainly did it during holidays and she shot mostly landscapes. She has been using Instagram for a year, more or less since January 2011, and is now deeply interested in portraits. The photo app has become for her “a compulsion, somewhere to be all the time.” Celine is quite happy having been hooked for a while, plus exhibiting in Paris has helped to slightly relieve her Instagram obsession.

Meeting other women like her, who share the same passion, has been very helpful as well. During 2012 Celine posted around 656 photos, an average of one or two images a

day and she has 2134 followers, even if many are *ghost followers* (as of the 24th of December 2012). Celine explains that ghost followers or commonly also called lurkers, is the name given to those who do not post anything, follow active members, but do not partake in liking, commenting, messaging and posting. She does not even know who they are, they could even be trolls, or bought followers, but in this anonymity, what haunts her the most is that they do not have any kind of interaction with her. Interaction is key. Instagram and the other applications she uses are there to help her rework her photos but, above all, to post them immediately.

Why participate in virtual conversations? I ask.

“When I take a portrait of someone I send him/her a message through Kik (an instant messaging app that also allows to exchange videos, sketches, emoticons and more) to ask the person if she is OK with me posting it in public.”

“Sometimes I also use Kik to demand for advice to one of the girls from the group (Regards de Femmes) because their opinion counts for me; if they say they do not like the pic I will reflect whether I’ll post it or not.”

“For example when I shoot their portraits I want them to feel beautiful, this is important to me, so want to I check if they feel OK with the way I pictured them.”

“Also... this is like a Photo club.”

So, why not join a real one?

“Because this one is free, works 24/7 and from wherever you are, and having kids, this is much better!”

In the 60s Kodak sponsored research and its practices were studied and analyzed by Pierre Bourdieu, in his book, *Photography: A Middle- Brow Art*.⁶⁰¹ Among other

⁶⁰¹ Bourdieu, P. (dir), Boltanski, L., Castel, R., & Chamboredon, J. C. (1965). *Un Art Moyen, essay sur les usages sociaux de la photographie*. Paris: Éditions de Minuit.

conclusions, Bourdieu noted that the camera clubs of the 1960s established their own norms, values, and systems of aesthetic judgment, so as to legitimate practices, styles, and subjects that were relatively unique to a specific community that had artistic and social-class aspirations, they were the serious amateurs. Resemblances to what Bourdieu had studied but in regard to the French, were developed in Chalfen's book *Snapshot Versions of life*, from which I would like to highlight his definition of the "Kodak culture".⁶⁰² The Kodak culture describes the "knowing how to use visual media in home communication". Years later, Sarvas and Frohlich referred to this as the "Kodak path".

According to the latter authors, the Digital Path, started in the 1990s and exists today. Closer in meaning to Sarvas and Frohlich's book is drawn through the Flickr communities case study analyzed in 2000s by Gómez Cruz.⁶⁰³ Today it is neither a Kodak, nor a Nokia, nor a Flickr culture but more an app culture, or even a Snapchat culture that is being designed. So, some essential differences exist as well. The size of online photo communities is stronger, as is their focus on mobility and ephemera.⁶⁰⁴ According to Murray, the category of *ephemera* "seems to speak to a new aesthetic and function – one dedicated to the exploration of the urban eye and its relation to decay, alienation, kitsch, and its ability to locate beauty in the mundane. Some have claimed that it is indeed a new category of photography."⁶⁰⁵ They also reflect Wenger's "communities of practice".⁶⁰⁶ This means that if a group of people share a concern or a passion for something they do, they (can) learn how to do it better if they interact regularly and in a social interaction processes; furthermore, nowadays, it would be better to give them the more precise name of "*instant* communities of practice".⁶⁰⁷ Mobile photographers can immediately see, the feedback, the likes, in other words, the reception and comments a posted picture may have.

⁶⁰² Chalfen, R. (1987). *Snapshot Versions of life*. Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press.

⁶⁰³ Gómez Cruz, E. (2012). *De la Cultura Kodak a la imagen en red. Una etnografía sobre fotografía digital*. Barcelona: Editorial UOC.

⁶⁰⁴ Murray, S. (2008). Digital Images, Photo-Sharing, and Our Shifting Notions of Everyday Aesthetics. *Journal of Visual Culture*, 7(2), pp. 147–163, p. 158.

⁶⁰⁵ Murray, S., Op. cit. p. 155.

⁶⁰⁶ Wenger, E. (1999). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁶⁰⁷ Castells, M., Fernandez-Ardevol, M., Linchuan, Q., & Jack-Sey, A. (2007). *Mobile communication and society: A global perspective*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, p. 249, emphasis added.

Celine tells me she has around 30 photo apps, but Hipstamatic is the one she uses the most. “It is the one that enables to crop the photo easily if I ever take the photo with the camera that comes embedded in the iPhone.” The filters she uses the most are Grunge or Snapseed. Each of the *Femmes* tries to have a personal style, an authorship, a recognizable signature.

Meredith and Audrey. Thanks to Instagram they have become very close friends and even asked to do the interview together. Meredith, pseudonym, geygey, 39 years old, is a social worker who lives in Saint Etienne. An early adopter, she has been on Instagram almost since its launch, the 16th of December 2010 was the date she posted her first photo. In the peak of her popularity geygey had around 10 thousand followers. But later on she decided to make a selection, removed ghost followers and decreased this number, first to 6 thousand, and then to 4142 followers. To remove ghosts you manually unfriend the ghost user and then change the accounts privacy settings. Geygey explains that she has also erased all the photographs she felt were too intimate. As of the 24th of December 2012, she only had 1220 photos online. In 2015, the pseudo geygey is no longer on Instagram.

“After two years I have surpassed my honeymoon period with Instagram. ... and even if it is true that I have got to know many people, handing my privacy was something that was not easy to master... the use of the filters might also represent the need to filter intimacy, put an atmosphere, filter your day.”

She recognized she was no longer dazzled by Instagram, and admitted that she was about to start posting in EyeEm, another photo sharing app, soon. As many of her contacts are from the United States, she seems to be an early adopter of trends and apps, especially those that are not yet well known in France. I also asked her if she is planning to work with Mobile Photography in her job, to which she answered affirmatively. “There are some ideas of working with the Third Age, and recording their way of life, their scenes of daily life...”, she added.

Audrey, pseudonym Odrelom, 36 years old, lives in Saint Etienne, and has two children. In the past she used to be a professional painter, but since the birth of her kids she no longer has studio space. Currently she works as a nanny. In Instagram she found the answer to her “*need of image creation*”, with no need for a studio, lab or any physical place, she became a mobile photographer. Since the 3rd of January 2011, Audrey has posted 800 photos. As of the 24th of December 2012, she had 648 a collection of photos. However, she decided to erase around 200, those she later felt were too intimate. Most of them were images she had uploaded before having such notoriety and visibility, and which were mainly pictures of her children or of herself, and photos that she later felt were too intimate to share with such a large public.

“I had to purge my account, and since the site is not done for you to erase photos, it took me like three days to do so ... You have to keep on scrolling up and go back in time, and unless you are very dedicated you just give up.”

She had 2158 followers. Are you on Facebook? I asked. Do you post any of these photos in this social networking site? “Instagram has made me quit Facebook”, she said. We laugh as she personifies the apps. Because these practices demand so much time, Audrey talks about them as if they were people, and as if one had forced her to quit it for the other. On Facebook, I later found that she had two accounts.

How do you deal with copyright?

Audrey: “Well, we are aware that the photographs we post can be used, but the drive to share them is bigger and Instagram is our exhibiting support, we love it and are its slaves too.”

As if a premonition, just a couple of weeks after the interviews, on the 18th of December 2012, Instagram updated its Terms of Service (ToS) allowing the company the right to sell users’ photos to third parties without notification or compensation after January

16th, 2013. That same day, gegey posted no photo, just a sentence calling for a boycott of the site until the 16th of January. And although soon after, Kevin Systrom, Instagram's founder, backed down, in one week (as for the 24th of December 2012) gegey's petition had 108 likes and 30 comments from 21 users. After gegey started the dialog and set the tone by commenting: "nothing else to say expect gone from here" [sic].

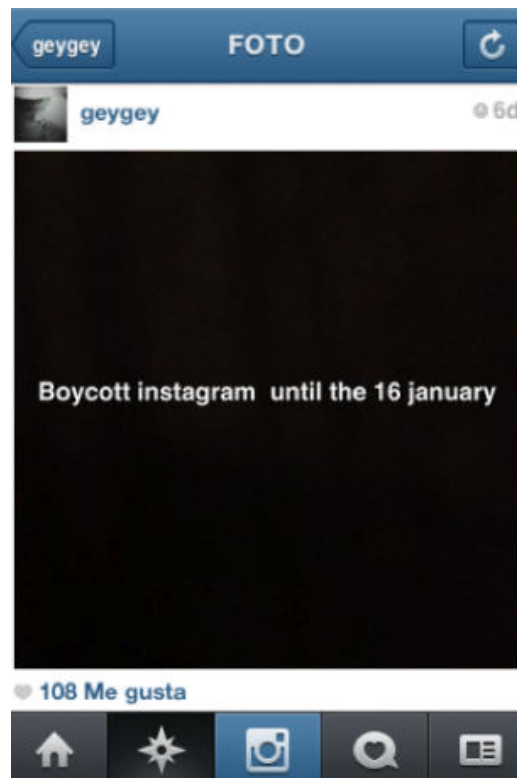


Figure 70. David, G. (December 2012). "Boycott instagram until the 16 january" [gegey's Instagram account update]. Screenshot detail.

The question of copyright is an interesting yet unresolved question to ask artists and photographers that live off of their art and use apps such as Instagram to share their work. Many take the opposite position to gegey's. They understand that such actions do not compete with the other means of profiting from their work, but instead complement it.

In regards to copyright matters, the comments in gegey's Instagram account can be divided in the following way

- 8 acknowledge they are leaving Instagram (geygey, lumilyon, manureze)⁶⁰⁸
- 7 propose other alternatives such as Starmatic, EyeEm, Tadaa or express where they have opened their new accounts (newinemo, alisbon, titesafo, 1126as, jeanleroux, picnicketimekorybalski, geygey)
- 4 share importing tips or frustrations (ceceama, shoeboxtony, geygey)
- 4 are feelings of sadness, rage or thankfulness (razhe, geygey)
- 2 people “hope to meet again soon in another site”. (shoeboxtony, stephenkparker)
- 2 state that the digital revolution has started (owenlaider, viewfindre)
- 2 are farewell messages
- 1 question “what is this loop about?”

Through their comments users show how they are active, how they can have confronted opinions on the platform itself, and not *only* images to feed the site. These are signs of how they try to objectify this expression and interaction space, which might be changing. In the interview, gegey and Odrelom also talked about Flickr, but neither of them had a clear idea of how the site had worked in the past, before mobile internet, and did not associate the photo-sharing site with any vernacular practice. Flickr, nowadays also available as a mobile app, could see a new boom. But in fact, Flickr became a collaborative experience: “a shared display of memory, taste, history, signifiers of identity, collection, daily life and judgment through which amateur and professional photographers collectively articulate a novel, digitized aesthetic of the everyday”.⁶⁰⁹ Besides, many other new photo-hosting platforms have fragmented its popularity.

Years later, in 2015 another Instagrammer friend, and mobile researcher colleague, Sven Buridans posted this Facebook status update

Fed up of receiving “likes” on Instagram, coming from
brands community managers (McDonalds, Remax,

⁶⁰⁸ Sometimes, like in this case, the number of times does not illustrate the number of users quoted - there are only three users - but they acknowledge it eight times.

⁶⁰⁹ Murray, S. (2008). Digital Images, Photo-Sharing, and Our Shifting Notions of Everyday Aesthetics. *Journal of Visual Culture*, 7(2), pp. 147–163, p. 149.

Kitchen, etc.) I'll close my account in not long. Since 2011, I've made acquaintances, found blessed and beautiful artistic nuggets, but this platform is turning around in circles and ultimately has no other interest but for marketing departments that are trying to catch up on their pitiful retard on this exchange "phenomenon".

@pixetoile will soon say ciao to Instagram, as it's time to move on.

closing up the shop ! ⁶¹⁰

Usually most of the brands take their time to get in phase with ordinary uses. However, as it will be later discussed in more detail, the brand's adoption time gap has remarkably decreased. Mainstream brands have joined Snapchat at a quicker pace.

Q: Apart from this friendship experience have you faced any other strong encounter, like any flirting?

Sure !!! (and they both laugh). On Instagram there is a lot of flirting. There have even been encounters, and there is even an Instagram baby! That is the reason why we have decided to step back from the sharing of our personal lives and work more on projects. Now, what we post is more a sort of mise en scene, staged. However, many people still do not get it, and think that our photos are us, and cannot make the distinction between fictional, and real life.

This reminded me that way back in 2009 I met a couple that had got married thanks to Flickr. When I asked them how they had met, they told me that it was through their

⁶¹⁰ Buridans, S. (2015, July 15). I translate: "*Ras-le-bol de recevoir des "like" sur Instagram de la part de représentants de marques (McDo, Remax, Kitchen ché pas quoi, etc.) Je vais fermer mon compte dans pas long. J'y ai fait de belle rencontres et découvert de sacrées pépites artistiques depuis 2011 mais cette plateforme tourne en rond et n'a finalement plus d'autre intérêt que pour des départements de marketing qui tente de rattraper leur piteux retard sur ce « phénomène » d'échange. @pixetoile dira bientôt ciao à Instagram car il est temps de passer à autre chose. Fermez le ban !*". [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/sven.buridans?fref=nf&pnref=story>

Flickr photographs. I recall that not being a “digital native”, but a “digital immigrant”⁶¹¹ it did sound bizarre. Then, years later, it was the turn of my own personal encounter. The first time I met someone offline thanks to an online photo-sharing site, happened on the 13th of May 2013: I met Galla, a 37-year-old man from Senegal, jurist and Instagrammer. We had exchanged online comments, either on his or on my photos, and almost naturally, we decided to meet offline. While getting acquainted, we discussed Instagram. I asked him how many people he had met by this means, and he said just two. I was the second. Similar to Audrey and Meredith, the first one was a neighbor of his. They both realized they lived nearby due to the images they were posting. He told me he was also about to meet another guy, but that it had not happened yet due to personal schedules. As we continued talking, Galla explained me he took photos every day, took his time in the post-production and uploaded them later. However, he continued: “I just do not understand what drives a lady such as... to upload an image of her such as this one...”, he said, as he stretched out his arm, showing me the photo in discussion on his phone, a photo from his IG feed. The picture was an artsy-porn black and white shot, of the female genitalia. “Why should a person feel the need to want to post such an image?” he asked me.

Stammering, I answered that maybe it could be exhibitionism or maybe a forfeit, a token in a game (as the French say ‘*cap ou pas cap?*’, capable or not capable of doing such a thing?). Maybe a bet with someone, or maybe it is not even the poster in the photo, and the account’s owner only took the shot... in fact many suppositions and hypothesis which would not be answered, or at least not by us. Galla replied to me, “indeed, all your answer-sentences start with a maybe this or maybe that...” He was right. “These type of images confuse me profoundly.” He continues, “With Instagram I get to take the temperature of society; these photo deposits are just places where I can see, have a feeling on how society is”, he said. But, since he had told me that he liked to comment, and usually did so. The day after our meeting I sent him an instant message chat asking him why he hadn’t commented on the photo, asking its author the reasons behind her

⁶¹¹ Prensky, M. (2001). Digital natives, digital immigrants. *On the Horizon* 9 (5): 1-6.
<http://www.scribd.com/doc/9799/Prensky-Digital-Natives-Digital-Immigrants-Part1> (accessed January 28, 2009). Archived at <http://www.webcitation.org/5eBDYI5Uw>

public sharing. In a couple of hours I got his reply: “I question. I try to put myself in the mind of people. In their mind, it is more interesting not to know immediately.” Galla thinks that raising the question is more important than getting the answer. Nevertheless, as our discussions leaned towards a more explicit topic, I felt he was actually flirting, and trying to direct our relationship down other paths, I decided not to pursue more meetings.

Ornella, pseudonym a lisbon affair. Ornella is an Italian who lives in Lisbon. She is 47, is married, and mother of two. She mainly works as a dress-maker and costume designer for theater. In her own words she started taking photos as a hobby. Nevertheless, after her Instagram account was reported on by a very well-known Portuguese newspaper, she has encountered quite considerable success. As of the 24th of December 2012, her account had 13 thousand followers, and 952 photos. She only works in black and white and most of her pictures relate to a “representation of men and women in this world, but mainly women.... Everything is staged and even if it isn’t I make it look as if it was.” Ornella refers to Instagram as a “*matrix*”, as something virtual. We discussed what we comprehend as “the real and the virtual”. She finally understands my point of view when I tell her that the two hours she spends per day on Instagram are real and not virtual, because the virtual is real too. “Sure, we have all had problems with our husbands.” She answers me illustrating, that she totally agrees. Besides, all of *the Femmes* add that they have often had arguments with their spouses over the time devoted to photo editing. “... they all complain that we spend too much time on it. They are jealous.” Jealous of what? I ask her, “of not sharing the same passion”, she replies. This is what unites this group, *the passion*.

“... these friends (referring to the other women from the group and thus different to other kind of friends) understand that you are here and that in a while you can switch into being in your photos for some minutes and then come back, and there is no problem.”

Finally, after a couple of years *Regards de Femmes* ended as such. Its dissolution demonstrates both that the communities of practices are useful at a certain moment of time, and that offline meetings are crucial for the constituency of the group.⁶¹²

3.4. Why and How to Study Snapchat?

In few years' time, the ease of production increased the many possibilities and diversities in mobile image creation. Even the making and sharing of 'embarrassing' mobile snapshots, ones which are considered funny, stupid, or those that are erotic, has become ubiquitous. Also, what counts as embarrassing for some, can count as amusing for others and vice versa.⁶¹³ However, since the domestication of webcams, the snapshots and the mediatization of people's private spheres has been a frequent topic of debate. Because its characteristic ephemeral feature, Snapchat is a special visual image-sharing app: images *do not* stand on esthetics as their main pillar, but on its fleeting practices. But, in order to outline the next corpus of analysis, I will first describe the stages I underwent to decide what methodology to take to study this particular app and its different sharing practices.

Initially, I focused on the app's reception in the market as of 2013. For this first instance I compiled a corpus through three different ways. The first technique was setting a Google Alert⁶¹⁴ for the word "Snapchat"; the second, by analyzing three comments that appeared in Google Play store's Snapchat app page (five per cent of the total amount of comments), and lastly, by holding an open three-and-a half-hour online

⁶¹² Gómez Cruz, E. (2012). *De la Cultura Kodak a la imagen en red. Una etnografía sobre fotografía digital*. Barcelona: Editorial UOC; David, G. (2015). *De la cultura Kodak a la imagen en red: Una etnografía sobre imagen digital*. *Visual Studies*, Book review, (ahead-of-print), 1-2.

⁶¹³ Haddon, L., & Vincent, J. (2009). Children's Broadening use of Mobile Phones. In Goggin, G. & Hjorth, L. (Eds.). *Mobile Technologies: From Telecommunications to Media* (pp. 37-49). New York: Routledge.

⁶¹⁴ Defined in Wikipedia a "Google Alerts is a content detection notification service, service, offered by the search engine Google, that automatically notifies users when new content from news, web, blogs, video and/or discussion groups matches a set of search terms selected by the user and stored by the Google Alerts service. Notifications can be sent by email, as a web feed, or displayed on the users' iGoogle page. The service is available to the general public as an open beta release." Retrieved 14 May 2013.

chat interview with someone who belonged to a Facebook group called ‘Snapchat Funniest Snapshots’. Then, after having seen that the *online only methods* did not apply properly to what I intended to study and understand (the practices); I decided I needed to follow yet another approach. Some months later, the app became tremendously popular among French youngsters, and therefore I decided that conducting focus groups would be the best methodology. Sometimes iteration is the only way to decide which methodological approach suits best.

Online

3.4.1 The Google Alert as Research Methodology

With the Google Alerts, I decided to go for an interval of seventy days, from the 20th of March 2013 until the 29th of May 2013. By that time I had received thirty alerts. This alert was a measure of time and of the frequency with which the internet was reporting the app’s reception; by doing so, it mirrored and was a meta-reception study of the app’s adoption. After having verified that all the articles I was being alerted about were only in French, I realized that Google Alerts is restricted by your computer’s default language settings. What I learnt online in the web browser’s service forum, was that in order to receive the same alert in multiple languages, one has to create a separate alert, each one in the targeted language. Therefore, it would be more precise to say that the alert samples I had set, and therefore received, were only in French, and thus only mirrored the reception of Snapchat on the French web. They thus enabled, *only* a perception of the French online comments and acceptance. However, the conclusions drawn by this methodology might be considered transposable to webs and websites in other languages.

The Google Alerts only registered two types of content. On one side there were articles that had the word Snapchat in their title, but not necessarily all the articles really dealt with the topic. Moreover, from other feeds that I follow, I found out that the Alert algorithm had not recognized some articles, and this was due to the fact that the word Snapchat did not feature in the title. These Google Alerts however, helped trace how

and where the application was being spotted or discussed online, pointing to what kind of websites and articles were dealing with this topic. I'd divide these latter into five categories: teenagers, innovation, news, (much to my surprise) forums, and, last but not least, only one video, relayed by Fresh News, which happens to be one of Orange's (the telecom operator) blogs. It also led me to obtain some first methodological conclusions described below.

After having read all the alerts, something particularly troubling caught my attention: in all of them I was seeing the same photos over again. In almost all, with but two exceptions, the blog posts that had images had the same illustrations, which were taken from the Snapchat site. In other words, these online articles were using the official corporate pictures used to advertise the app. What happens when Snapchat photos are ephemeral and not circulating online? Precisely this: all the formally published articles have the same images as illustration: the Snapchat logo icon, the trade ghost, or the two female teens that also star as the app's icons. The strategic image pounding helped to install the brand's impact.

Snapchat

Le règne de l'éphémère. Créée en septembre 2011 par des étudiants de l'université de Stanford, Snapchat permet d'envoyer des « Snaps », des photos qui disparaissent au bout de 10 secondes. Carton auprès des lycéens et étudiants américains, le succès s'explique par cette disparition des images : les utilisateurs les prennent ainsi moins au sérieux, et se lâchent, sans surveiller leur image ou leur e-reputation.

Mais les premiers griefs se font entendre contre cette appli : certes l'image est censée disparaître, mais il est très simple de faire une capture d'écran, et d'archiver ainsi les « doss ». **L'appli possède un « blocking system » qui si on réalise la capture de ces éphémères, envoie une notification à celui qui l'a envoyé.** Mais selon de nombreux utilisateurs, elle ne fonctionne pas toujours. De plus, rien ne garantit que l'entreprise ne conserve pas une trace de ces photos. **Facebook a réagi à la création de Snapchat, en proposant son appli Facebook Poke, qui rend éphémères des statuts, photos ou vidéos.**



Figure 71. (March 31, 2013). L'Etudiant Trendy. Screenshot detail. Retrieved from <http://www.letudiant.fr/trendy/geekeries/vie-online/pheed-snapchat-yupeek-vine-les-nouveaux-reseaux-sociaux-preferes-des-etudiants.html>

Le 17 Avril 2013

150 millions de photos échangées sur Snapchat



L'application Snapchat permet de profiter de clichés pendant un laps de temps limité.

Le phénomène Snapchat générerait trois fois plus d'images qu'Instagram

Le PDG de Snapchat, Evan Spiegel, annonce que plus de 150 millions d'images sont envoyées chaque jours depuis son application de prise de vues autodestructrices, rapporte le site Venture Beat. Ce score est à comparer à celui d'Instagram, référence en matière de partage de photos via un terminal mobile et qui revendique de son côté quelque quarante millions de photos échangées. L'originalité de Snapchat est de pouvoir prendre des photos puis de les partager avec ses amis, mais aussi

de pouvoir déterminer pendant combien de temps l'image pourra être vue. De cette manière, il devient amusant de s'échanger, sans risque, des photos tantôt rigolotes, honteuses, voire même coquines.

L'application Snapchat est à télécharger sur l'[App Store](#) (iOS) et [Google Play](#) (Android).

Figure 72. (April 17, 2013). Le Monde Informatique. Screenshot detail. Retrieved from <http://www.lemondeinformatique.fr/actualites/lire-150-millions-de-photos-echangees-sur-snapchat-53265.html>

3.4.2. The Happiness of the Forum

In the line of reception studies, as second option I decided to verify where, and what, people were commenting about the app. As of the 2nd of May 2013, I found that in the Google Play store's Snapchat app page (in French) there were 60 comments.⁶¹⁵ Reading forums, discussion sites, and checking people's online rankings - even if these people are unknown to the researcher - can be one of the many online research measures to allow a perception of a general assessment on how customers are receiving, adopting and consuming commodities, goods, apps, services, etc. It can also serve as a historical trace: by reading the social influence of internet forums, and seeing how, at a certain moment in time, youngsters perceive a particular commodity. In the forums, where the age frame found was 15-18, questions varied from how to delete an account to trying to get more

⁶¹⁵ Google Play Snapchat app page. The sixty comments were checked on the 2nd of May 2013, <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.snapchat.android>

followers. This is because in Snapchat, in order to find, and thus acquire more followers, you need to know the person's pseudonym; firstly to uncover them, and secondly to add them as a contact.

From Google Play store's Snapchat app page, I have carefully chosen the following three quotes, which I felt best represented the general opinions. I picked these comments, 5% of the total amount, because they appeared to be the most repeated themes, and emblematically related to what the online mainstream media was saying. For instance



Régis Décamps - 1 janvier 2013 - Samsung Galaxy S2 équipé de la version 1.6.0

★★★★★ **Concept intéressant, gâché par une mauvaise ergonomie**

Le concept de la photo qui s'auto-détruit quand on la voit est original. Certainement utile pour les discussions coquines. Il faut tout de même se méfier par la fausse impression de sécurité. Quelqu'un qui veut garder l'image envoyée pourra le faire. Surtout, l'interface est faible. Par exemple, on est notifié quand quelqu'un nous ajoute dans ses contacts, mais il n'y a pas de façon simple de l'ajouter dans nos propres contacts. Il est possible d'ajouter du texte sur une photo, mais de façon peu intuitive

“The concept of the picture that self-destructs when you see it is original. Certainly useful for naughty discussions. It must still be wary of the false sense of security. Someone who wants to keep the image sent will be able to do so. Above all, the interface is weak. For example, we are notified when someone adds us to his/her contacts, but there is no simple way to add him/her to our own contacts (reciprocity). It is possible to add text to a photo, but in an unintuitive way.”⁶¹⁶
Régis Décamps

According to his commentary, Régis thinks that the logic of the interface is inventive, but he is suspicious about its possibility for leaks. A possible link could be done with the hook up apps, which were also gaining in popularity; he never opines about the amusing

⁶¹⁶ Translation is my own.

side the app has, and criticizes its non-reciprocity. He gives it two stars saying that it is an “interesting concept, wasted by bad ergonomics.”



Sandrine Fichet - 26 avril 2013 - Samsung Galaxy S3 ☞

★★★★★ **Marrant**

Marrant sans plus. Mais ma sœur est addict alors ça dépend de ta dose de folie dans ta vie...

“Fun but not more. But my sister is addicted so it depends on the dose of craziness there is in your life...”

⁶¹⁷ Sandrine Fichet

In Sandrine’s comment her sister’s age is unknown. This missing data is very important, if not crucial, to better understand her statement, and thus her sister’s usages; nevertheless, she openly verbalizes that it all depends on how you use it. She gives it three stars and catalogues it with three stars and as “Fun”.



Benoit Flot - 30 avril 2013 - Samsung Galaxy Gio équipé de la version 2.1.0 ☞

★★★★★ **Excellent**

Cette application permet de prendre une belle photo bien moche sur quelqu'un et de l'envoyer à quelqu'un pendant quelques secondes avant qu'elle soit supprimée ! Au final tout le monde est content :)

“This application enables (users) to make a beautiful photo of someone quite ugly and to send it to someone some seconds before it is destroyed! At last everybody is happy ☺” ⁶¹⁸ Benoit Flot

Benoit’s remark illustrates quite bluntly what the app is: It has the lightness of ephemerality (“some seconds before it is destroyed!”), the joy of play (“At last everybody

⁶¹⁷ Translation is my own.

⁶¹⁸ Translation is my own.

is happy ☺”), and the sureness of trust in strong ties (as if taking for granted that the photo will not be screenshot before it disappears.) It is as an infinite game. By infinite game I take James P. Carse’s distinction between finite and infinite games: “Finite games are defined by external rules, have the purpose of winning and thus ending the game. Infinite games are internally defined. They are played for no other purpose than to continue the game itself”.⁶¹⁹ In the case of Snapchat, people play a mobile hide-and-seek mediated visual game. According to Benoit it is just excellent, and therefore he gives it five stars. Moreover, on Google Play app’s store page there is another app that allows viewing and *saving* friends’ Snapchats. Just by logging in with your Snapchat account, and then downloading the images and videos *SnapGrapple* should enable viewing of all images and videos, an unlimited amount of times, and images and videos may be saved to the SD-card simply by tapping on them. However, images that have already been opened cannot be opened in the original Snapchat app. Unlike the former free one, this app costs US\$ 1.75. Most users prefer to use free apps, I decided likewise and did not opt to purchase the paying app. When choosing and downloading apps, cost is a parameter that counts.

3.4.3. Chat Interview

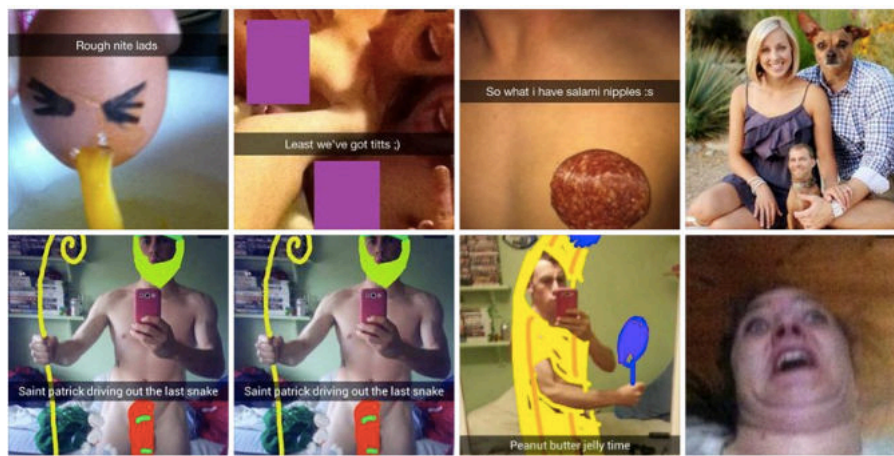


Figure 73. Snapchat Funniest Snapshots Facebook page. (2013). Screenshot detail. personal collection.

⁶¹⁹ de Lange, M. L. (2010). *Moving circles mobile media and playful identities*, (Doctoral dissertation). Rotterdam: Erasmus Universiteit, Netherlands. Retrieved from <http://www.bijt.org/wordpress/2010/11/21/download-my-phd-dissertation-moving-circles/p.53>.

The third methodology used, aimed at interviewing people who had liked a Facebook group called “Snapchat Funniest Snapshots”, that later changed its name to “Snapchat Funniest Screenshots”. For geographical reasons and after verifying with its members, I selected those users whose home city was set as Paris, hoping that in a near future we could meet face-to-face. I sent them a Facebook message asking if they would agree to answer some questions for an academic purpose. For reasons of anonymity I did not ask them as friends; I had just sent eight different emails to these unknown persons, requesting for them to respond to how they used Snapchat and what they liked about the app. From the eight messages I sent out, I only received one answer and it was to decline.

It was from Emma (14), saying: “Hi, no sorry, that’s ok, it’s just that I don’t know you.” Although I understood her reservations, as I saw she was online, I tried my luck again, and wrote her back explaining that it was for an academic research study for University. The first email I had sent was dated Friday May 4th, 2013. Our online conversation started the day after on May 5th, 2013. It was after chatting in real time just a couple of minutes, that I perceived she seemed more at ease, and we started an instant message exchange that started at 11:15 and lasted until 2:44, around three and a half hours. The interview was held entirely online. Knowing that most unknown interviewees prefer visual anonymity, I decided not to use any webcam.⁶²⁰ The communication was synchronous, i.e. we interacted in real time. The interview was done through typed words only; we did not use images, gif or emojis, nor exchange any photo. Both of us were connected by a computer. With Facebook being our online environment, this meeting environment set an informal and laid back atmosphere and framed a high level of immediacy. Emma’s primary negative reaction illustrates the initial normal fear and unease one may experience when chatting with a stranger. For some, mistrust can be amplified if the exchange happens online. I reassured her saying that we could meet, at the University, but she explained that she lived in Australia. “oh... bizarre .. cause in the group, your home town appeared as if Paris ...” I replied, but knowing she was online,

⁶²⁰ Fielding, N., & Macintyre, M. (2006). Access Grid Nodes in Field Research. *Sociological Research Online*, 11(2). Retrieved from <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/11/2/fielding.html>; Salmons, J. (2010). *Online interviews in real time*, Chapter 6. Preparing for a Live Online Interview. Los Angeles: Sage, pp. 121-139.

and since I did not want to lose this opportunity, I quickly typed: “well... in any case do you use Snapchat ? Who with and what for if I may ask?”

Emma: “Ohh yeah well i just put that for seucity reasons sorry no i dont mind. Yes i do use it, with my fiends and to have some laughs and see some of my friends faces that i have seen in a while.” [sic]

Naïve, I was to discover that the information she had provided about herself was actually false. Facing my own ingenuousness, I was haunted by my own foolishness and had to confess that I had really believed she lived in Paris. But, the discussion was launched. As a teenager, Emma is part of (and represents) the sample-target population who is very comfortable with, and possibly prefers intermediated communication, and informal language. The exchange was very dynamic and the conversation kept moving. Neither of us cared about the spelling mistakes that arose from quick typing. During the chat I found out that she uses the application with five other friends, four female and one male, who are around her age. I posed many questions as directly as I could, for instance: Why did she use it, if it was mainly to laugh, like funny pictures... or if there was any kind of sexy exchange too. To “Laugh a bit of convo⁶²¹ too. No no not any of sexy ones!” So, from the start I got to understand that it was for fun, she was playing with her friends.

Here below is the comment at the heart of our dialogue

Me: “& why do you prefer Snapchat and not MMS or other means that are not ephemeral?”

Emma: Whats mms? [sic]

Emma did not even know what an MMS was; and I was so surprised that in a concise and summarized way, as fast as I could I quickly typed

Me: like sending the photo by text message

⁶²¹ I had to double check if “convo” was ... “conversation ?”, for which I got a positive reply.

Emma: Ahhh. Its better like the picture deletes its self after 10 sec which is good. It doesn't charge when you send it. And like its the new in thing rather then sms [sic]

Me: yeah I agree.

I expressed this last comment, as a probe to give her confidence and to let her know that I was there “listening”,⁶²² reading her, since I was at the same time trying to process the information I was getting hold of and refining my future questions. Cost is a recurrent issue for users, specifically teens. Indeed, MMSs in some countries or depending on the telephone package can be costly, whereas Snapchat is free of charge as long as users have an internet connection.

Me: but don't you regret not having trace of the pictures later? with how many friends and like how many pics do you exchange per week?

Emma: Sometime i do but then again i dont. Well its different with each of my friends [sic]

“Sometime i do but then again i don't”, means that she has mixed emotions about non – archiving and at least her ambiguous feelings are clear. As Okabe states: “sharing is highly relationship-specific”.⁶²³ Emma expresses the fact that each one of her relationships is different and therefore each interaction should be grasped based on its own diverse factors.

Me: have you tried whatsapp or viber?... these apps do not charge either and you could keep trace of the pictures... i mean my question is: why do people prefer not keeping the photos rather than having them to see them later if wanted ? i mean why do you ?

⁶²² Rubin & Rubin as quoted in Salmons, J. (2010). *Online interviews in real time*, Chapter 6. Preparing for a Live Online Interview. Los Angeles: Sage, p. 122.

⁶²³ Aoki, P., Szymanski, M., & Woodruff, A. (2005). Turning from image sharing to experience sharing. In *First Workshop on “Pervasive Image Capture and Sharing: New Social Practices and Implications for Technology”* (PICS), Ubicomp 2005. Retrieved from <http://www.spasojevic.org/pics/PICS/pics05-aoki.pdf>

Emma: No i dont have them. Umm well i dont know like you can screenshot the picture before it goes and look at it whenever then but maybe people prefer not being able to keep them beacause peace of mind? Just incase you send an embarrassing picture to someone [sic]

Emma seemed unfamiliar with Whatsapp and Viber, two well-known apps that do allow saving and using photos that belong to the mobile's photo roll. But, her sagacious answer explaining the reasons for *not* using them was: "peace of mind?", in the interrogative form, as a reflexive way of self-asking and not really knowing why she is using Snapchat. It seemed as she was reflecting on her own practices at the very moment of the interview. Perceived through hesitation expressions such as "Umm", "i dont know" or "but maybe", one could also recognize her teenage doubtfulness.

Me: is that your case? has it happened to you? and do you screenshot the picture before it goes?

Emma: Yeah it is, no not really only weird facial expressions.

No.

Cause i think what if they dont want me to keep the photo.

Sorry i have to go to bed [sic]

Each new line gives one opinion or answers the different questions. It also shows the dynamic, speed and conciseness of informal online chatting. As there is an eight-hour time difference between Australia and France, and because it was time for Emma to go to bed, as she openly stated, the conversation reached its end. As spontaneously as our communication had started, and from the fact that I knew she was going to go to sleep, I suddenly felt another layer of unexpected ephemeral intimacy wove between us.

3.4.1. Theoretical Frame and Methodology

This Snapchat study is based on two guided focus group sessions done in Paris between May and June 2014. One session consisted of a group of five 16-17-year-old French, female teenage friends, and the other session of five 16-year-old French, male, teenage friends.⁶²⁴ No one self-identified as other sex. These Parisian groups of adolescents are teens that have also been raised in a McDonalds and Angry Birds world, and we can say that their environment surrounds them with a fast food and *discardable* ephemeral logic. Moreover, they regularly share their music playlists, pass their tech devices from hand-to-hand, and believe in a peer-to-peer way of sharing. I could even venture to say that they are shameless multi-taskers, master multi-screenerers, and tend to love being in immersive situations. In this context, and springing from the flexible concept of social capital that Bourdieu and Wacquant defined as: “the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition”,⁶²⁵ I will conceptualize how the Snapchat dynamic provokes strong attachment between individuals, transforms these personal photos and videos into social currency with affective value. The origin of this dynamic, I would like to suggest, lies partially in its existence as a series of endless symbolic interactions.

In order to study Snapchat practices, the focus group methodology seemed to provide the best way to understand and discuss the participant’s practices within their own group of exchange. Unlike these same teens’ Facebook or Instagram editing modalities, which can be for bridging social capital, all the participants I interviewed admitted using Snapchat predominantly or only with an existing social network of friends as their main audience; therefore using them either to maintain or to bond their already existing ties, and to continue in a semi private dynamic. Clearly, by being in a group of discussion,

⁶²⁴ I am aware that this is a reduced participant group number, and that accordingly; there are limitations to formulating broad statements.

⁶²⁵ Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. J. D. (1992). *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 119.

together with their closest friends present, all the teens felt more at ease. By verbalizing their practices, these young users exchanged opinions and reflected upon their ideas and their visions of their own images, and consequently about their own identities. However, I would like to note that the helpful process of holding focus groups presented two main difficulties or limitations. First, was the exclusion of the researcher from all the in-jokes and implicitness that both groups had, their jokes, their insider language, and of which the researcher, (as an outsider), had no-knowledge or access. Secondly, I found myself in the paradoxical position. I was analyzing participants' visual uses without actually seeing the images, and relying instead on my interviewees' reflections, or non-reflections, on their practices, and my own understanding of those practices in relation to our socio-cultural moment. Despite these limitations, some preliminary insights emerged.

In 2015, and as I finish writing, mobile images are a socially legitimated part of everyday life, and undoubtedly an established global cultural phenomenon. Additionally, as the adoptions of free visual mobile apps increases, in a circular way these self produced mobile images advertise themselves through word of mouth and through the sharing practice itself from person to person. After "the visibility of the networked image",⁶²⁶ is it now the time for the *invisibility* of the networked image? Finding a fleeting existence from device to device, does Snapchat represent the ease of an evanescent and proximal need for more private and intimate amusement in personal image sharing?

3.4.2. French Teens and Snapchat in an Age of Immediate Attention Seeking

Like the use of social network sites, mobile visual apps function as repositories of images. There, conversations are also affectively driven and have been adopted by a mass of users. The city of Paris is one example of the many places where one can watch people strolling or commuting, often holding their mobiles. Frequently these

⁶²⁶ Rubinstein, D., & Sluis, K. (2008). A Life More Photographic. *Photographies*, 1(1), 9–28, p. 18.

pedestrians are taking and sending pictures, revealing how much these portable usages are already embedded in everyday life. Focusing on Parisian teenagers' uses of Snapchat, a mobile application conceived for ephemeral image exchanges, this paper aims to offer a qualitative analytical appreciation, an insight on teenagers' selfie-taking ephemeral practices, and the mechanisms they have to control the privacy and the sharing of their images. Today, at least among the teenaged population I studied, it seems there is a marked shift in the practices of sharing and saving self produced images. Due to the fact that most of these amateur mobile pictures remain digital, there seems to be a change of attitude where youth see mobile images less as a physical good, a commodity, or an object for personal data archiving, and more as fleeting ephemerality. Is this the end of vernacular, everyday life photographs, understood as a material jukebox of souvenir?

Through these transient private image exchanges, is not a more a visual-storytelling recreational exchange being established? In order to examine this question, I will relate teenagers' image-taking practices, both to capital and possession, as well as to immediacy and ephemerality and thus decided to dig into the analysis of Snapchat.

3.4.3. Snapshot Everyday Life, Snapchat Fun

Depending on whom and how old you are, you'll probably diverge or converge in what *snapshot* and *Snapchat* mean or represent. Following Chalfen's school, according to Sarvas

The term snapshot photography comes from the way the photos are captured (easily, instantaneously, and simply, by a single click) and the intentions the photographer has for the photo: no artistic nor commercial intentions, rather photos taken with simple cameras by non-experts for personal use. Snapshot photography is used often to distinguish between professional photography, and especially, amateur photography, where the intentions are more creative

and artistic, and the technical skills of the photographer are emphasized.⁶²⁷

According to both focus group members, Snapchat is today's teenagers' visual killer app.⁶²⁸ At least it was as of 2014, and according to popular opinion, one of the most used photo sharing apps among French teenagers, but unfortunately no quantitative data, statistics and figures are yet available. Originally conceived as a free photo-messaging application, Snapchat is a photo app for playful and ephemeral use of mobile photos. One of the most distinctive particularities of Snapchat, distinguishing it from other photo sharing apps, is that image producers can set a limited viewing time for the recipient of the image. This can range from between one to ten seconds after which the image disappears. Afterwards, it *fades* by being no longer available via the Snapchat user interface. However, it is not actually securely removed from the device.⁶²⁹

Snapchat was created in September 2011 by Evan Spiegel and Bobby Murphy and belongs to the category of electronic games that the American Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) rates under "T" (Teen-13 and above).⁶³⁰ They have launched a kids' version called Snapkidz, but this version lacks its main asset, which is the possibility of sending photos. Therefore, two main ethical drawbacks come attached to these types of apps. First, that no real verification of age is feasible, and second, that to my knowledge no precise legislation exists on how to regulate a world-wide phenomena as entailed by this app; in other words it signifies the non-standardization of laws, ethics and morality.

⁶²⁷ Sarvas, R. (2006). *Designing User-Centric Metadata for Digital Snapshot Photography*, (Doctoral dissertation). Helsinki: Helsinki University of Technology and Helsinki Institute for Information Technology HIIT. Retrieved from http://groups.ischool.berkeley.edu/pics/papers/Sarvas_Vihavainen_holistic_pics06.pdf, p. 16.

⁶²⁸ A killer app is an app that is so necessary or desirable that it proves the core value of some larger technology, such as mobile devices can be. By extension I use this concept to visual apps.

⁶²⁹ Roesner, F., Gill, B., & Kohno, T. (2014). Sex, Lies, or Kittens? Investigating the Use of Snapchat's Self-Destructing Messages, *Franziroesner.com*. Retrieved from <http://www.franziroesner.com/pdf/snapchat-FC2014.pdf>

⁶³⁰ Carlisle, R. P. (2009). *Encyclopedia of play in today's society*. Los Angeles: Sage, p. 867.

Previously taken images archived in the user's mobile device cannot later be sent through Snapchat, and images that have been exchanged through Snapchat are not archived on the device either. Technically, one can save Snapchat photos using screenshots. When one takes a screenshot, the initial sender receives a notification that her image has been screenshot by the receiver. It is also possible that users use cameras to photograph the snap. Therefore, while the characteristics of the app can certainly be circumvented, the sites' logic is that one sends what one is seeing, experiencing and feeling *at that very moment*. Again, this "here and now" (*hic en nunc*) paradigm changes or reverses the anti-indexical postmodern agreement and sets the context of the mobile snapchatted photo as an ephemeral short-term sharing proof of reality, also evidencing how ephemeral reality itself is. Snapchat images are not only performative markers, but also receptive ones. As Media lecturer and communications scholar Lisa Gye remarked "... the use of devices like cameraphones will have important repercussions for how we understand who we are and how we remember the past",⁶³¹ or in other words the uses and practices of photography are far more important than its aesthetics.⁶³²

The females within the focus group estimated that, in order to keep track they only screenshot 10% of the images received. One teenager said: "Sometimes we can end-up editing a funny montage, a power-point for someone's birthday" (laughs). It could happen that the funniest selfies are saved for later purposes and end up circulating in completely unrelated situations and contexts. But, possessing the picture is not the goal for participants, rather their purpose is to have fun, to laugh and be connected immediately, in a short term sharing. All female participants said they almost always self-censored so as not to screenshot a boy's snap.

In other words, if it is a boy's selfie, they would not screenshot because he would know she wants to save his photo, and perhaps assume she has a special interest in him. Quoting one of their comments, they said

⁶³¹ Gye, L. (2007). Picture This: the Impact of Mobile Camera Phones on Personal Photographic Practices. *Continuum*, 21(2), pp. 279–288.

⁶³² Gunthert, A. (2014). L'image conversationnelle. Les nouveaux usages de la photographie numérique, *Études photographiques*, N° 31. Retrieved from <http://etudesphotographiques.revues.org/3387>. Reprinted in Gunthert, A. (2015). *L'Image partagée. La photographie numérique*. Paris: Textuel.

I do not dare... cause the other person knows that I screenshot... if it is a funny snap, or something bizarre of someone, for example screen shooting a photo of someone falling is OK, but if not I block. If it is a boy no, if it is among us it's OK.

The assumption is that for heterosexual teens, gender and sexuality turns up as an additional variable to take into account in how Snapchat exchanges are understood and practiced. In terms of teenager teasing and seduction, there is a shame or dare dynamic where the screenshot notification becomes the proof of some desire.⁶³³ In terms of teenager teasing and seduction, there is a shame/dare dynamic where the screenshot notification becomes the proof and exposure of desire. Surprisingly, most participants were not aware that retrieving snaps was possible. In their minds, it seemed as if they perceived the mesh, not as a cellular technological network but more as mobile device-based peer-to-peer network; where (their own) identity construction is built through writings “in several voices”.⁶³⁴ Out of the nine people, only one of the boys knew of the existence of SnapCrack, another free app that enables screenshots without being discovered, as it is in Snapchat. Interviewees in both groups said that in order to impede the receiver from taking screenshots, they play with the viewing time lapse. The shorter the image can be seen, the more difficult it is to screenshot it. In general terms, teenagers love to tease. Here, instant photo messages are used as playful teasing.

Developed in depth in *Moving Circles: mobile media and playful identities*, de Lange defended his doctoral thesis with the idea that the spread of mobile media technologies called for a new mediation of identity, because mobile media shapes identities in playful ways. The theory of “playful identities”⁶³⁵ accounts for the shaping of identities by mobile media technologies where play is the better medium to describe this mediation. Therefore, the next question that one can pose is: why do they play this image teasing

⁶³³ Cf. Casado E., & Lasén, A. (2014). What is disturbing and why not to disturb. On mobile phones, gender and privacy within heterosexual intimacy. *Mobile Media and Communication*, 2(3), pp. 249-264.

⁶³⁴ Beaudouin, V. (2002). De la publication a la conversation. Lecture et écriture électroniques. *Rezeaux*, 116(6), pp. 199-225.

⁶³⁵ de Lange, M. L. (2010). *Moving circles mobile media and playful identities* (Doctoral dissertation). Rotterdam: Erasmus Universiteit, Netherlands. Retrieved from <http://www.bijt.org/wordpress/2010/11/21/download-my-phd-dissertation-moving-circles/>, p. 23.

game? There are many possible answers, but evidently they play to see if they can screenshot and circumvent the ephemerality of this short term sharing dynamic. They play to be the paparazzi of their own lives, or even better, of their own images. They play games of tease, games of trust, friends' games. Codified games of rationed out seduction. But these practices do not really give the sense that participants are trying to shoot someone else's life: Snapchat pushes and transforms users' drive further: not in wanting to be able to photograph someone quickly and unnoticed, but in succeeding in the shooting of someone else's momentary and disappearing image: *the fleeting selfie*.

3.4.4. Funny Fleeting Selfies

In the 2014 Snapchat version, images can be sent either to one or to several persons and can also be posted in a feature called *Stories*, that allows you to add a 'snap' to a public feed for 24 hours before it vanishes. *Stories* simulate the Facebook wall and can be seen by all the user's contacts for a period of one day, but only ten seconds per view. All the focus group participants commented to the effect that, they constantly check what has happened within the Stories, to see what their friends are posting, when they feel bored. As for frequency of use, all members of the focus group said they use the app on a daily basis, several times a day, not even really knowing how many. I got answers such as "as soon as I feel bored", "all the time", "whenever I have wifi", "it is a reflex". In the app, the number of photos sent and received builds your *score*, thus subliminally creating a habit of wanting to come back again to play more and win. This score-keeping and gamification of ephemerality keeps people coming back, and adds a certain quantification of the ephemeral, anchoring it in the uses and gratification mode. It could be compared to the instant Polaroid photos excitement, or somehow similar to the quick need of Facebook likes, or to the instant sex encounter through location-based real-time dating (LBRTD).

Stemming from the online and offline maintenance of social capital, and linked to a group affiliation belonging feeling; there is a collective license to acknowledge users activity, creating an even stronger attachment between its consumers. Snapchat photos

and videos become “symbolic capital” and “social currency via social media”,⁶³⁶ where immediate answers are expected, and thus elicited. This acknowledgment dynamic helps mold the users’ identity in the “always on” community sense.⁶³⁷ Though, the participants did not perceive the score as motivation or incentivization to return or use the app: “it just changes who your three favorites are” (Alex).

Snapchat users do not see who the other user’s friends are as only their three best friends are displayed. Those three best users represent the ones with which they exchange the most. But since in Snapchat users have pseudonyms, so it is difficult to find people. The only way is to check whom those three top rank users are and ask to *friend* them. Once again, the score is the latent unspoken expectation that this pattern of joy and amusement should be repeated. To signify the relation between users, in April 2015 the app introduced an emoji code. For instance: the heart represents reciprocity, the smiley is a very good friend, etc. The following are some of the emoji meanings.



You are #1 best friends with each other. You send the most snaps to this person, and they send the most snaps to you.



Your #1 best friend is their #1 best friend. You send the most snaps to the same person that they do. Awkward



Another best friend of yours. You send this person a lot of snaps. Not your #1 best friend, but they are up there.



One of your best friends is one of their best friends. You send a lot of snaps to someone they also send a lot of snaps to.

⁶³⁶ Fuchs, C. (2015). *Culture and Economy in the Age of Social Media*. New York: Routledge.

⁶³⁷ Baron, N. S. (2008). *Always on: Language in an online and mobile world*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.



You are one of their best friends...but they are not a best friend of yours. You don't send them many snaps, but they send you a lot.



You are on a Snapstreak! You have snapped this person every day, and they have snapped you back. Increases with number of consecutive days.

Figure 74. Snapchat Emoji meanings, (2015 August), Emojipedia, Retrieved from <http://emojipedia.org/snapchat/>

Snapchat users *could* send their images through regular MMS, but due to speed and price, apps and short term sharing exchanges such as Snapchat stand out as being much more convenient: they are free of cost and do not use any memory space in the device. I also want to underline that these short-lived iconic sharing practices underscore that the significance given to the aesthetic of a photo is no longer the core of its material essence or existence; but rather, its immediacy coupled with its mobile private and intimate shareability,⁶³⁸ and where the “gamification” of the photographic practice seems to be the key to its success. Gamification is defined as being “a process of enhancing services with (motivational) affordances in order to invoke gameful experiences and further behavioral outcomes.”⁶³⁹ Moreover, the authors conclude, “gamification does produce positive effects and benefits.”⁶⁴⁰ Consequently, it would not be of surprise that one of the success keys of the app relies on the gamification of this mobile habitus.

The interviewed teenagers said they usually, if not always, take selfies and put text and drawings on them when they send and receive. In order to write on the image the sender has to tap on it and then she will be able to add a text. Each photo can have only

⁶³⁸ Fletcher, C., & Cambre, M. C. (2009). Digital storytelling and implicated scholarship in the classroom. *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 43(1), 109-130.

⁶³⁹ Hamari, J., Koivisto, J., & Sarsa, H. (2014). Does gamification work? - A literature review of empirical studies on gamification. *Proceedings of the Annual Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences*, pp. 3025-3034, p. 3026.

⁶⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 3028.

one short sentence, the length of a line. Often it is the sender's face, their selfie, that appears in the photo, as if talking. Nathan Jurgenson, researcher at Snapchat calls it "your own voice-as-image".⁶⁴¹ I agree with him, by understanding them as momentary linguistic signs, we can see how they function as illustrative formats that become one single combination of selfies and texts as these three Snaps below portray.



Figure 75. Adamshick, Eric (January 4, 2015). Retrieved from his Flickr account, random pictures album, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/onionboy/albums/72157651384963485>

To compare how other media modalities are dealing with image and text altogether in one piece, in the video *A Brief Look at Texting and the Internet in Film* (2014) Tony Zhou analyzes how mobile texts and the internet are depicted in movies, and how film forms are always evolving.⁶⁴² Zhou reveals that even if this change had already occurred in countries such as South Korea and China (2001), in recent years a new formal convention on how to portray SMSs on the big screen has taken the spotlight. As the following screenshots taken from the video indicate, in order to illustrate a text message

⁶⁴¹ Jurgenson, N. (2014, January 7). The Frame Makes the Photograph, *BlogSnapchat*, <http://blog.snapchat.com/post/72561406329/the-frame-makes-the-photograph>

⁶⁴² Zhou, T. (2014, August 15). A Brief Look at Texting and the Internet in Film, *Every Frame a Painting*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uFfq2zblGXw>

in a film filmmakers have to find visual solutions. As different and diverse as the aesthetics can be, the overall effect is that the SMSs can be read on the big screen as one single piece of information, contextualizing both the visual image of the character or scene and the SMS as a single unit and at the same time. The user is seen in its context, perhaps, like walking in the street, or lying in bed or at the office sending an SMS and the textual signs are displayed on the image.

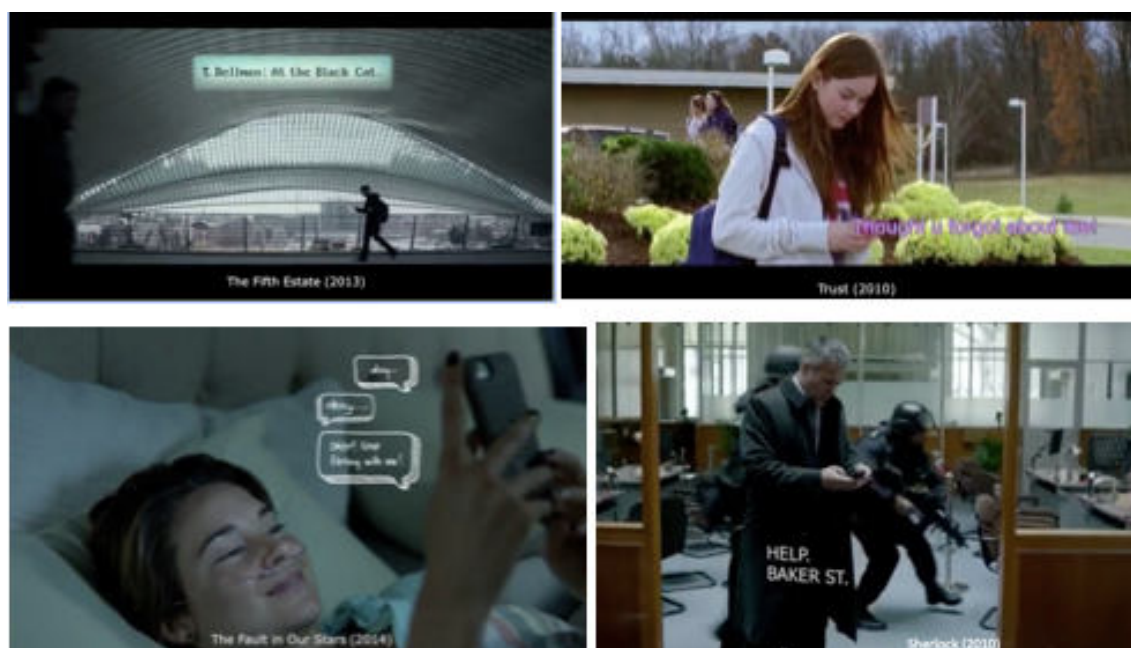


Figure 76. Zhou, T. (August 15, 2014), A Brief Look at Texting and the Internet in Film, Every Frame a Painting. [YouTube]. Four screenshots. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uFfq2zblGXw>

There is no before or after the image text bubble as it appears in a standard MMS on smartphone screens and the text line can float in any place of the image. The Snapchat message works then as a combined whole: both text and image strike at once and thus are stronger (if not to say impossible) to break down into separate informational pieces. In this way, the reaction is also made in one single gest. In a mediascape where the use of emoticons and stickers also is on the rise,⁶⁴³ the mounting trend seems to be speaking

⁶⁴³ Allard, L. (2014). Express Yourself 3.0! Le mobile comme technologie pour soi et quelques autres entre double agir communicationnel et continuum disjonctif soma-technologique, pp. 139-161. In Allard, L., Creton, L., & Odin, R. (Ed.). (2014). *Téléphonie mobile et creation*. Paris: Armand Colin, Coll. Recherches.

together *with* and *through* images and not (only) *about* them. I have analyzed other apps, like the Japanese app *Pick* that also enables writing on photos.⁶⁴⁴ However, the difference between *Pick* and Snapchat is that the latter is more in the line of a cinematic and flowing image, as could be understood in the aforementioned video *A Brief Look at Texting and the Internet in Film*, one that passes, and is erased by other, soon-to-come, images.

The number of exchanges these teenagers can have per day - my interviewees said that they may be as high as 50 - demonstrates that these interactions entail dialogues that depict prolonged iconographic conversations, as in a longer story, and which are habitually enveloped in, and interrupted by, the everyday life contexts and conversations. Sometimes, the exchanges emulate the continuous all-day texting dynamic that many teenagers have: as if an instant messenger. Rubinstein foresaw it as the emergence of a new type of speech in which photographic images acquire a new life along with the written language and spoken voice.⁶⁴⁵ He said

This move of the photographic image away from the activity of photography is similar to the move of the mobile email away from the rules of grammar and spelling. The photo-text message does not conform to the norms of the spoken or written language nor does it follow the norms of photography.⁶⁴⁶

In this quick writing, a short sentence or word is embedded in the photograph, and not clinging separately above or beneath as traditional photo captions are. Moreover, the real-time photography of these selfies indicates that the medium once again changes the conception of photography; because, even if still indexical, these images become somehow more of a fun fleeting linguistic sign. And, if as one of my seventeen year old interviewees said: “all what we send is selfie”, then, it is possible that ten years after

⁶⁴⁴ David, G. (2013). The panorama between mobile visual platforms is a sentimental bond. *Ubiquity: The Journal of Pervasive Media*, Volume 2, Issue 1-2, October 2013, pp. 146-163.

⁶⁴⁵ Rubinstein, D. (2005). Cellphone photography; The death of the camera and the arrival of visible speech. *The Issues in Contemporary Culture and Aesthetics*, 1, pp. 113-118, p. 114.

⁶⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

Rubinstein's aforementioned quote, his prediction is finally manifested in fact. But, then what does selfie mean?

In today's cultures, selfie, has become the umbrella word can imply almost anything. Selfies as evidence, as pedagogy, as affect, as ethics; homeless selfies, selfies at serious places, funny selfies, tweenies, petfies, bed selfies, foot selfies, bathroom selfies, food selfies, healthy selfies, the Obama selfie, celebrity selfies, duckface selfie, usies, drone selfies: the list of categories for this genre is endless. As this very chapter title reads: "all what we send is selfie", Snapchat photos are used as a medium that allows for agency in the transforming of representations of reality. They also reveal how reality is difficult to seize, and provide a ground where identity issues are confronted, experienced, teased, and performed. Since Snapchat photos can be drawn and written on and captioned, images can be transformed. Hence, they also serve as proof that the medium transforms reality and transmits it in its own curious ways. Self-mockery usually is a healthy release mechanism, not only for oneself, but also because by making yourself appear silly, you show others that you have a humorous attitude towards yourself. The app is derisive towards photography, and provides a place to play with images. Its social value lies in its symbolic interactions.

For instance, as it is only possible to use Snapchat on mobiles, this element presupposes a more intimate and even embodied relationship. Does the fact that these private mobile images are not publically or openly exposed undermine a more sentimental or sexual hidden shame to these practices? Is it that when people see the image, it is but for a short period of time? Besides, the advantages and disadvantages of the cultural uses of such types of applications are frequently discussed via mass media outlets. Innumerable online media articles with evocative titles exemplify, point out, and connect the boom of the selfie, and its mediatic success, with the increase of digital ego-trips and narcissism. "Sharing the (self) Love: The Rise of the Selfie and Digital Narcissism"⁶⁴⁷ is but an example. Some have postulated that it is not really a way of pushing people to have fun

⁶⁴⁷ Chamorro-Premuzic, T. (2014, March 13). Sharing the (self) Love: The Rise of the Selfie and Digital Narcissism. *Media Network Blog, The Guardian*, <http://www.theguardian.com/media-network/media-networkblog/2014/mar/13/selfie-social-media-love-digital-narcissism>

and amusement, but rather that it refers more to the scoring logic, and have even portrayed it as “the worst idea in tech: let’s gamify sexting”.⁶⁴⁸

As demonstrated by Kath Albury,⁶⁴⁹ teenagers do differentiate between sexting and joke-sexting. Most of the Snapchatter participants in my focus groups judged that there was more teasing going on than other things. They acknowledged being aware of, and responsive to, the feelings of others when sending just humorous content selfies. For example, during one of the male focus groups, one of them received a snap. I asked if I could quickly see the image. He showed it to me. It was of a girl’s legs wearing a pair of grey jogging pants, and a very high-heeled pair of shoes. On the left part of the photo, only one word was written in red. In French it read: “Avis?”, which translated would be something like “Opinion?”. Is this a joke-sext or a tease? I asked; the nuance is tiny. The boy smiled.

It is too early to gauge the range of many possible uses that Snapchat or any other transient visual sharing app can inspire. In any case, my findings thus far align with the results of a broader American survey. Conducted by Roesner, Gill and Kohno, the research suggests that Snapchat’s success is not due to its security properties, but rather because users find its logic gives them enjoyment.⁶⁵⁰ I discovered that for these groups, Facebook represented something more permanent, as an imprint that would last for too long; Instagram was used for beautiful photos, for playing the artist; and Snapchat represents the *leisure*, the sharing, but most of all immediacy and amusement.⁶⁵¹ As Wilhelm et al. called it, “the power of now”.⁶⁵² According to my interviewees, since it is transitory, average users do not have time to process its images, neither rework them by applying filters, or embellishing in any way. They do not seem to know the

⁶⁴⁸ Notopoulos, K. (2012, Dec. 5). The Snapchat Feature That Will Ruin Your Life, *BuzzFeed*, <http://www.buzzfeed.com/katienotopoulos/the-snapchat-feature-that-will-ruin-your-life>

⁶⁴⁹ Albury, K. (2013). Young people, media and sexual learning: rethinking representation. *Sex education: Sexuality, Society and Learning*, 13 (sup1), S32-S44.

⁶⁵⁰ Roesner, F., Gill, B., & Kohno, T. (2014). Sex, Lies, or Kittens? Investigating the Use of Snapchat’s Self-Destructing Messages, *Franziroesner.com*. Retrieved from <http://www.franziroesner.com/pdf/snapchat-FC2014.pdf>

⁶⁵¹ Ibid.

⁶⁵² Wilhelm, A., Takhteyev, Y., Sarvas, R., Van House, N., & Davis, M. (2004). Photo annotation on a camera phone. In Extended Abstracts of the 2004 Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI 2004). Vienna, Austria, April 24 - 29, 2004. ACM Press, New York, NY, 1403-1406, p. 1406.

aforementioned Snapchat artists, or even that doing transient art is possible. For them it is as if it were a more authentic and raw representation of the self and the moment. The only alterations that can be done on the images through the app is to scribble on them or write a very short line on them. For example, some of the comments my research subjects had on the feelings this ephemeral entertainment evoked were: “it is the place where one shows oneself with no fear, with no make-up and in pyjamas” (Maïmouna, 23rd May 2014). Another one said: “Snapchat is the decadence, everything and no matter what, it is not serious. In general terms, in Snapchat you can always laugh” (Midred).

In a Goffmanian sense⁶⁵³ most of these teenagers’ ephemerally staged, but also *non-staged selfies* conform to *the real me*: “I like the principle” (Midred). Even if presentation seems to be at the center of these experiences, participants are teasing, through a sort of anti-performance logic, so as to get attention. In a moment where wearable devices are gaining popularity, and where the self seems to be in the self-mediated spotlight, Snapchat and its *selfies act as authentic self-validation stepping-stones*. The Snapchattling practice denotes both a more spontaneous reporting with self-mediation and self-fashioning; and also a sign that perhaps we are entering a moment of quantified-self, a life-logging wave,⁶⁵⁴ in the pursuit of mastering individual agency.

Entrenched in the zeitgeist and impositions of an attention economy, Snapchat users can also make and quickly send 10-second videos. “You have to go to the essential, and if you only have 7 seconds to watch a snap, you’d better look at it attentively”.⁶⁵⁵ Just some days before I had held my first focus group, in May 2014, a new Snapchat update had been launched, including a real-time chat option. The focus groups participants’ responses to questions about this new version included: “chatting or sending only text messages (SMS) within the app is quite difficult and thus we still prefer to send very

⁶⁵³ Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday.

⁶⁵⁴ de Lange, M. L. (2010, November 16). *Moving Circles: mobile media and playful identities*. Erasmus MC: University Medical Center Rotterdam. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/1765/21334>, p. 58; Walker Rettberg, J. (2014). *Seeing Ourselves Through Technology*. Basingstoke, GB: Palgrave Macmillan. Retrieved from <http://jilltxt.net/books/Seeing-Ourselves-Through-Technology-full-book.pdf>

⁶⁵⁵ boyd, d. (2014, March 21). Why Snapchat is Valuable: It’s All About Attention, *apophenia*, <http://www.zephoria.org/thoughts/archives/2014/03/21/snapchat-attention.html>

short one-line texts written on the photo itself.” So, if one wants to comment on a Snapchat, it can either be through sending another Snap back, through regular SMS, through another app, or by using another means of communication. How did teenagers circumvent the textual length constraint this particular app has? One of them tells me: “what we do is continue to respond through Snapchat but just with a black photo behind... I just take a picture of the table, or of my jeans to be able to write on it.” This comment exemplifies how users can and do, subvert platform affordances, and tool-led media use, to find their own ways to circumvent and appropriate the platform’s logic to their wishes and needs. Moreover, when the receiver sees the snap, the sender reads ‘opened’, and an *immediate answer* protocol/paradigm applies; as times passes, an instant answer is expected with increasing imminence. This is also due to the fact that “the mobile phone also helps to create an imagined sense of nearness with other people”,⁶⁵⁶ which has been called “perpetual contact”,⁶⁵⁷ co-presence,⁶⁵⁸ and “almost contact”.⁶⁵⁹

These fleeting moments are *not meant* to be stored; they are a way to train ingenious instant image message use. They are ways to practice how to surprise, how to be funny, how to tease, how to seduce. And, while immediacy is often read as authenticity (as if no time to produce our front staged image, in Goffman’s terms), these instant image messages are understood as more intimate and genuine than the constructed and seamlessly self-curated Facebook and Instagram portraits. As a token, this playful self-mediation action/reaction dynamic is what these teenagers like. Immediate ephemeral experiences that could be more related to a *short-lived orality*, as speaking could be, and which projects its users into a low-cost near future, with images as metaphors that belong to an intimate and performative realm. All at once, these constant and

⁶⁵⁶ de Lange, M.L. (2010, November 16). *Moving Circles: mobile media and playful identities*. Erasmus MC: University Medical Center Rotterdam. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/1765/21334>, p. 138.

⁶⁵⁷ Gergen, K. (2002), The Challenge of Absent Presence, in James E. Katz and Mark Aakhus (Eds.), *Perpetual Contact: Mobile Communication, Private Talk, Public Performance*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 227-241.

⁶⁵⁸ Ito, M., & Okabe, D. (2005, September). Intimate visual co-presence. In *Position paper for the Seventh International Conference on Ubiquitous Computing, Tokyo* (pp. 11-14). Retrieved from <http://www.spasojevic.org/pics/PICS/ito.ubicomp05.pdf>

⁶⁵⁹ Hjorth, L. (2007). Snapshots of Almost Contact: Case Study on South Korea. *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, vol. 21, N° 2, special issue G. Goggin, (Ed.). pp. 227-238.

ubiquitous, fleeting selfies, demonstrate that the present, or the image of the present, is ephemeral and priceless.

Joining Facebook and even Instagram, some teenagers' parents closely track what their daughters and sons do. Contrarily, my interviewees' parents, at least for the moment, are not joining Snapchat. Coline said that, for example, if she sends her mother a Snap, her mother responds through normal SMS. "My mom has not understood what all this is about, she is not in the instant." Other girls said that they would not have their parents as contacts. Coline then added: "in any case, usually parents do not understand the things of the instant." Differentiating from, and maybe even contrasting with their parents, the Instant Image Message (IIM) has become *their* way of communication, even one of their ways of being.

3.4.5. Snapchat Versions of Life

Having declined a Facebook acquisition of three billion dollars in November 2013, Snapchat's monetization mechanisms are yet to be unveiled. Currently, the number of mobile photos and videos one can upload to mobile photo sharing platforms like Instagram and Snapchat is unlimited, there is no possibility of having a professional account (like the Flickr enables) and its usage is free of charge. However, nothing guarantees that licensed charged subscriptions will not be proposed in the future. By the end of 2014, many brands such as Audi, Taco Bell and McDonald's, have their Snapchat pages. They advertise through sending snaps, by offering a special discount or bonus to users that follow their ephemeral advertising instructions or games. Some American news media channels such as NPRNews, HuffPost WashingtonPost are also present. Counterposing these advertising campaigns, perhaps an increase in the use of advertisements versus no-advertisement propositions can be the economic model for the survival of these photo/video applications.⁶⁶⁰

⁶⁶⁰ Kamradt, G. (2013, Oct. 7). 10 ways Snapchat can monetize, Greg Kamradt, <http://gregkamradt.com/post/63386547331/10-ways-snapchat-can-monetize>

Following the narration format of *Stories*, on January 27th, 2015 Snapchat launched the user friendly *Discover*: “a new way to explore *Stories* from different editorial teams”.⁶⁶¹ *Discover* is a “collaboration with world-class leaders in media”,⁶⁶² where each channel curates and refreshes its daily edition, including photos and videos, long form layouts, and advertising to build a storytelling format. The partnership between Snapchat and these editorial media channels is a noteworthy confirmation of how mainstream media channels ride on and profit from, the penetration and adoption success of the app, to be part, of and legitimize it as, a storytelling application. Introducing *Discover*, a new way to explore *Stories*, in the *Snapchat blog*, it read: “Tap to open an edition, *swipe* left to browse Snaps, or swipe up on a Snap for more”.⁶⁶³ Up to July 2015 the media companies within Snapchat *Discover* were: Cosmopolitan, ESPN, People, National Geographic, CNN, Daily Mail, and Food Network, Vice, MTV, Yahoo!, Fusion and b/r, but the number might increase. (See figure 77). What does the introduction of *Discover* do? It intends to change an app that was mainly intended for teens and young adults (18-34) into a mainstream media.

Downright strategically acknowledged by media managers and executives, and embodied through community managers, the use of use (of) SNS is now clearly formulated everywhere by the media brands themselves, who together deploy a discursive and semiotic lobby impossible to circumvent. They see in the SNS means to support the economic and organizational changes of their businesses.⁶⁶⁴

Since November 2014, in a partnership with payments firm Square, ‘Snapcash’ allows people to enter their debit card payment information securely and message their friends a dollar amount to be directly deposited into the recipient’s bank account: a preview of what money exchange can be. Still, the question of its economic model remains unclear.

⁶⁶¹ Team Snapchat, (2015, Jan. 27). Introducing Discover, *Snapchat blog*, <http://blog.snapchat.com/post/109302961090/introducing-discover>

⁶⁶² Ibid.

⁶⁶³ Ibid. Emphasis added. What I call the swipe logic will be analyzed in detail in chapter four.

⁶⁶⁴ Jeanne-Perrier, V., Smyrnaio, N., & Díaz Noci, J. (2015). Journalism and Social Networking Sites. Innovation and Professional Transformation or Imposition of “Sociability”? Introduction. *Sur le journalisme, About journalism, Sobre jornalismo*, Vol 4, n°1. Retrieved from <http://surlejournisme.com/rev/index.php/slj/article/view/194/80>

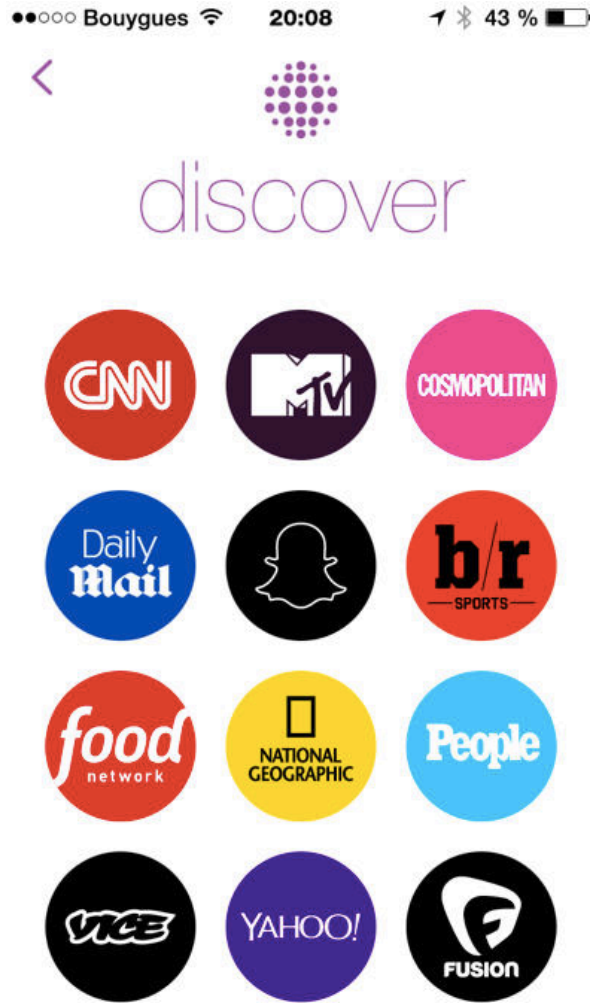


Figure 77. Snapchat “Discover”, (July 2015). Screenshot. Personal collection.

In fact, Snapchat users could be sharing their images through regular MMSs, but both due to speed and price, ephemeral exchanges are much more convenient. As mentioned, they are free of cost, and do not engage any memory space in the device. Snapchat images circulate in different levels and make part of a more visual interpersonal communication that becomes its main “*raison d’être*”.⁶⁶⁵ Referring to consumer culture, Wagner expresses: “In consumer culture, the value of an object or a service is expressed through its use, which is culturally constructed and cannot be isolated from its social

⁶⁶⁵ Wang, V., Tucker, J. V., & Rihll, T. E. (2011). On phatic technologies for creating and maintaining human relationships. *Technology in Society*, 33, pp. 44-51. Retrieved from, https://www.academia.edu/2005465/Phatic_technologies_in_modern_society, p.45.

context.”⁶⁶⁶ One might also want to ask: What makes these visual apps so successful? Emma (participant) replied: “because it’s the new thing...” It was not really new, but I could not retort that it was not; in fact, more important than the newness is consideration of the phatic aspects of this technologically mediated driven modality.

What happens with phatic images? How did we succeed in reaching a phatic and useful, selfie moment? Snapchat enables the circulation of phatic images. Moreover, as previously mentioned, Snapchat is not *only* used for image exchange: it can entail ephemeral practices such as transient conversations, just amusement, but also advertisement and money exchange. Paradoxically, in larger cultural and economic liberal trends, ephemeral selfies become daily traded. In a more personal exchange while discussing all these visual app exchanges, a friend of mine said to me: “my intrigue, my desire, comes from my excitement”. Clearly these visual exchanges can trigger cerebral tease and intrigue, almost like thrillers. However, it could also be the other way round: excitement can come from intrigue and desire.

Following Snapchat’s initial uniqueness, on October 14th 2014, Skype (now owned by Microsoft) launched Qik, which, after many technical transformations, is now an app for disappearing video messages. Therefore, in this desire for the visual mobile application, it should be recalled that, though Snapchat was mentioned among *Time Magazine*’s 2013 most remarkable people, it is but one more app in the visual ecosystem. The addition and combination of all these visual applications and platforms, aids and reinforces the passage of mobile imagery. It moves from device centered to app-based. It becomes a key part in the app economy,⁶⁶⁷ contributing to its adoption and monetary capitalization.

⁶⁶⁶ Wagner, K. (2011). Moblogging, Remediation and The New Vernacular. *Photographies*, 4(2), pp. 209-228.

⁶⁶⁷ The app economy refers to the array of economic activity surrounding mobile applications. Mobile apps created new fortunes for entrepreneurs and changed the way business is done. The app economy encompasses the sale of apps, ad revenue or public relations generated by free apps, and the hardware devices on which apps are designed to run. In 2007, virtually no mobile apps existed. As of 2011, more than 25 billion apps have been downloaded. (Wikipedia). Cf. Natanson, E. (2015). The State of Mobile and the App Economy in 2015, *Forbes*, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/eladnatanson/2015/05/26/the-state-of-mobile-and-the-app-economy-in-2015/>

It must be recalled that in 2014 Snapchat, was declared by Techcrunch, as having been the fastest growing app.⁶⁶⁸

If movement to a web 2.0 environment enabled a new set of visual practices, especially in terms of blurring the lines between professional and amateur images, and searched for larger audiences, apps like Snapchat point to a set of different practices. These ephemeral exchanges represent appreciation, interest, love, friendship but most of all trust.⁶⁶⁹ In the words of H. Berking, as quoted by Taylor and Harper, “the gift makes feelings concrete”.⁶⁷⁰ Here the intangible gift is somehow concretized, and reciprocally made tangible, yet invisible in larger public spheres. With sent and received images, people have something to talk about, something that might further facilitate a more targeted conversational exchange, and discussion of experiences. These actions, in turn, could allow other stories to surface, while at the same time contributing to the financialization of data flows, and commodification of participation in larger public spheres.

3.5. Conclusion

This part analyzed and sought to comprehend how instances of mobile visual negotiations between peers, groups of friends, as communities of practice, contribute to the sharing of personal vernacular mobile image in support of a social function. Starting in 2010, in Madrid with the Eyephoneography exhibit, and continuing in 2012, with the Regards de Femmes, in Paris, the study of these group practices develop chronologically through time, and swing from offline-centered practices to online-centered ones, to end up being a complete mix of both. After having tried to apply

⁶⁶⁸ Lunden, I. (2014, Nov. 25). Tumblr Overtakes Instagram as fastest Growing Social Platform Snapchat is the fastest Growing App, *Techcrunch*, <http://techcrunch.com/2014/11/25/tumblr-overtakes-instagram-as-fastest-growing-social-platform-snapchat-is-the-fastest-growing-app/>

⁶⁶⁹ Mauss, M. (1923-1924). Essai sur le don. Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés primitives. Article originally published in *l'Année Sociologique*, seconde série, 1923-1924. Online digital edition done by Jean-Marie Tremblay, Cégep of Chicoutimi, 17 February 2002. Retrieved from <http://pdf.thepdfportal.com/PDFFiles/104888.pdf>

⁶⁷⁰ Taylor, A. S., & Harper, R. (2003). *The Gift of the Gab ? : A Design Oriented Sociology of Young People's Use of Mobiles*. World, pp. 267-296. Retrieved from, http://research.microsoft.com/en-us/um/people/ast/files/Gift_of_the_gab.pdf, p. 272.

exclusively online methodologies in order to undertake reception studies, one of the conclusions reached was that, the methodology used to study these exchanges must be not only in phase with the topic but also be done with the group altogether in one place. This was how I realized that Snapchat had to be studied within the strong friends community of practice.

Later, by interviewing two different focus groups, I demonstrated that image share might not only be in search of recognition, but also can become well-intentioned, just for fun or even just as phatic images. Centering in the teenager use of Snapchat, these visual narrative uses relate to the selfie moment and relay it to identity construction understood as fleeting images.

These visual narratives demonstrate how, as one of my interviewees said: “*all we send is selfie*”, the topics of self-representation, affective evidences, and empowerment develop. I asked: in what ways do teenage Snapchatters feel they might be circumventing a consumerist ecosystem predicated on image possession? It is arguable that Snapchat might be symptomatic of a desire to forego data archiving and instead just live and share self(ie)-fleeting moments. Of course, production of ephemeral selfies via Snapchat is not totally free nor eludes a commercial application. Conversely, the practice demonstrates why it is high time to continue considering issues like transiency, immediateness and friendship when studying current and future mobile image production, consumption, circulation, and conceptualization.⁶⁷¹ Midred, one participant girl, made a comment that could help unravel one of my introductory questions: is it the end of photographs understood as a material *jukebox of souvenir*. By *jukebox of souvenir* I am indicating a certain random and non-systemic use. She said: “we are not going to

⁶⁷¹ Cf. Hjorth, L. (2005). FCJ-035 Locating Mobility: Practices of co-presence and the persistence of the postal metaphor in SMS/MMS mobile phone customization in Melbourne, *The Fibreculture Journal*, issue 6, mobility. Retrieved from <http://six.fibreculturejournal.org/fcj-035-locating-mobility-practices-of-co-presence-and-the-persistence-of-the-postal-metaphor-in-sms-mms-mobile-phone-customization-in-melbourne>; Villi, M. (2010). *Visual mobile communication: Camera phone photo messages as ritual communication and mediated presence*, (Doctoral dissertation). Helsinki: Aalto University School of Art and Design; Retrieved from <https://aaltodoc.aalto.fi/bitstream/handle/123456789/11889/isbn9789526036557.pdf?sequence=1>, p. 155.

remember the snaps, because these images are not very important, and therefore they are not made to be remembered” (Midred).

Most of my interviewees affirmed they had a Facebook and Instagram account, but that they used them much less than their Snapchat one. This means that they do use other image-permanent apps, and thus that their Snapchat practice does not only represent an exclusive transient and discarding dynamic, but rather, a more nuanced representation of the self. In each one of the platforms they faultlessly play with the different degrees of intimacy engagement, and authenticity.⁶⁷² Tama Leaver proposes that instead of thinking of UGC we should think more in terms of CGU of Content Generated User. This means that an individual’s online stories and construction is the assembling of all her content from all the social platforms from which she is part.⁶⁷³

Besides, the generally declining desire for ownership of their mobile images among teens seems also to be directly linked to other technological developments, mainly, due to an increase in the penetration of cloud-logic, and therefore of its use. Nowadays, the possibility of placing data in the cloud is cheaper, occurs more often, and in some devices is even proposed by default. Backing up in the cloud becomes something common for these users. The data is backed up somewhere far away on the web, and does not engage the memory space of the device and correlates to Snapchat’s dynamic. Moreover many devices can be linked, and therefore the same user’s hardware can be linked through the software. Concomitantly, we could say that it is as if these adolescents became physically less attached to the images they produce, and therefore these mobile images no longer represent something they want to keep evermore, to archive as the irreplaceable or carry carefully in their pockets. It may also mean that they take for granted that everything is going to be archived anyway, if not in the device, then in the cloud.

⁶⁷² Lasén, A. (2015). Digital Self-Portraits, Exposure and the Modulation of Intimacy, pp. 61-78. In Carvalho, J. R. & Serrano Tellería, A. (eds.) 2015. *Mobile and Digital Communication: Approaches to Public and Private*. Portugal: LabCom Books. Retrieved from http://www.livroslabcom.ubi.pt/pdfs/20150707-2015_12_public_private.pdf

⁶⁷³ Leaver, T. (2015, July 20). Birth and Death on Social Media, Lecture given at Curtin University, Perth, Australia, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rQ6eW6qxGx8>

These teenagers exemplify an audience that is formed, and de-formed by what they see online. For the work of visual and mobile culture researchers, their visual public selfie opacity can thus be either useful or limiting. It is definitely also a sign of the commodification of excitement, of bypassing public (over)exposure. Despite the conscious aim to grasp the desired yet unreachable object, it is by joining the force of sharing within the network that produces satisfaction. Just as once Instant Messaging impacted mediated communication, immediate image sharing is undeniably changing, fostering and conditioning new forms of social relations; setting the commodification of users' own images in the center (as we have, for now seen through these teenagers' activity).

Amateur mobile images also rely on the lightness of immediacy, mockery, self-derision, but also on the cyclical pleasure of play and gamification, fun and confidence of ties, where these vernacular visual sharings are the signs, and its images the symbols, of how vulnerable and ephemeral trust can be. The fact that the sharing of these photos is short lived makes its production process answer more to gratification impulses rather to reflection.

Chapter 4.

The Pursuit of Self-legitimation, the Selfie Moment and a First Person Perspective

4.1. Motivation and Rationale for an Autoethnographic Approach

I consciously know that *autoethnography entails a storytelling process*, however, by analyzing my own audiovisual mobile creations and its ways of circulation, in this chapter I share and analyze my own, personal, experience. They could even be re-examined as initial sources. In fact, there is no doubt that reviewing or bringing one's past into an autobiographical present requires story editing of one's life and experiences and in this case private mobile conversations. Under these circumstances, I adhere to the school that believes there are academic benefits to documenting and studying insider

meanings within personal moments and stories⁶⁷⁴ I found myself doing what Pratt had clearly laid out: “[a]utoethnography is not something researchers do, but something their research subjects do that they may want to study.”⁶⁷⁵ In my case not only making intimate mobile images but also analyzing their production process, *a posteriori*. It is clear that bringing one’s past into an autobiographical present creates a private montage of one’s life that will include “juxtaposed fragments from widely dispersed places and times.”⁶⁷⁶

Apart from a desire for larger public recognition, possibly political or artistic, what might the reasons for sharing personal mobile vernacular images be? This is but a rhetorical question that cannot be answered, due to the endless possibilities it entails. Therefore, the catalyst for this study materialized as I scrolled my daily SNS feeds: a dissatisfaction of encountering many seemingly private images, that appeared before my eyes in a vacuum of meaning. The will for a more comprehensible image context was the driving force for this research: lack of context in image hosting sites.

I have done participant fieldwork observation, focus groups and interviews, semi-structured and unstructured ones, some formally and most informally, with middle-aged French adults on the private uses of self-made mobile images (2008-2014). Moreover, all throughout this research while teaching English as a Foreign Language, mainly conversational business English in companies and banks, I have asked my adult students if they were familiar with taking mobile images and if they shared those self-produced images somewhere. The majority of them confessed to having few mobile image related practices. Maybe this was due to the fact that, being business people, most have BlackBerry smartphones; provided as perks by the firm, devices where the iconic environment is not that developed; or just because they said they did not feel the drive to do so. But, contrary to the popular myth that people are over-exposing their lives, in this period from 2012 until 2015, most of them reported not being fond of publishing

⁶⁷⁴ Denzin, N. K. (2006). Analytic Autoethnography, or Déjà Vu all Over Again. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*. August–35. Sage Publications, pp. 419-428, p. 420.

⁶⁷⁵ Pratt, M. L. (1992), as quoted in Butz, D., & Besio, K. (2004). The Value of Autoethnography for Field Research in Transcultural Settings. *The Professional Geographer*, 56(3), p. 353.

⁶⁷⁶ Ulmer, G. (1989), as quoted in Denzin, N. K. (2006). Analytic Autoethnography, or Déjà Vu all Over Again. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, August–35. Sage Publications, pp. 419-428, p. 423.

or sharing their private mobile images.⁶⁷⁷ In this context, (as far as for my French sample of the adult mobile user population) this lack of confidence is an interesting trait that develops with inverse proportionality to advances in the cloud, the big data, and targeted advertising. For instance

In fact, I take many more mobile photos but do not send nor share them. I send a very little amount of what I take. Indeed, apart from sending them through mail or MMS I do not know how to do it. I know that if I took the time to discover the way I'd figure it out, but in fact I do not feel the need. However, I backup them all, in my home computer.⁶⁷⁸ (Celine 34 years, 2011).

Even as years pass by, Mikko Villi's builds on Van House and blunt comments are always timely

Potentially it is the most radical development in photography since the advent of the film camera, which made personal photography possible (Van House et al., 2005 in Villi, 2010). The camera phone is used at times as a pure phone, and at other times as a pure camera, but despite the technological potential, not as often as a camera-phone, which would combine simultaneously the two different modes of communication offered by the converged device: photography and telecommunication.⁶⁷⁹

With these thoughts in mind, I wondered - why did this adult population did not take more advantage of these easy and almost costless mobile image-sharing possibilities?⁶⁸⁰

⁶⁷⁷ My observation aligns with the ACSEL - L'association de l'économie numérique figures, Baromètre 2015, *Résultats du Baromètre 2015 ACSEL-CDC de la Confiance des Français dans le numérique*. Retrieved <http://www.acsel.asso.fr/resultats-du-barometre-2015-acsel-cdc-de-la-confiance-des-francais-dans-le-numerique/>

⁶⁷⁸ Celine's, like any other mobile phone practice should be studied in relation to her other practices in a more holistic way. However, these queries were out of the scope of this study.

⁶⁷⁹ Villi, M. (2010). *Visual mobile communication: Camera phone photo messages as ritual communication and mediated presence*, (Doctoral dissertation). Helsinki: Aalto University School of Art and Design; Retrieved from <https://aaltodoc.aalto.fi/bitstream/handle/123456789/11889/isbn9789526036557.pdf?sequence=1>, p. 29.

⁶⁸⁰ I say "almost costless" because since the device has to be purchased, and with wifi subscription too,

Apart from some holiday or birthday photos, most of the images remained unshared or with very little social diffusion. Was there “no need”, as Celine said? In fact all through these research years, I identified a certain tendency. This being; unless there is a specific artistic will, such as when people send their pocket films to festivals expecting them to be selected or to win, or if the event is not especially newsworthy; the majority of the mobile images produced remain on one’s device for personal and individual viewing - like a cherished, always at hand, portable album.⁶⁸¹ The number of mobile images that are shared is much lower, and when publically shown, they are carefully chosen, edited and filtered: self-curated. The adults I encountered said that, if they do exchange raw mobile images, it only is with those with whom they share very strong ties. Thus, if middle-aged adults such as Celine take mobile images, why is it that for a huge majority, the bulk of their everyday mobile images remain mostly if not completely, private?

To answer this question a number of considerations should be taken into account. To begin with, it is known that interpersonal messages (in this case the MMS or mobile videos) are only completely understood by those who have created them. It is also hoped that the persons to whom the images are addressed, will fully understand them too. Bakhtin had called this “addressivity”.⁶⁸² Addressivity is a powerful analytic concept to study inter-subjectivity, as it reveals the implicit orientations of speakers to the orientation of their audience.⁶⁸³ Moreover, in the addressivity of emails, SMS messages, or mobile images, their contexts extend beyond what the interviewee tells the social researcher. It is a reference to a shared moment, sometimes it could even come integrated as a cultural reference, and in any case it is a share of reference for the senders

costs are *not* zero.

⁶⁸¹ van House, N., & Davis, M. (2005). The Social Life of Camera phone Images. Paper presented at *Ubicomp 2005 Workshop on Pervasive Image Capture and Sharing: New Social Practices and Implications for Technology*. Tokyo, Japan, September 11, 2005. Retrieved from <http://people.ischool.berkeley.edu/~vanhouse/Van%20House,%20Davis%20-%20The%20Social%20Life%20of%20Cameraphone%20Images.pdf>

⁶⁸² Bakhtin, M. M., Holquist, M., McGee, V., & Emerson, C. (1986). *Speech genres and other late essays*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

⁶⁸³ Gillespie, A., & Cornish, F. (2009). Intersubjectivity: Towards a Dialogical Analysis. *Journal for the theory of social behaviour*, 40 (1), pp. 19-46, p. 34. Retrieved from <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1468-5914.2009.00419.x/full>

and receivers of the message.⁶⁸⁴ The implicit affection, friendship, or love that exists prior to, and *au-delà* the image or phone communication, i.e. its inter-subjectivity degree, is very difficult to quantify

For Garfinkel intersubjectivity concerned the shared, but often implicit, taken-for-granted assumptions that enabled human communicative interaction. [...] Interlocutors not only make these assumptions implicitly, but they implicitly assume that they are shared.⁶⁸⁵

Studies that measure the intimacy scores of interpersonal relationships have already been done.⁶⁸⁶ For instance, also referenced in the previously cited article, in 1982 Miller and Lefcourt calculated these indexes through their frequency, intensity, and the time and day that they had been undertaken. Nevertheless, in order to comprehend these image exchanging within their natural settings, I decided not to follow this quantitative approach, but to analyze the uses in a qualitative way as far as possible. Therefore, in order to document the practices and the means through which adult mobile visual users make sense of their worlds,⁶⁸⁷ I decided to use a schema of autoethnography, as a particular way of carrying out self-reflexive ethnography in my research process.⁶⁸⁸

Cloke, Crang, and Goodwin describe autoethnography as follows

There are two quite different understandings of autoethnography. First, and most commonly, autoethnography understood as the process by which the researcher chooses to make explicit use of [their]

⁶⁸⁴ Chalfen, R. (1987). *Snapshot Versions of life*. Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press.

⁶⁸⁵ Gillespie, A., & Cornish, F., Op. cit. p. 29.

⁶⁸⁶ Jumin, Chi, Hyungeun, Jo & Jung-hee, Ryu (2010). Predicting Interpersonal Relationship Based on Mobile Communication Patterns. In proc. CSCW2010, pp. 487-488. Retrieved from http://research.microsoft.com/en-us/um/redmond/groups/connect/cscw_10/docs/p487.pdf

⁶⁸⁷ Garfinkel, H. (1967). *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J. : Prentice-Hall.

⁶⁸⁸ Butz, D., & Besio, K. (2004). The Value of Autoethnography for Field Research in Transcultural Settings. *The Professional Geographer*, 56(3), pp. 350-360.

own positionality, involvements and experiences as an integral part of ethnographic research.⁶⁸⁹

In this meaning, autoethnography is a self-reflective way of carrying out ethnography in the research process.⁶⁹⁰ Understanding the implications of the researcher's involvement in the information gathering is crucial for an autoethnographic study. This is a case of coming to terms, methodologically and analytically, with the fact that we become part of the same social world and that this influences what becomes of our data.⁶⁹¹ Although it is possible to use someone else's mobile images, it would be necessary *to become* someone else in order to really understand all the implicit meanings that their private mobile images might carry.

While my line of thought can also be applicable to texts, music or any other cultural production, images are equally ambiguous if not more so. In what has even been called a "technosexual era",⁶⁹² throughout these years many people held that image sharing could be even more selective and intimate than text sharing.⁶⁹³ In 2014 debates about hook up apps, and the intimate images shared in those apps, started to gain media attention. However, even if Vetere had, already introduced the concept, of "mediated intimacy"⁶⁹⁴ ten years earlier, the apps gained a lot of media attention, much of it focusing *because*

⁶⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 353.

⁶⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁹¹ Butz, D. (2001). Autobiography, autoethnography and intersubjectivity: Analyzing communication in northern Pakistan. In P. Moss (Ed.). *Placing autobiography in geography: History, method and analysis*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

⁶⁹² Chamorro-Premuzic, T. (2014, January 17). The Tinder effect: psychology of dating in the technosexual era, *The Guardian*, <http://www.theguardian.com/media-network/media-network-blog/2014/jan/17/tinder-dating-psychology-technosexual>

⁶⁹³ Okabe, D. (2005). Social practice of Camera Phone in Japan. Paper presented at Ubicomp 2005 Workshop on Pervasive Image Capture and Sharing: New Social Practices and Implications for Technology, Tokyo, Japan, September 11, 2005. Retrieved from http://www.spasojevic.org/pics/PICS/okabe_ubicomp.pdf Accessed April 23, 2006 ; Sarvas, R., Viikari, M., Pesonen, J., & Nevanlinna, H. (2004). MobShare: controlled and immediate sharing of mobile images. In Proceedings of the 12th Annual ACM international Conference on Multimedia. New York, NY, USA, October 10–16, 2004. New York: ACM Press.; Villi, M. (2010). *Visual mobile communication: Camera phone photo messages as ritual communication and mediated presence*, (Doctoral dissertation). Helsinki: Aalto University School of Art and Design.

⁶⁹⁴ Vetere, F., Gibbs, M. R., Kjeldskov, J., Howard, S., Mueller, F., Pedell, S., Mecoles, K., & Bunyan, M. (2005). Mediating Intimacy: designing technologies to support strong-tie relations. CHI 2005, April 2–7, 2005, Portland, Oregon, USA. *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*. New York: ACM Press, pp. 471–480.

they were *empowering* this “mediated intimacy”.⁶⁹⁵ For instance *The New York Times* portrayed that: “With Some Dating Apps: Less Casual Sex Than Casual Text”;⁶⁹⁶ this is an example of the fear/moral panic that casual *mediated sex* or mediated sexting is provoking, which, in some way, almost greater than the moralizing over casual sex. Accordingly, articles like the abovementioned are not statements of reality, but of interpretations of how this *mediated sex* can sometimes, and in specific situations be.

Very often images work as pretexts for possible dialogue.⁶⁹⁷ Sometimes stories are *about* the photos and sometimes they are *with* the photos.⁶⁹⁸ Even in the past, photos used to spark dialogues between family and friends. However, these stories were rarely recorded: they retained an oral status. Nowadays, both these scenarios exist: if the images are sent on a one-to-one basis and denote more private uses, even if recorded, the comments remain hidden for the researcher. At the beginning, these 2.0 epistolary exchanges were mainly held in private emails. But, the dialogue was fragmented and difficult to follow. When vernacular images started being posted publically in platforms such as Picasa, Flickr or Facebook, written comments as traces of these conversations could be kept and, therefore, tracked more easily. As these sites developed technically and gained users, the comments moved online, appearing in an easier to read cascade, and like this, image commenting became more public.

Similarly, commenting was made possible in moblogs and in blogs, and increased even more with the image sharing possibilities provided by SNS. In the majority of smartphones today, applications that allow video recording are important for the

⁶⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁶ Wayne, T. (2014, Nov. 7). With Some Dating Apps: Less Casual Sex Than Casual Text, *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/09/fashion/with-some-dating-apps-tinder-less-casual-sex-than-casual-text.html>

⁶⁹⁷ Maresca, S. (15 December 2012). Souvenirs décadrés, *Fovéa*, *Culture Visuelle*, [Online blog comment], <http://culturevisuelle.org/fovea/archives/402>

⁶⁹⁸ Miller, A., & Edwards, W. (2007). Give and take: a study of consumer photo-sharing culture and practice. In proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, San Jose, California, USA, April 28 – May 03, 2007. ACM Press: New York, pp. 347–356; Kurvinen, E. (2003). Only When Miss Universe Snatches Me. Teasing in MMS Messaging. *Proceeding of Designing Pleasurable Products and Interfaces DPPI'03*, June 23–26, 2003, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA.; van House, N., Davis, M., Ames, M., Finn, M., & Viswanathan, V. (2005). The Uses of Personal Networked Digital Imaging: An Empirical Study of Cameraphone Photos and Sharing. In *Extended abstracts of the Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI 2005)* in Portland, Oregon, April 2–7, 2005. New York: ACM Press, pp. 1853–1856.

average consumer. However, on the social side, there is always some reluctance: average people try to be strategic about how to manage their privacy. The issue of privacy is perfectly represented through the ‘hide and seek’ game, as seen in the pocket film, *Porte de Choisy*, and studied in detail in the first section. People do not want to be traced, but are nonetheless more locatable than ever, and have passed from wanting to be “always on”⁶⁹⁹ to wanting to go to digital detox and disconnection spas.

But, photos do not unveil people’s privacy. They do not “talk more”, articulates sociologist Maresca.⁷⁰⁰ What Maresca means by this, is that, unless the images are accompanied by a story, the construction of a plausible narration disappears with time, as has happened with analog images. Images without accompanying narratives become almost mute, with a high level of mutual comprehension needed in order to connote more than they denote. Whereas in the former part I studied the *dispositif* in which an intimate mobile video was shared and publicly exposed in a legitimating public artistic frame, here there is a different dilemma: how to describe and analyze *one’s own* mobile visual uses?

It was difficult to unveil the evidence: my personal uses. Reflecting on one’s own practices demands personal introspection, as well as *a posteriori* verbalization of spontaneous practices and recognition of what the sharing of one’s private mobile images might mean. By being actively implicated in the process of production, consumption, and analysis, I involve myself in a more explicit description and understanding of my own (and my contacts’) uses and expressions. I have felt I had the insight to identify and analyze what the private mobile image uses of a middle-aged adult woman (myself) living in a foreign country were.

Throughout this part, my rationale and methodology has been guided by, and grounded in, my own experience.⁷⁰¹ I have, through this approach, discovered and been able to

⁶⁹⁹ Baron, N. S. (2008). *Always on: Language in an online and mobile world*. New York: Oxford University Press.

⁷⁰⁰ Maresca, S., Op. cit.

⁷⁰¹ Cf. Glaser, B. G. (1967). *The discovery of Grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

demonstrate the ways in which intersubjectivity must be and *is* negotiated, *even* among strong ties. My process mixes the past into an autobiographical present moving from field observations, note taking, and photos, to bring them together into an academic paper.⁷⁰² Jones states that “the point of creating autoethnographic texts is to change the world.”⁷⁰³ However, I do not quite agree with his point of view. For me, this observation seems overly ambitious. I propose to analyze some of my most private exchanges, not in order to modify the world, but so as to better understand the non-exposed mobile sharing and its eventual misunderstandings associated in private image share.

I do agree with Jones when he says that autoethnography: “is setting a scene, telling a story, weaving intricate connections...” But then I disagree when he says that it refers to connections “between life and art.” I prefer to adhere to the point of view that autoethnography can operate between life and all other expressions of culture, not necessarily artistic, but: daily. These autoethnographic narrative genres are produced through creative analytical practices (CAP), and can include fiction-stories, poetry, performance texts, polyvocal texts, reader’s theatre, responsive readings, aphorisms, comedy and satire, visual presentations, allegory, conversation, layered accounts, writing stories, and mixed genres. Creative nonfiction, performance writing, mysteries, memoirs, personal histories, and cultural criticism can be added to this list of narrative forms that can be used by the creative analytic ethnographer.⁷⁰⁴ The main goal of this chapter is to analyze the uses of private mobile image in their first and real context. Moreover, to shed light on and demonstrate that - even in strong ties - unless the sufficient context is provided, images can easily mislead the construction of meaning.

⁷⁰² Denzin, N. K. (2006). Analytic Autoethnography, or Déjà Vu all Over Again. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, August–35. Sage Publications, pp. 419–428.

⁷⁰³ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 420.

4.2. From Cellphone to Camphone – Personal Timeline from 2002 until 2010

About myself: I am 47 years old. I have been living in Paris for the last 13 years. I live alone and have no children. My family context: I have a very small and geographically scattered family. My parents live in Uruguay. My brother and his family are in Spain, and my uncle lives in Uruguay and works in Germany. My cousins are in Israel. Fortunately, we are very close and like to communicate on a regular basis, which I would classify as very often, or as often as possible. Therefore, as an example of the many other global families, we rely heavily on mediated communication. In fact, the telephone as an interpersonal device has always been a central part of our family life, which until recently provided only voice communication. We do not have any specific link with professional photography or video making: our family practices are absolutely ordinary and amateur. Regarding my friends' context: many are also disseminated across different parts of the globe.

Therefore, as soon as possible, and just a few days after having arrived in France, and more precisely on November 14, 2002, I bought my first cellphone. It was very useful, not only for the aforementioned affective personal reasons but also for professional purposes. Fortunately, as a teacher of Business English as a Foreign Language, the days when I arrived at a company, only to find out that the participant was too busy and could not attend the lesson, are long gone. With the popularization of the cellphone, with just a simple phone call or SMS, the student could save me the trip, and, if the lesson was cancelled on the day, I still got paid. Thanks to this small portable device, I was suddenly reachable, wherever, and whenever necessary, a very important and non-negligible fact for those, who, like me, have flexible working hours. This “tethering technology”⁷⁰⁵ was felt, not as a constraint, but as a professional gain. The coordination of everyday life was exactly what Ling and Yttri had named “micro-coordination”.⁷⁰⁶

⁷⁰⁵ Turkle, S. (2010). *Alone together: Why we expect more from technology and less from each other*. New York: Basic Books.; Turkle, S. (Feb.-April 2012). *Connected, but alone?*, TED: Ideas worth spreading. Retrieved from http://www.ted.com/talks/sherry_turkle_alone_together.html

⁷⁰⁶ Ling, R., & Yttri, B. (2002). Hyper-coordination via mobile phones in Norway. In J. E. Katz & M. A. Aakhus (Eds.). *Perpetual Contact Mobile Communication, Private Talk, Public Performance* (pp. 139 - 169).

Additionally, this micro-coordination was easier, because the cellphone enabled different norms: I no longer had to go through the hierarchical chain (the student spoke to the company's secretary, then this person called my company's secretary and finally I was phoned) to know that the lesson would not take place. In those days, I was often already in transit (and, therefore, unreachable) when notice of a cancelation was given. With the advent of mobile communication, the student had direct to access me, thereby circumventing institutional authority to obtain a quicker, and more effective result.⁷⁰⁷

It took me almost a year to have a fixed home in Paris. Finding a place to live in the overpopulated French capital is not easy, and I found myself having to go for short-term rentals, and did not have an internet subscription, as it was necessary at the time to have a landline in order to have internet. Now, after more than 10 years in this city, I can still remember the countless hours spent in cyber cafés, as I wrote to or chatted with my overseas family and friends. In the early 2000s, going to a cyber café in Paris was a whole experience in itself. In the 18th district, where I used to frequent cyber cafés (and where I still live today), there is a strong immigrant population, around 20%, and, probably due to this fact, the quantity of cyber coffee-boutiques, and people using them was high, turning these public spaces into very popular and very lively neighborhood meeting centers.

Between 2002 and 2014, the internet connection fee (in the 18th neighborhood of Paris) remained at one Euro per hour (the price of a bottle of milk). However, where there used to be many cyber cafés, now I can only count two, and none of the cybers I used to frequent exist anymore. Compared to the monthly home internet access rates, which have always been around 30 Euros per month, the cyber fee was costly (and still is), but, in those years, if you had no fixed address, and, therefore, no landline, you had no other means of staying connected. When most of your strong ties are far away, being able to communicate to friends and relatives is extremely important. I remember myself daydreaming of having a mobile phone that could enable a personal portable internet

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 143.

⁷⁰⁷ de Gournay, C. (2002). Pretense of Intimacy in France. In J. E. Katz & M. A. Aakhus (Eds.). *Perpetual Contact Mobile Communication, Private Talk, Public Performance* (pp. 193–205). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 195.

connection, independent from the burden of the home telephone landline. Finally, by the beginning of 2004 I moved, got a fixed telephone number, and was, thence able to have a monthly internet subscription. I was connected again, and could communicate much more readily. At that time, the concept of 24/7 connectivity did not yet exist. I had to return home from work or studies in order to connect. The real feeling of *constant connectedness* did not become pervasive until the arrival of the smartphone era.

Between 2002 and 2007, I changed my mobile handset four times. My very first cellphone model was a silver clamshell Nec N22i with no embedded camera, which I kept until 2004. This meant that after one year I renewed my contract without changing models. I guess I did not even know that I could change models with a point system, and, as long as the one I had continued working, I did not really care about changing it. In September 2005 with the points I had saved, plus 25 Euros in cash (otherwise it would have cost me 129 Euros), I changed my mobile for a better model: a Sagem SG3441 with a classic monobloc design. This model did not have video recording possibilities, but had an embedded 0.3 megapixels camera. As it was my first cameraphone, at the time, this factor was not important to me. I was still completing my Fine Arts degree, and was much more interested in shooting with the analog Nikon FM10 camera I had. By December 2005, concepts such as, “going digital”, entering the “digital age”, or arriving at a “network society”,⁷⁰⁸ were notions that were here to stay, and passing from analog cameras to digital ones became affordable for the consumer in France. Accordingly, I decided to buy an ultra-compact Olympus U700 for Christmas.

It was my first digital camera and, with its purchase, I felt I had officially entered the era of digital photo production and sharing. In 2006 family photographic images were still rarely shared online, as the task was slow, and images were too large for e-mail attachment. Like most ordinary users, I usually printed my personal photos at photo boutiques - shops that would soon become cellphone retailers.

⁷⁰⁸ Coleman, E. G. (2010). Ethnographic Approaches to Digital Media. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 39(1), pp. 487–505, p. 489.

On September the 17th 2007, Facebook reached France. I created my page, and started to slowly opt for online self-exposure. This shift helped me feel more at ease with revealing myself online. However, Facebook's interface was not yet very efficient for photo uploading and they had to be uploaded one by one. Uploading photos, videos and gifs directly to one's page status, as we do nowadays, was not yet possible either. The dialogue with my friend Audrey, in figure 78, illustrates our frustration as users.⁷⁰⁹ As status I had posted

Would like to be able to put videos & music as her "is".

The following is the translation of the dialogue I had with Audrey about it.

Audrey: oh yes! Me too! Should we make a petition...??

Gaby: hehe, why not?!!! To whom, how? really- do you think so, should we give it a try?

Audrey: really I don't know, but it is not very much 2.0 the fact of not being able to do the video and "music in the Status.

Gaby: I've sent a suggestion to the staff.

Audrey: well done!

Gaby: 100% pragmatism, they still don't reply. Is it because it is Sunday ? ;-)"

⁷⁰⁹ Translation is my own.



Figure 78. David, G. (October 26, 2008). Would like to be able to put videos & music as her "is" [Facebook status update]. Screenshot detail. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/gaby.david/posts/30467209297?pnref=story>

Only around five years later, on the 13th of June 2013, Facebook launched a new feature for attaching photos in comment threads. The fact that the Facebook interface was not very image friendly was the principal reason why between 2007 and 2009, I got used to sharing images through Picasa, the Google image organizer site. Picasa Web Albums had been launched in June 2006. In March 2007 they upgraded their free storage capacity to 1GB and unlike to Flickr it was free of charge, therefore, this was another of the reasons I chose this site. As at that time my parents did not have any camera at all, and my brother and sister-in-law were not really into technology either; out of my immediate family, I was the only one uploading images. These were sometimes viewed by close friends as well. I used to send them the Picasa link, and then simultaneously,

we would follow the same image order, and discuss the photo albums orally, speaking on the phone, as we used to do with the family analog photo albums.

Within these novel technologies, and shedding light on my own practices, digital albums had a social family bonding and interactive function as well. They were a source of sentiment and stimuli for conversation. Similar to the past (even during the “Kodak path”), when albums were visual catalogues: ways of emphasizing the coherence and unity of a family that was living physically apart and undergoing a world of major societal, economic changes. They became the nostalgic compensation for the loss of close family. These online digital albums, somehow emulated the physical printed ones.⁷¹⁰

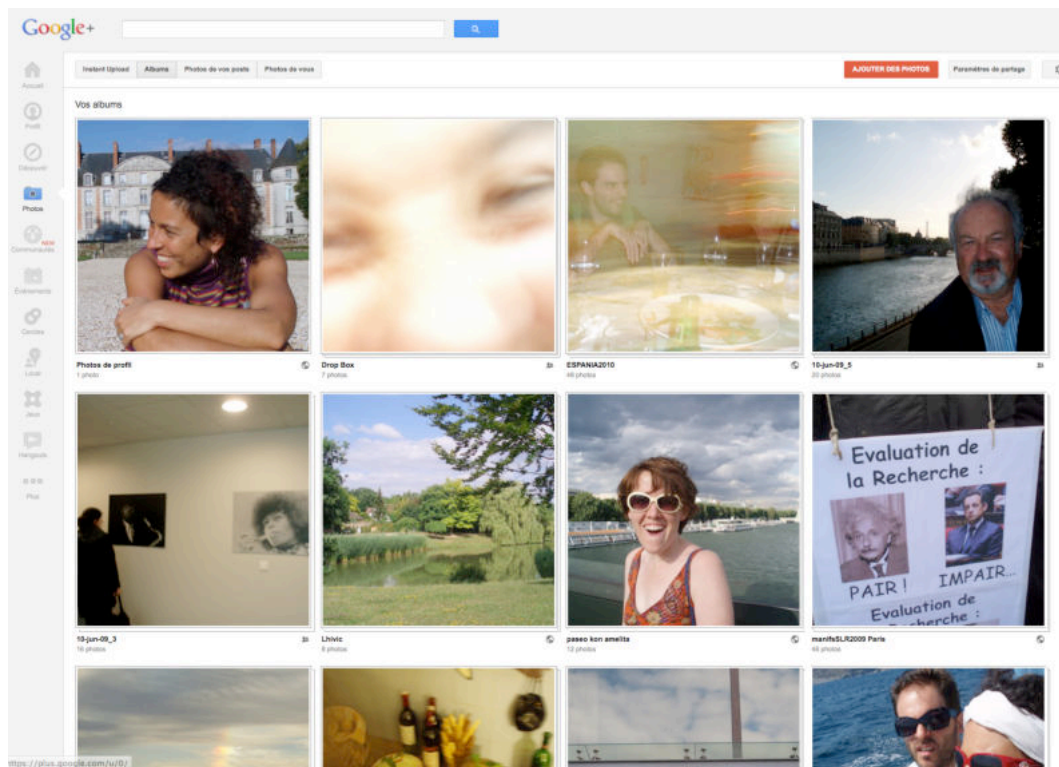


Figure 79. David, G. (June 2009). [Picasa Web albums]. Screenshot detail. Retrieved from <https://picasaweb.google.com/118252581507882497638>

⁷¹⁰ Sarvas, R., & Frohlich, D. (2011). *From snapshots to social media: The changing picture of domestic photography*. R. Harper (Ed.). London: Springer-Verlag, p. 42.

In 2007, I posted 8 albums, totaling 395 photos. In 2008 I posted 13 albums, 637 photos, and in 2009, 5 albums, which counted for 250 photos. Overall, a diminishing practice that totaled 1232 photos in three years. In 2010, my first nephew was born and my brother and sister-in-law started increasingly concern themselves with the online sharing of their child's images and, *as if a consequence* of my sister-in-law's desire for discretion regarding our online family privacy, I stopped uploading to Picasa images of our family encounters. This resistance seemed quite logical, and was in connection with the increase of the social network sharing moral panic, that was mainly due to tweaks in Facebook's privacy settings.⁷¹¹

To return to my personal cellphone-cameraphone purchasing timeline, on February 19th, 2007 I changed my mobile for the third time. It was a Sagem MY101CL, and again I used my collected points, and paid 29 Euros for it. In Paris, unless you decide to pay full price, each time you change handset, the telecom operator renews your contract. So, on the one hand you do not pay much, but on the other hand this commits you to staying with them for at least another year. With my new device I started to experience taking photos, and soon realized that the resolution quality was far inferior to both my analog Nikon and my digital Olympus; and found no advantage in shooting with the Sagem cameraphone, except for very spontaneous shots when I did not have any of my other cameras with me. In 2008, in the Pocket Film Festival environment, I decided to make a shortcut, a sort of film experiment with one of the cameraphones Orange lent to the people.

However, very soon after having finished my Fine Arts Masters diploma, and shooting less and less with my heavy analog Nikon, I swapped, it in a camera exchange shop, for three pairs of binoculars. The decline of the analog equipment had already started, and it was clear that the later I decided to exchange it the more it would devalue. In addition to this, doing away with my heavy analog camera made me shift towards shooting and

⁷¹¹ Arthur, C. (2010, May 24). Facebook to tweak privacy settings, says Zuckerberg, *The Guardian*, <http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2010/may/24/facebook-revise-privacy-zuckerberg>; Eldon, E. (2010, May 11). Analysis: Some Facebook Privacy Issues Are Real. Some Are Not, *InsideFacebook*, <http://www.insidefacebook.com/2010/05/11/analysis-some-facebook-privacy-issues-are-real-some-are-not/>

recording with lighter digital pocket cameras. My new mobile handset enabled internet connection, but, as this service was not included in the monthly fee, and quite expensive for me to afford, I did not use it much. I may possibly have used it a couple of times: on free trial days the telecom company offered in emergencies; or, on trips. But, in any case, just having a mobile phone that *had* the possibility of “perpetual contact” (as foreseen by Katz and Aakhus, borrowing the title of their seminal 2002 book), was again a relief in itself. I was also swayed away from using the mobile internet option, because, having purchased a laptop, I became accustomed to connecting through this means.

In the second half of the first decade of the 2000s, publications such as *Being Digital*,⁷¹² *Wired*, *The Virtual Community*,⁷¹³ *Smart Mobs: the next social revolution*,⁷¹⁴ or *Second Life* proclaimed a *digital revolution*. The revolution continued to develop, gradually disseminating high-tech products and software, gaining ground in more and more homes, as highlighted by Goggin.⁷¹⁵ The increase in the use of cameraphones came about, at the expense of analog and disposable cameras. But, whatever the type of device, in France, as in most countries, the prices, and communication promotions were fundamental buying criteria - cost being the most important criterion for the purchase of both cameraphone and the disposable camera.

According to a report done by Oudghiri and Brunet, 2008, for the *SIPEC: Syndicat des entreprises de l'Image, de la Photo et de l'Information* (the Image, Photo and Communication Companies' Association), the digital camera still remained the most frequently used, but the cameraphone was already taking second place. Amidst the other cameras present in French homes between 2007 and 2008, 59% of households, declared having a cameraphone, and it was gaining greater hold. As discussed in part one, *integrated shooting* within the cameraphone was starting to be considered less as a

⁷¹² Negroponte, N. (1995). *Being digital*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

⁷¹³ Rheingold, H. (1993). *The Virtual Community*. Retrieved from <http://www.rheingold.com/vc/book/intro.html>

⁷¹⁴ Rheingold, H. (2002). *Smart Mobs: the next social revolution*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing.

⁷¹⁵ Goggin, G. (2012). The iPhone and Communication. In L. Hjorth, J. Burgess & I. Richardson, (Eds.). *Studying mobile media: cultural technologies, mobile communication, and the iPhone*. (pp. 11- 27). New York, NY: Routledge.

gimmicky gadget and was used by almost 90% of phone owners who had this option.⁷¹⁶ The last time I changed my mobile using my contract providers exchange scheme was in September 2009. I decided to change it for a Samsung Player 1 using the points method. This meant that it only cost 19 Euros. Since I gave it to someone as a gift, and having used all my points, the next time I wanted a new handset, I had to purchase it myself and found that there was a specific fee for new mobile contracts, so I decided to change my mobile number and went for a cheaper subscription.

4.3. My Own Private Mobile World, from 2010 Onwards

Three years after the iPhone launch, I purchased my first one. My having waited until February 2010 suggests something about the time needed for new technologies to be more fully adopted by the general public. In any case, it was also a matter of price: it was expensive (it cost me 208 Euros and yet another contract renewal). In fact, it was because I perceived the iPhone mainly as a status marker that I initially resisted purchasing one. Even as someone doing research on mobile communications, I felt buying one was a kind of unnecessary luxury, and did not want to fall into the consumption trap. Still, already having an Apple Macintosh laptop, I finally made up my mind, and decided to buy an iPhone with a 3-megapixel auto-focus camera and stay within the Apple family. This would enable the possibility of downloading apps, surfing online, and participating in the *Convergence Culture*.⁷¹⁷ It implied a shift from the notion of *Cell Phone Cultures*⁷¹⁸ to one of *Mobile Phone Cultures*.⁷¹⁹ Mobile phones, counterposed with cellphones, are understood as a composite of various functions, and are formed in relationship to other products and their diverse usage. The very idea of connectivity is embedded in mobile devices. Mobiles embody connectivity.

⁷¹⁶ Oudghiri, R., & Brunet, L. (2008). *Baromètre photo vague 2008, Les principales tendances du marché, Baromètre API/IPSOS*, p. 8. Retrieved from <http://www.sipec.org/statistiques.php?PAGE=statistiques>

⁷¹⁷ Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York, N.Y: New York University Press.

⁷¹⁸ Goggin, G. (2006). *Cell Phone Culture: Mobile Technology in Everyday Life*. London: Routledge.

⁷¹⁹ Goggin, G. (2008). *Mobile phone cultures*. London: Routledge.

As soon as I got my iPhone, *hey presto*, the possibility of image sharing was just a click away- I started to take pictures exclusively with this one device, forgetting all my other digital devices. From then until 2015 I kept the same iPhone, and continued to shoot and share photos and videos with it. I only felt the need to change it and upgrade model, when faced with incompatibility in regard to the different operating systems, something that is almost certainly contrived in order to force people to change device.

4.3.1. Methodology

Firstly, I would like to clarify that I only decided to use a very small corpus of my own mobile images a posteriori, in retrospection and towards the last phase of my PhD. Otherwise it might have conditioned my own image production and practice. Moving from field observations, note taking, and photos, I analyzed my own visual sharing practices both by reflecting on them, and by discussing them with my strong ties. Secondly, and counterposed with my own practice, I held group debates, in open-ended and non-structured discussions, with adults aged between 25-50, who were not from my close circle, but with whom I had professional ties in real life. Talking about their mobile image sharing practices complemented my closed-tie autoethnography participant observation, allowing me to bracket my personal experiences, and compare them to weaker ties' involvements and settings. Because people hesitate to speak about their private use when being recorded, I made no voice recording.⁷²⁰ I chose an evocative approach not to develop a theoretical explanation, but to further the conversation about my research theme.

After going on my strong ties exchanges, I realized that some messages had been misinterpreted. When? How? Why? Therefore, I analyzed my personal private uses in strong tie friend relationships through those representative MMS cases, those misunderstanding situations. Seven of them were exchanged with one of my strongest tie friends and one was from another of my closest friends. Both are adults with whom I have very deep friendship relationships (Nath, 51 and Bil, 61). The MMS which is not

⁷²⁰ Ling, R. (2008). *New Tech, New Ties: How Mobile Communication Is Reshaping Social Cohesion*. M.I.T, p. 21.

from this same-sex friendship dyad relation,⁷²¹ clarifies a specific characteristic that I believe should be highlighted, thus I have decided to include it as well.

As in I my personal experience, and in line with Rivière's findings, all of my interviewees stated that they exchange MMS messages with one, two, or very few very close persons, if any, and that they do so on a frequent basis.⁷²² The person with whom I exchange the most is Nath. French, divorced, and the mother of two teenagers, she used to live near Montpellier, but in October 2012, she changed jobs and moved to live and work in Paris. Therefore, some examples relate to the time she was still living in the South of France. Thus at the beginning of our friendship, and governed by the fact that we were living in different cities, dialogues were mainly done, either by smartphone, via MMS, or via Facebook, so we quickly got used to communicating frequently in a mediated way.

If forced, I would say that most of the time MMS communication is useful and helpful. Its positive assets are clear: often when sending an MMS, there is a communication *see what I see* side, a stretching of time and space between sender and receiver, and thus a strong feeling of sharing. MMS messages can also serve as memo aids, as something pragmatic. However, through the following examples and taking inspiration from Ilpo Kalevi Koskinen's seminal book, *Mobile Multimedia in Action* (2007),⁷²³ I show that, even in strong ties, and even if all the above-mentioned functions happen quite normally, there are times when implicits do not operate. It is in those instances that the implied becomes crucial, and can even lead to misunderstandings. It is therefore impossible to think that a picture can happen without its narrative, its background, and all the comments that might go along with it.

⁷²¹ A dyad relation is a relationship of only two. In this case the parts are of similar kind; both of us are in our forties, divorced and have heavy telephone usage. Our communication frequency is on a daily basis with a SMS exchange in chat mode that lasts all throughout the day with at least several signs everyday.

⁷²² Rivière, C. (2001). Le téléphone: un facteur d'intégration sociale. *Economie et statistique*, pp. 3–32. Retrieved from http://www.persee.fr/web/revues/home/prescript/article/estat_0336-1454_2001_num_345_1_7442

⁷²³ Koskinen, I. (2007). *Mobile multimedia in action*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

4.3.2. Strong Tie Friendship Dyads. Seven MMS Case Studies - Four Topics: Absence/Presence, Indexicality, Implicits and Instantaneity

“Don’t play with what’s there, play what’s not there.” Miles Davis

As part of the many conversational mobile uses, my hypothesis is that, contrary to popular belief, when exchanging images, sending MMSs, and even between strong ties, nothing can be taken for granted. How does that relate to mobile image exchanging? “Intersubjectivity is woven into the very warp and weft of ordinary conversation”;⁷²⁴ nevertheless, when a private conversation thread is seen publically, the mobile image that are embedded in it are seldom seen. As Mikko Villi suggests

Visual chitchat or small-talk can be a valuable communicative activity, even if it consists of repetitive and superfluous photographic messages – visual little nothings. These ritual conventions of photo messaging follow largely from the practices of mobile communication, where often the act of calling or texting counts at least as much, if not more, than what is said.⁷²⁵

Seven of the following eight MMS messages were exchanged between my friend, Nath and I. Only one MMS was between Bil and I.

Absence/Presence = Message#1: Dealing Frustration

In mobile and consumer societies, dealing with everyday tasks involves both micro and hyper-coordination.⁷²⁶ This amounts to perpetual contact,⁷²⁷ to being always on,⁷²⁸ to

⁷²⁴ Schegloff, E. A. (1992), as quoted in Gillespie, A., & Cornish, F. (2009). Intersubjectivity: Towards a Dialogical Analysis. *Journal for the theory of social behaviour*, 40 (1), pp. 19-46. Retrieved from <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1468-5914.2009.00419.x/full>, p. 30.

⁷²⁵ Villi, M. (2010). *Visual mobile communication: Camera phone photo messages as ritual communication and mediated presence*, (Doctoral dissertation). Helsinki: Aalto University School of Art and Design, p. 150.

⁷²⁶ Ling, R., & Yttri, B. (2002). Hyper-coordination via mobile phones in Norway. In J. E. Katz & M. A. Aakhus (Eds.). *Perpetual Contact Mobile Communication, Private Talk, Public Performance* (pp. 139 - 169).

immediacy, and requires learning how to deal with all these norms and societal protocols. For instance, when buying a dress, thanks to the developments in the smartphone technology (apps), the possibility of having a distant person's opinion is visually achievable. Nevertheless, sometimes in spite of the ubiquity of this mobile technology, the frustration of not receiving mobile images might also occur, as there is often a lag between the SMS and MMS reception. Frustration shows in the exchanged SMSs. "Yes, yes, what do you think about these shoes 36 Euros".



Figure 80. David, G. (Octobre 8, 2011). Dealing slow MMS reception. [MMS and SMS exchange between Nath and Gaby]. Screenshot.

This first message was sent at 4:58 P.M., but 15 minutes later at 5:13 P.M., I sent "Still have not received anything. Did you send a photo?" - "Yes" She replied and I immediately received the picture. Then, asking if I had received the photo she says

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.; Ling, R. (2004). *The Mobile Connection: The cell phone's impact on society*. San Francisco: Morgan Kaufmann.

⁷²⁷ Katz, J. E., & Aakhus, M. A. (2002). *Perpetual contact: Mobile communication, private talk, public performance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁷²⁸ Baron, N. S. (2008). *Always on: Language in an online and mobile world*. New York: Oxford University Press.

“always nothing, shit”. One possible remark here is, that in my answer: “I love”,⁷²⁹ it is implicit in the dialogue that the photo had been received. As Risto Sarvas and David Frohlich clearly advance: “Photographs are also captured to communicate the present for the present. Photographs are captured and sent to distant relatives and friends to show ‘how our life is here, right now’”⁷³⁰ and not only as a nostalgic past memory.

Nonetheless, apart from expense, technical complications such as the one considered above, are the main issue that dissuades people from sending MMSs on a more frequent basis. The process is often taken for granted, but is in reality, fraught with possible glitches. First, sending an MMS is not possible for all phones: there may be a prohibitive technological incompatibility for the reception and transmission of a multimedia message. Indeed, the device must absolutely have the General Packet Radio Service (GPRS) standard, be at least 2.5G, for the SMS to meet the Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) and access to the Wireless Application Protocol (WAP). Another pitfall: it may be that the GPRS network is unavailable. It is also necessary to have color display to assess the message content. Sometimes they cannot be sent between people subscribed to different international mobile network operators, some handsets do not read images and the sender does not even know if the photo has been properly viewed. Sometimes the receiver gets an SMS with a link that has to be checked online if the mobile device does not enable image (either photo or video) visualization. Therefore, “standards are probably more influential in shaping technology, business, and practices than any single user inter-face or application.”⁷³¹

Photography technology for domestic use is a good example of a technology with increasing returns to adoption: the more people use a specific technology (e.g., glass plates, 35 mm film, or JPG images), the more standard or compatible with others it becomes;

⁷²⁹ Translation is my own: “oui, oui, tu penses quoi de ces chaussures 36 euros”. “Encore rien reçu, t’as envoyé photo?” “Oui”. “toujours pas, merde”. “j’aime”.

⁷³⁰ Sarvas, R., & Frohlich, D. (2011). *From snapshots to social media: The changing picture of domestic photography*. R. Harper (Ed.). London: Springer-Verlag, p. 7.

⁷³¹ Ibid., p. 167.

hence, it grows more attractive. The outcome of an era of ferment is non-obvious and complex.⁷³²

For instance, to my question “Do you exchange phone photo messages with someone?” one of my close friends, Jane (41) who lives in Uruguay, answered me in a private Facebook message

I have a totally obsolete phone that does not take pictures, or (anything) else. I used to have one and I did get pictures. I tried to send a couple of times but they never arrived. If I had one, for example I'd now send you a picture of my house that is fully turned upside down... I'm painting it. The degree of chaos is scary, in truth.⁷³³

Constant standardizations: of cables, protocols, drivers, and also the operating systems and middleware; of image formats and metadata transfer protocols; all of these influence the way domestic ICT infrastructure changes, the way domestic photography is exchanged; and thus their possible usage and meanings.⁷³⁴ SMS and MMS messages, and mobile images in general, are merely one element in an ecology that includes many other handy communication modes. Apps - Facetime, Skype, Whatsapp - and many other means with which to construct mobile conversations. In fact, two days after our Facebook email exchanges, Jane and I held a long Skype exchange where she showed me all the mess around her through video chat: the painting, the colors, the state of the house - in a more detailed way than a mobile picture could have illustrated. But, even if MMSs have never become the killer app, so far, it is evident, as Scifo expressed, MMS were the “birth of a new language.”⁷³⁵ The user adoption of apps such as Whatsapp and Kik, demonstrate that these exchanges do count and how much they do.

⁷³² Ibid., pp. 14-15.

⁷³³ Jane, private communication, March 2013.

⁷³⁴ Sarvas, R. Op. cit., pp. 168-9.

⁷³⁵ Scifo, B. (2005). The domestication of camera-phone and MMS communication: The early experiences of young Italians. In Nyíri K. (Ed.). *A Sense of Place: The Global and the Local in Mobile Communication*. Vienna: Passagen Verlag, pp. 363-374.

The idiom that says a picture is worth a 1000 words, or the *see what I see* myth, is sometimes quite effective. Often mobile images can be time saving, and there is no doubt that often a picture is worth 140 characters. This is the case here exemplified. Nath had sent me a good morning SMS “Godday BB” (baby). But for me, unable to type among a crowd of people, rather than describing the place and situation I was in, it was much faster and more informative to send images. That is to say, two images of my surroundings depicted how my house looked more quickly and effectively than any words. Nath’s comment portrays it clearly. Just by seeing the pictures she answers “effectively more than nice”.⁷³⁶ It is like pictures of children growing, or vacation days, sent as a personalized postcard to the family.⁷³⁷ Even special and spontaneous events can work as comprehensible signals if the images rely on personal common ground.⁷³⁸ However, quick image sending without framing contexts can also lead to misunderstanding. Implied unsaid exist between the parts, but in order to fully understand the received image, there is a mandatory need to be aware of the context it depicts, it belongs to and therefore illustrates.

⁷³⁶ Nath, private communication, February 24, 2013. Translation is my own: “Bjr BB”, “*effectivement, plus q sympa*”.

⁷³⁷ Hjorth, L. (2005). FCJ-035 Locating Mobility: Practices of co-presence and the persistence of the postal metaphor in SMS/MMS mobile phone customization in Melbourne, *The Fibreculture Journal*, issue 6, mobility. Retrieved from <http://six.fibreculturejournal.org/fcj-035-locating-mobility-practices-of-co-presence-and-the-persistence-of-the-postal-metaphor-in-sms-mms-mobile-phone-customization-in-melbourne>; Koskinen, I. (2007). *Mobile multimedia in action*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, p. 97.

⁷³⁸ Garfinkel, H. (1967). *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J. : Prentice-Hall; Kindberg, T., Spasojevic, M., Fleck, R., & Sellen, A. (2005). I Saw This and Thought of You: Some Social Uses of Camera Phones. In *Extended Abstracts of the Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI 2005)*, Portland, Oregon, April 2–7, 2005. New York: ACM Press, pp. 1545–1548.

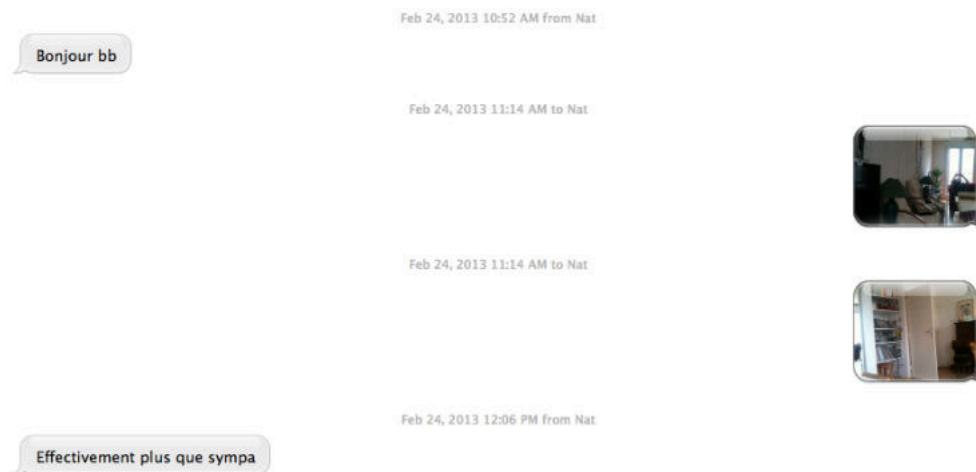


Figure 81. David, G. (February 24, 2013). Showing were I am. [MMS and SMS exchange between Nath and Gaby]. Screenshot.

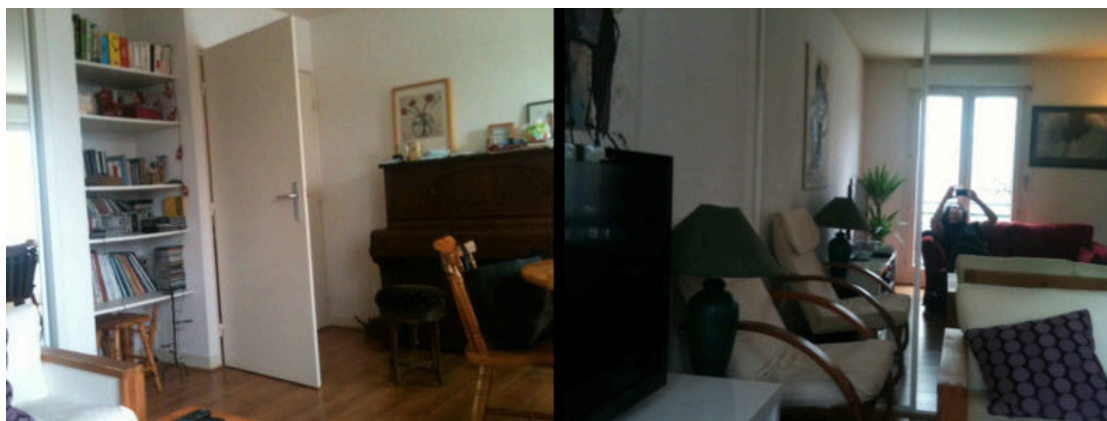


Figure 82. David, G. (February 24, 2013). Two MMSs were sent. Reflected in the mirror is the image of me taking the photo. [Photos Gaby David].

Interpretations: Message#3: Misunderstanding - The dirty dishes

The night before I received these two MMS, Nath told me that she had a lot of chores and cleaning to do, so, with no text at all, I immediately presupposed they were snapshots illustrating the state of the her kitchen's sink. I answered "Lol" (laugh out loud). But right after, and in order to explain that the origin of these two images was not such an amusing story, she called and let me know where and why these photos had been taken. SMS can be less intrusive, but if the interlocutor answers, making a

telephone call will allow a faster response than typing a long SMS. I phoned, and thus quickly heard the full story behind these two photos: they were not taken at her house. I had jumped to the wrong conclusion. Confusion and errors on the provenance of images is quite common. One thing is both undeniable and doubtless: when misunderstood, mobile images spawn conversations.

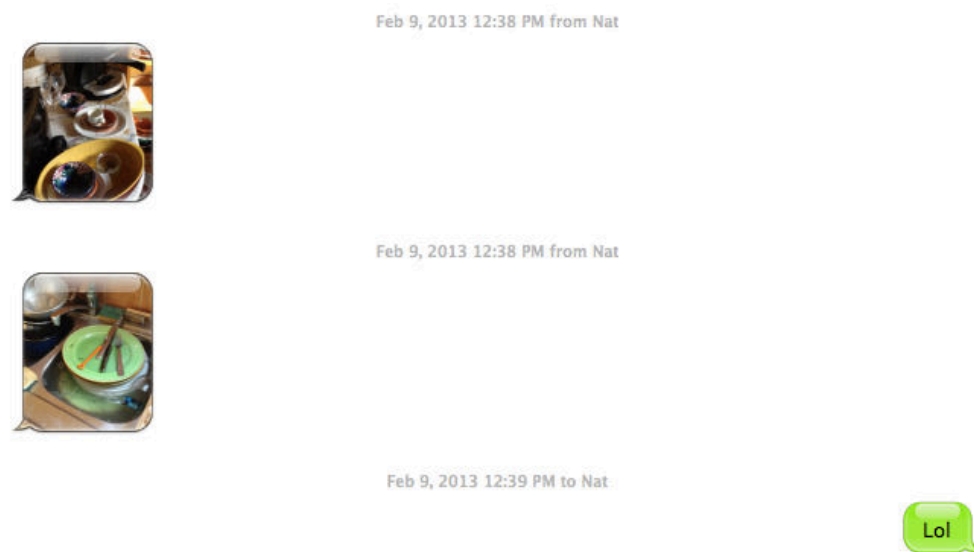


Figure 83. David, G. (February 9, 2013). The dirty dishes. [MMS and SMS exchange between Nath and Gaby]. Screenshot.

Assumptions = Message#4: Gloire à Dieu

Another example of miscommunication is when, out of the blue, my friend Bil sent me this image in a MMS.⁷³⁹

⁷³⁹ Bil, private communication, March 6, 2013.



Figure 84. Bil (March 6, 2013) MMS. [Photo Claude Bilgoraj]. Personal collection.

Having no previous understanding of the context at all and not even a short explanatory SMS text, I thought it concerned the huge dog which happens to be in the foreground and without really knowing what to reply, and making reference to the dog, I typed “Huge and nice”, (“*Enorme et beaux*”). But that was not exactly what my friend wanted me to look at or to comment on in the picture he had sent me. So, he gave it a second try. This time to help me understand the humor, he sent a second image, a more frontal shot of a West Indian hairdresser salon which sign read: *Gloire à Dieu*. Bil’s image came captioned by an SMS that read: “*Dieu*”, “God”, and I could see that his intention was to joke about at the weird name the salon had (in his opinion) (See figure 85).



Figure 85. Bil (March 6, 2013) Further and closer angle. [Photos Claude Bilgoraj]. Personal collection.

Two months after this MMS exchange, I talked with Bil's girlfriend about our MMS misunderstanding. She told me of her experience when receiving the same image: she had had the same feeling of not totally understanding the image. But, knowing Bil better than I, and having already established this type of visual enigma game between them, she knew that there was something in it that she had to find and understand. She told me: *"it took me a while, but then I understood..."* (Val, personal communication, May, 2013). Since the level of connivance in couples is usually high, this instance is more understandable.

For an image to be understood, there is a need for shared codes in regard to intentionality and affective factors. "A 'pen camera' that captures reality without composing it, leads the viewer to a variety of interpretations depending on what his motivation is."⁷⁴⁰ When sending and receiving any type of message, the degree of

⁷⁴⁰ Compte, C. (2009). *L'Image en mouvement, la médiation du regard*. Paris: Hermès Science, Lavoisier, p. 173. Translation is my own: *"Une 'caméra stylo' qui saisirait la réalité sans la composer entraine le spectateur vers des interprétations très diverses en fonction de ce qu'il est de sa motivation."*

implicitness in what the other person knows or is supposed to know, look at, and thus understand, is a very important parameter. In both of the aforementioned cases, the “see what I see” formula triggered even more conversation. The image *per se* has no intrinsic power, so needs and demands a longer explanation – as W. J. T. Mitchell asked in “What do pictures want?” answering, “pictures want a voice.”⁷⁴¹ So, unless the images are accompanied by a story, a legend, a written comment, an SMS, etc., as time passes, the construction of a plausible narration becomes more difficult and might even become impossible. Similar reflection can be made in regard to what happened with ephemeral oral storytelling that was abandoned in favor of private analog images.

Message#5: In-jokes

In daily phone exchanges with strong tie friends, it is natural to tease over humorous or odd daily events. This was the case with Nat and I at the beginning of our friendship. We started exchanging photos, of things that the other did not have or couldn’t do. For example, while in Paris the weather was always bad, often I received photos of her sunbathing on the beach after work – as, at that time, she was living in the South of France, while the weather in Paris was still mild, in Montpellier it was already like summer.

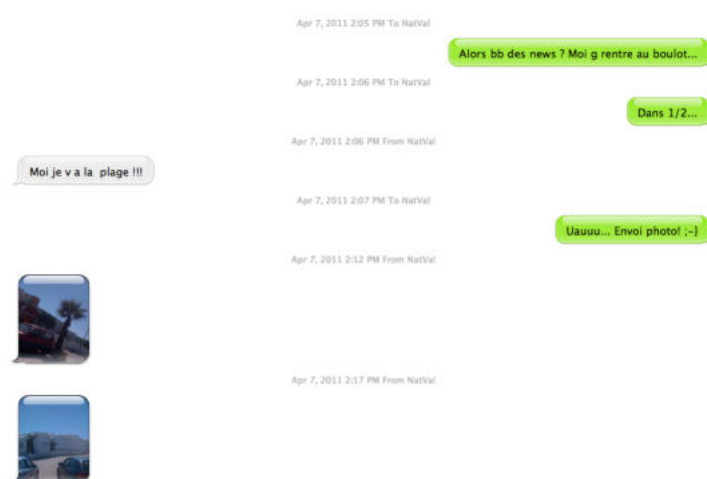


Figure 86. David, G. (May 25, 2011). At the beach. [MMS and SMS exchange between Nath and Gaby]. Screenshot.

⁷⁴¹ Mitchell, W. J. T. (2005). *What do pictures want?: the lives and loves of images*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 29.

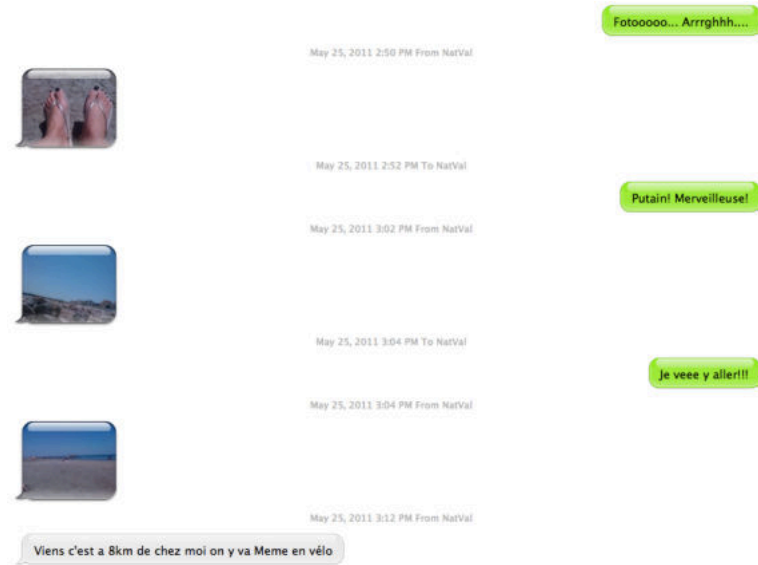


Fig. 87. David, G. (April 7, 2011). [MMS and SMS exchange between Nath and Gaby]. At the beach, feet selfies. Screenshot.

I in turn I sent her pictures of the weirdest things I could find in the capital, or of the classiest dresses discovered in my Parisian window-shopping strolls.

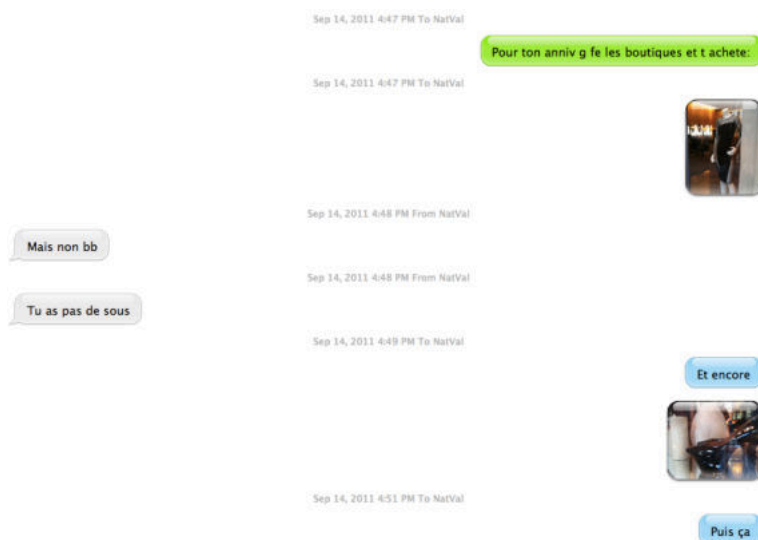


Figure 88. David, G. (September 14, 2011). Image as gift. [MMS and SMS exchange between Nath and Gaby]. Screenshot.

It is evident that keeping a relationship alive when people live in different cities requires energy, time and, overall - desire, care and affection. On a routine working day, a mobile photo dialog can become a creative way to joke together. In the search to stimulate each other's imagination, one tasks oneself with staying alert to anything that could convert into a photo opportunity. In any case, in order to tease the other there must be something to tease about.⁷⁴² Teasing and playing become crucial and intrinsic parts of image sending. Two types of games arise: finite games where there is a winner; or, a more infinite one - one that is played for its own ends. Mobile image exchanges stand for the latter. Examples and demonstrations of this pleasure in playing visual ping-pong started to gain fame, through apps such as Whatsapp, and even more with the latest playful photo apps popular among teenagers like Snapchat and Poke. These apps enable sending of pictures that are viewable only for a specific time frame that can range from 1 to 10 seconds. Created in 2012, and gaining more impact in 2013, short recording video apps such as Vine (only 6 seconds) and Cinemagram were just begging to break into a larger market.

Message#6: Not just a portrait but also an "I am busy" sign

Feb 16, 2013 8:56 PM to Nat

Bil et une copine a lui chez moi



Figure 89. David, G. (February 16, 2013). MMS being busy sign. [MMS and SMS exchange between Nat and Gaby]. Screenshot.

⁷⁴² Kurvinen, E. (2003). Only When Miss Universe Snatches Me. Teasing in MMS Messaging. *Proceeding of Designing Pleasurable Products and Interfaces DPPI03*, June 23–26, 2003. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA.

Often one is occupied or in company, and it is not possible to immediately answer a call or SMS. Deciding to take, and quickly send, a picture of the situation one is experiencing, or the people one is with, can also be a good, fast and effective means to answer by *explaining* that you are busy, and not able to communicate. The mobile image can stand as an: “I am busy” sign. Yet, once again, the mobile image is part of a larger communication interaction and gesture. As seen in figure 89, where both of the persons smile, I make my guests feel happy because I am taking a picture of them and, at the same time, I send it to Nath with a short caption that reads “Bil and a friend of his at my place”. This would let her know that I am not able to answer her SMS (private communication, February 16, 2013). It would also allow her to understand why I did not answer her phone call and why I would not be able to reply to her by SMS at a quicker pace, as I usually would. In this way, the fact that I am busy with my guests is better explained pragmatically: Iconically.

Orality/AP = Message#7: Embedded in larger conversations

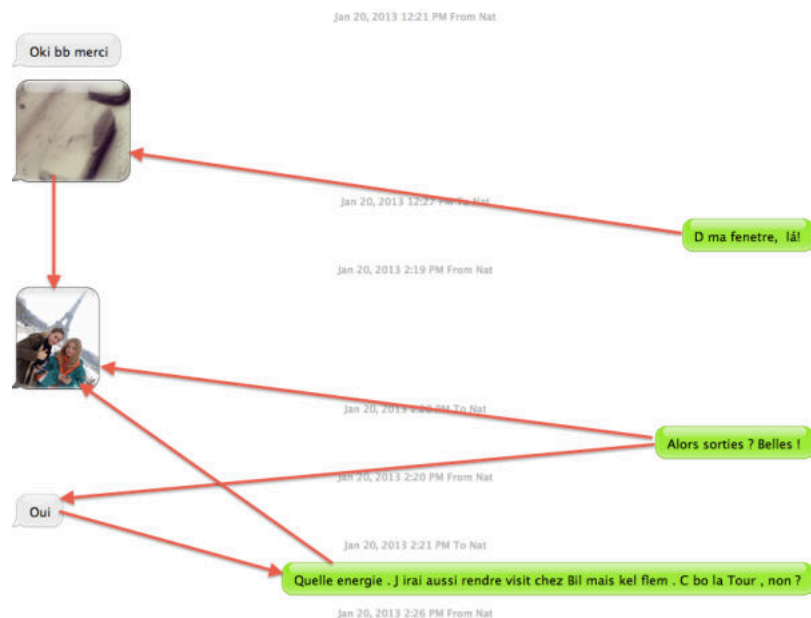


Figure 90. David, G. (January 20, 2013). Canonic dialog. [MMS and SMS exchange between Nath and Gaby]. Screenshot.

Around midday I sent an MMS, together with an SMS that worked as the image caption that read: “from my window, now”. It took almost two hours for Nath to reply – very rare for her. Why did this happen? While there were many possible reasons, (busy, cold, distracted, etc.) the fact is that, when she did reply, her MMS illustrated through another image, why it had taken her that long to answer. The discussion of snow that I initiated with a photo of the white-covered car, was being answered along the same lines: her daughter and friend in a touristic, wintery white, photo in front of the Eiffel Tower, with no caption or SMS at all. In reply to her image, an interrogative SMS, presupposing that they were still out, but wanting to double check: “So you are out? Nice!” Her short “yes” triggered my “What energy. I’ll go visit Bil, but what laziness. It’s nice the Tower, isn’t it?” The SMS-MMS dialogue lasted from 12.21 P.M. until 2.46 P.M. The duration of a short dialogue like this demonstrates how conversation time can be radically changed from how we used to understand it: banal dialogues like this can last as long as two, three hours or even all day.

In linguistics an adjacency pair (AP) is a conversational turn-taking: the first part provokes the answering of the second part and so on.⁷⁴³ Telephone conversations and SMSs usually follow this turn-taking pattern.⁷⁴⁴ Mobile visuals – as they are for the most part connected with verbal conversations – also follow this dynamic. However, sometimes the AP pattern is not respected. This is usually due to, either the time lapse in sending and receiving, as SMSs take less time than MMSs, or to the users typing speed. If no answer is received whatsoever, then the sender can continue taking the turn until s/he has a reply. In mobile image sending, WiFi connection, or 3G/4G (im)possibility is also crucial.

Mobile photos are embedded as if stapled into larger conversations: be they online or offline. But, sometimes a sequence of one person’s images and messages can take place without waiting for the AP protocol. Therefore, it has become frequent for the AP to be out of synchronization in mobile discussions, and conversations sometimes seem to be delayed in time. Since people are already aware that mobile communications are not

⁷⁴³ Schegloff, E. A., & Sacks, H. (1973). Opening Up Closings. *Semiotica* 8(4), pp. 289-327.

⁷⁴⁴ Goffman, E. (1981). *Forms of talk, Replies and Responses* chapter. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

always synchronic, but part of the so-called semi-synchronic, or non-synchronic, mediations, and non-linear dialogue can also take place, the interlocutors are aware of it and continue the thread out of phase. Several messages or images sent by the same user, without receiving any answer, might occur when:

- there is a need to send many images, as a series of related images, like three or four images related to the same event
- there has been no answer, in order to get a reply or double check reception
- there is a strong trust between the parties that gives a feeling of freedom of not having to wait and need to respect the implicit protocol of AP
- a tease or game takes place.

Instantaneity, Real Time, Live Stream, Speed = Message#8: Mobile Images Ahead of Time

Another micro dialogue took place on an occasion when I got my haircut. I had scheduled an appointment. Nath and I had met a couple of days before. I had told her that I was soon going to change hairstyle. She asked me to send her a photo once I had had my hair done. So while still in the salon, I decided to have my picture taken, not only for Nath, but also to send to my overseas family and friends, so they could see how I looked as well. Thus, once finished, I asked the hairdresser to take a shot of my new hairdo. We went outside the salon and in the natural day-light and drizzling rain, she took four pictures, “just in case”, she added. As the weather was too cold, and as I had not passed the shots through any of photo editing filter, as I usually prefer to do, I decided to send the pictures later, once warm at home. But, at around 3 P.M. Nath sent me an SMS asking: “so, how are you?”, meaning: How do you look? Since I was on my way back home, in a rush and still wanting to enhance the raw photo with a filter, I did not want to send it yet.

I typed: “hair is colored, dark, no red”, just a nominal sentence giving the needed information, but not unveiling the best part of the hair cut. Nat asked and then

demanded: “OKi, nice? photo quick”: a nominal sentence operating as an imperative one. An illustration of the eagerness people have, both to send and receive mobile images: I felt the urge to send her the raw picture. Nominal sentences are often used in SMS language, when speed and economy of speech is required. So, without delay I sent her one of the four shots I had in my iPhone photo library. I also added a text message saying: “this is the back, the front is similar”, meaning similar to my usual style: “Cool”, she answered. I asked whether she liked it, she said “yes”, “thanks babe, cool” and that was the end of the dialogue. After the image sent, the anxious desire to see my new hairdo as soon as possible, quickly dissipated.

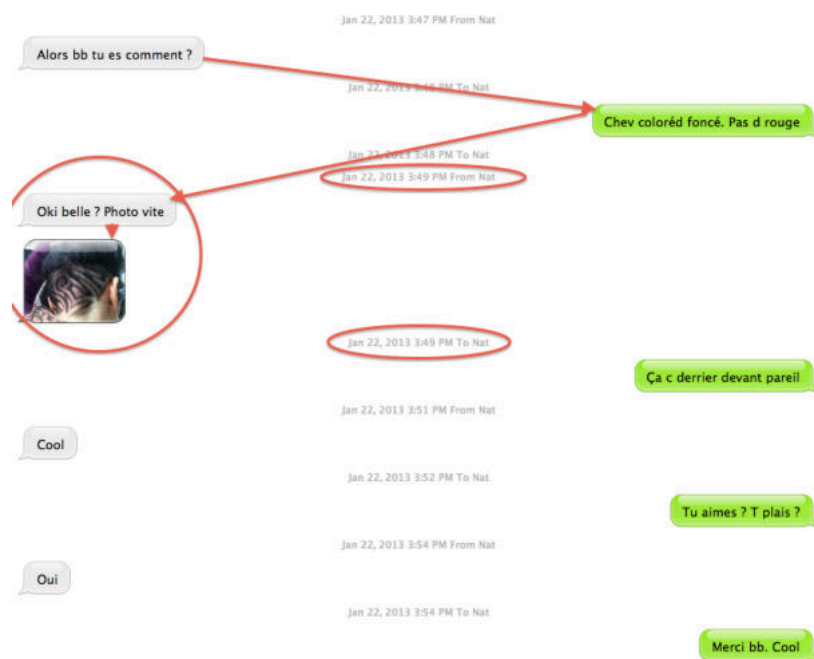


Figure 91. David, G. (January 22, 2013). The photo had been taken. [MMS and SMS exchange between Nath and Gaby]. Screenshot.

4.3.3. Couple Teasing

The following examples study how the use of mobile images can help us regain, as adults, this lost habit of playing with images and recapturing a more social kind of play.

The limits are established through mobile play-based visual signals that stem from experimentation, trust and fun. If the sharing of private mobile images implies trust and a desire to communicate with the other by sharing a part of our imaginary iconographic universe, then a mobile image being sent and received ‘in real time’ is a rich opportunity for research. Because of the risk of rejection from a partner, erotic playfulness using teasing⁷⁴⁵ to express interest requires some directness and confidence.⁷⁴⁶ The examples hereafter used portray these types of image exchanges, in adult teasing relationships. Looking more closely at the visual dimensions these playful interactions might undertake serves to reveal and comprehend the person’s character and personality in ways that interact with and complement the verbal and the physical ones.

According to Vetere et al., mediated intimacy is carried out in three stages. Firstly, through “the antecedents”, which entail understanding the actions that precede the intimate experience. Secondly, by what they named “constituents” these being the themes that characterize the acts. Lastly, the “yields” are the consequences of the exchange.⁷⁴⁷ So, if we focus on a mobile courtship situation, images that are intended to tease could refer to “the antecedents”. Computer mediated real time sex could be understood as “constituents”. And lastly the “yields” are represented by everything that is discussed the day after, even if there has not been a sexual encounter but just a flirtation.⁷⁴⁸ In my case I will mainly refer to the so-called antecedents, because I support the idea that the yields can be the antecedents of a future intimate moment to come. However, I consider it unhelpful to make such a neat categorization of stages.

Mediated adult teasing relationships are a game of negotiation, a game of give-and-take, of hide-and-seek. Being mischievous with the other, unveiling oneself but not too much, all this has to be measured and mastered to find the proper tone and balance. In

⁷⁴⁵ I use the word teasing, understanding it as a sort of game, to joke with, to pull someone’s leg.

⁷⁴⁶ Meston, C. M., & O’Sullivan, L. F. (2007). Such a tease: intentional sexual provocation within heterosexual interactions. *Archives of sexual behavior*, 36(4), pp. 531–542, p. 533.

⁷⁴⁷ Vetere, F., Gibbs, M. R., Kjeldskov, J., Howard, S., Mueller, F., Pedell, S., Mecoless, K., & Bunyan, M. (2005). Mediating Intimacy: designing technologies to support strong-tie relations. CHI 2005, April 2–7, 2005, Portland, Oregon, USA. *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*. New York: ACM Press, pp. 471–480.

⁷⁴⁸ Aziz, F. (2014). Visual Transactions, *Études photographiques*, N° 31, Printemps. Retrieved from <http://etudesphotographiques.revues.org/3388>

these kinds of exchanges, different sorts of mobile images transfer the many diverse ways of portraying one's self. In reference to meeting others' virtual demands, Eva Illouz describes it as: "reflexive self-observation, introspection, self-labeling, and articulation of tastes and opinions."⁷⁴⁹ Introspectively, if one rereads oneself, it will hint at who one is. The private exchange of mobile images between couple runs the gamut of many diverse topics that could be catalogued as *my universe*, *my likes*, *my taste*: that range from more intellectual to iconographic, interested in nature, to musical. They may also include cultural references such as a graffiti of Rimbaud or a sculpture seen in a museum that the person liked or even the cover of a CD/LP.⁷⁵⁰ The possible subjects of those exchanged mobile images in courtships are vast, and range from the most banal to the most extraordinary and strangest things. As analyzed, categorizing the content of sent images is not that useful: their taxonomy be more broadly based on their usage. Therefore, I propose that in these types of teasing and flirtation relationships through mobile photographs, these images aid three main overlapping purposes: to reveal/(un)veil oneself (figures 92, 93, 94), to tease (figure 96), and to amuse/be amused (figure 95).

Case N°1: Selfies of Tease⁷⁵¹

Relationship context: Xtof (47) and I (44) met firstly online (2011), but since we were both living in Paris, decided to meet in person as soon as possible. Neither of us wanted to let the online-offline gap grow. Nowadays, small screens are material objects and spaces for daily self-representations. Being a less intrusive communication mode, he preferred texting to speaking on the phone, at least that is what he later had told me. Therefore, a dynamic of sending and receiving, but most of all of *waiting for* text

⁷⁴⁹ Illouz, E. (2007). Romantic Webs. In E. Illouz, *Cold intimacies: The making of emotional capitalism*. Chapter 3. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, p. 77.

⁷⁵⁰ All these are examples that I have experienced and that only later, became part of my autoethnographical approach.

⁷⁵¹ In November 2013, *selfie* was declared the "Word of the Year" by Oxford Dictionaries. Selfing describes the practice of taking a picture of oneself, usually with a smartphone, maybe also with a selfie stick, and then sharing it, uploading it online to social networks, or as already seen, sent in a private MMS. As seen here, this practice existed way before being word of the year, even in the epoch of the analogue non-connected image, but the fact of formally naming this mobile habitus triggered its trend, and anchored the practice much more.

messages was quickly established. Loving to see photos, I had asked him if he would like to send me one image per day. He agreed, and we started a sort of ping-pong MMS visual game. Both having a visually oriented background and knowledge, we smoothly developed the habit of image exchanging as a game to joke with each other. We would also even send each other *visual homework* that could have peculiar instructions to follow. Instructions were varied; they could be finding something special to shoot, sending a photo of what you had cooked, and so on. Most of the time we were symbolically measuring the visual creativity and teasing each other. I once remember explicitly having asked him to send me a self-portrait.

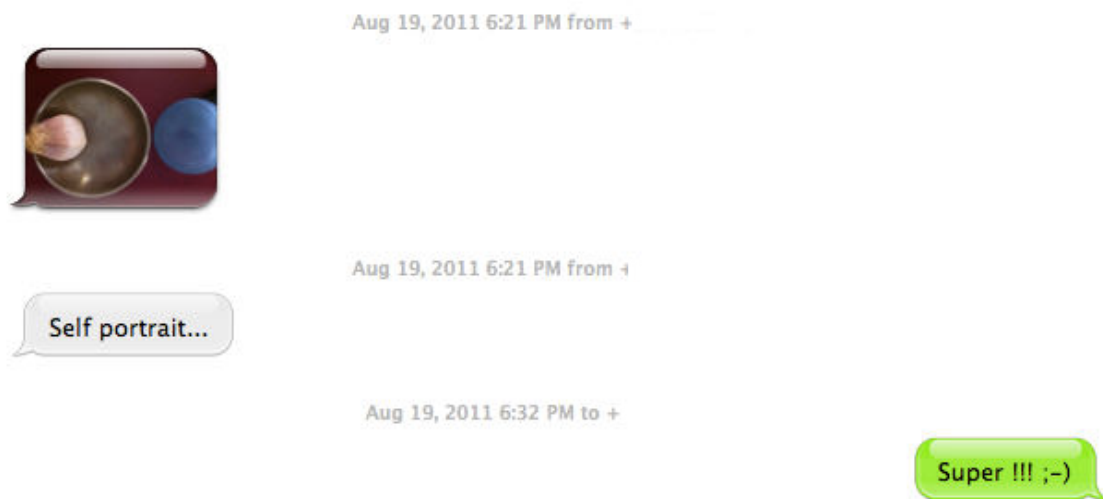


Figure 92. David, G. (August 19, 2011). The photo had been taken. [MMS and SMS exchange between Xtof and Gaby]. Screenshot.

What I received was a pondered minimalist circular composition, very graphic and neat, and I remember feeling that it represented him quite well. Nevertheless, without words - the objects in the photograph did not have any special meaning to me yet. Therefore, I found myself just answering: "Super", followed by three exclamation marks and a smiley. I also recall, that the next time we met he explained to me what each one of the objects in the photo meant and even showed me the other four shots he had done, before finally deciding to send me that one. I am also aware that he did not share his self-portrait online, but I did not find out if he had sent it to any other person privately

or used it for any other purpose. Three weeks later, as an end to one of our conversation, I received an SMS reply. The text message read: “as usual mademoiselle Pantone ☺” (this term of endearment made reference to the fact that I love comparing colors and hues, and therefore mademoiselle Pantone was the nickname he sometimes used to call me). His SMS sparked my creativity, and I felt it was my own turn to do the same self-portrait exercise. But, there are many diverse ways of portraying oneself. In Xtof’s case, he had done a sort of design, a visual composition. In my case I took a selfie, which was also conscientiously visual and aesthetically modified through Instagram filters.

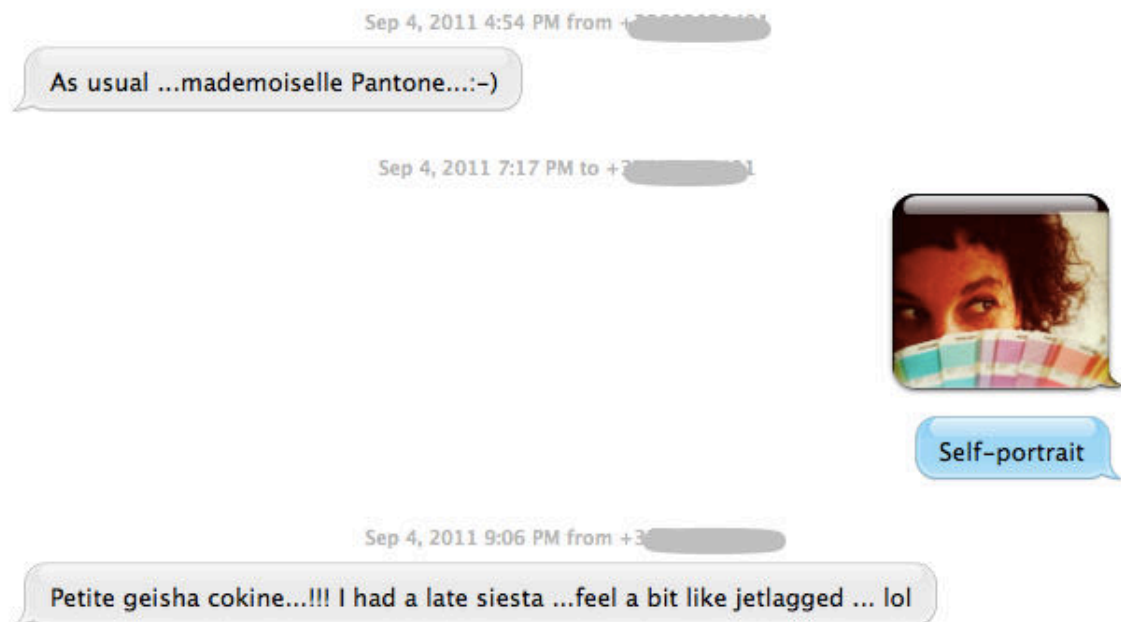


Figure 93. David, G. (September 4, 2011). Shades of color [MMS and SMS exchange between Xtof and Gaby]. Screenshot.

I sent the picture with a caption reading “self-portrait”. His answer, which, if I translate from French into English reads: “naughty little geisha... !!! I had a late siesta... feel a bit jetlagged ... lol”. In fact, because the Pantone chart I was holding covered me like a fan, he had made a slight comment on the composition of the photo. Nevertheless, what he had texted still seemed to me a little bit cryptic, and did not quite push the conversation further but gestured toward doing so later. Consequently, soon after

having sent it privately to Xtof, I decided to post my selfie publically on Facebook, just to see what its public comments would be. Sharing by diverse means, and with different intentions is another way of creating our micro-audiences.⁷⁵² I also knew that he'd probably, sooner or later, be seeing those comments as well.



Figure 94. David, G. (September 4, 2011). [Facebook profile picture update]. Screenshot detail.

Retrieved from

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10150282004448884&set=a.424738098883.211524.575313883&type=1&theater>

Even if to me it symbolized other things, once on Facebook, this selfie represented nothing but one more of my many other profile pictures. Nevertheless, at the same time it was a means to open up our small duo game to other people to participate. The picture had 11 likes and 5 comments (figure 94). These numbers do not represent anything *per se*, but illustrate the fact that some of my contacts reacted to the photograph in more or less an average way, denoting that commenting images is one of the essential social aspects of online images. Friends who knew that I was planning to

⁷⁵² Lasén, A. (2012). Autofotos. Subjetividades y Medios Sociales. In N. García-Canclini and F. Cruces (Eds.). *Jóvenes, culturas urbanas y redes digitales. Prácticas emergentes en las artes, el campo editorial y la música*, pp. 243- 262. Madrid: Ariel.

dye my hair and go for a change in color were the ones who mainly did comments. The first one reads: “*violet and lime green*” (Nathalie). The next one says: “*what a twinkling look!!! What should you have thought in that moment...*” (Amélie). Comment to which I could only answer: “*mmm*”. Then, the last two comments want to verify if I had already decided or done anything with my hair color. “*So it’s painted??!!:*” (Fatima) and “*hair???*” (Dora). All comments are quite insignificant but demonstrate curiosity and the inclination to chat.

With a first production and sharing context that differs from the second one, this banal example epitomizes the passage of a personal private photograph, from a closer MMS dyad circulation to a wider and public online share. However, probably because this selfie was published on my personal Facebook page, both situations elicited, in their own different ways, playful teasing comments. In both of the personal situations described here, the comments that followed the image exchange had a praising and rewarding tone. Having been produced the image *within* and *for* a dyad relation exchange, in the first private sharing situation the circumstances and publishing rules were different; whereas in the second public situation and context there was neither seduction nor any real teasing, but more a will, or a need to converse more, to open up the discussion. In any case, one can wonder how many of the mobile photos posted on social networking sites such as Facebook come from, and encounter similar divers situations.

Case N°2: Hot Pics and Sexting-circumvention

Facilitated by technical developments and also by the many visual apps, the production and circulation of sexy images turned into a more feasible task.⁷⁵³ There are two main styles of sexy mobile images shared: either they are images found online or they are self-produced images, in what is usually called a sext.⁷⁵⁴ They might be responses to dares or challenges that others have made. Images found on the web can portray self-

⁷⁵³ This does not mean that the habit of exchanging sexy images is a frequent everyday habit, however sexy image exchange has increased due both to the intimacy of the mobile and to the ease of sharing.

⁷⁵⁴ Chalfen, R. (2009). It’s only a picture: sexting, “smutty” snapshots and felony charges. *Visual Studies*, 24(3), pp. 258–268.

identification, a fun tease, or other, but are usually related to the world of imagination and fantasy, to the emotions and feelings partners might have themselves, or even be related to a broader cultural context. For example, as for non-self produced images, in March 2013, I received an MMS that was an animated gif image (see figure 95) parody of the “international sensation” (he had been defined like this even by the United Nations News Centre) Korean artist Psy, to which I could only answer by a couple of smiles. Through his worldwide video clip “Gangnam Style”, Psy had become buzzworthy, appropriated, remixed and transformed in endless diverse styles.

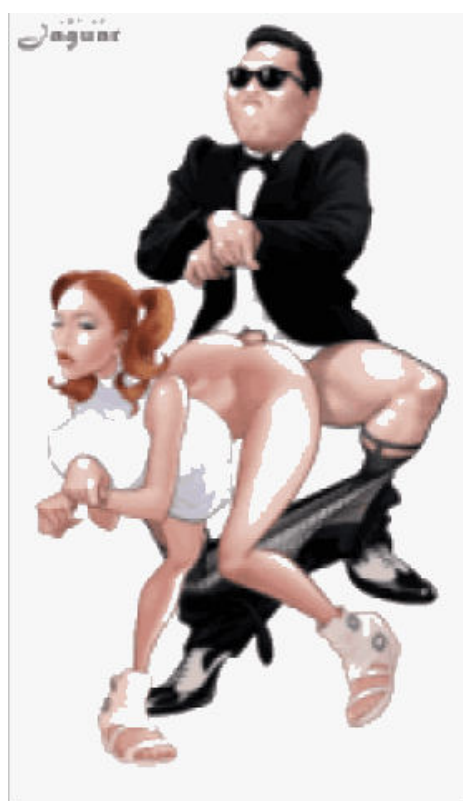


Figure 95. Unknown. (Received March 29, 2013). Parodic Gangnam Style [gif image screenshot].
Personal collection.

But, how should the exchange of mobile sexy images be carried out without being judged as sleazy or creepy? When the will is to dodge visual clichés, there seem to be two creative solutions: on one side, through the use of filters, cropping, emoticons, etc., in other words formal features that help its *aesthetics*, and on the other side, through creativity and inventiveness, that can range from humor to *mise-en-scène* (as seen in Fig.

23). Sometimes both of these solutions overlap, ending in very special, beautiful and meaningful result for each participant. As the following case exemplifies, as it was in our tradition, and as “antecedents”⁷⁵⁵ to our next meeting, we were exchanging SMSs. Suddenly, I received a mobile photo of all of Xtof’s clothes on the ground, with only one pun as caption: “*melted*”. I knew what he was trying to convey. With the double coded photo Xtof had sent, the implicit/implied notion was that *he* was very hot. And yet again the word *hot* being polysemic, interpretations were multiple. Besides, that August day in Paris, the weather was particularly scorching, and the temperature hot, so the ambiguity was enhanced by the climate context. The partner teasing dialogue *was favored through the images*⁷⁵⁶ but in its meteorological circumstance. One could have imagined him taking off his clothes, and then taking the photo naked and sweltering in the heat. In any case the image was a ludic way to express what he wanted, and it was not at all a gross sex MMS cliché.⁷⁵⁷

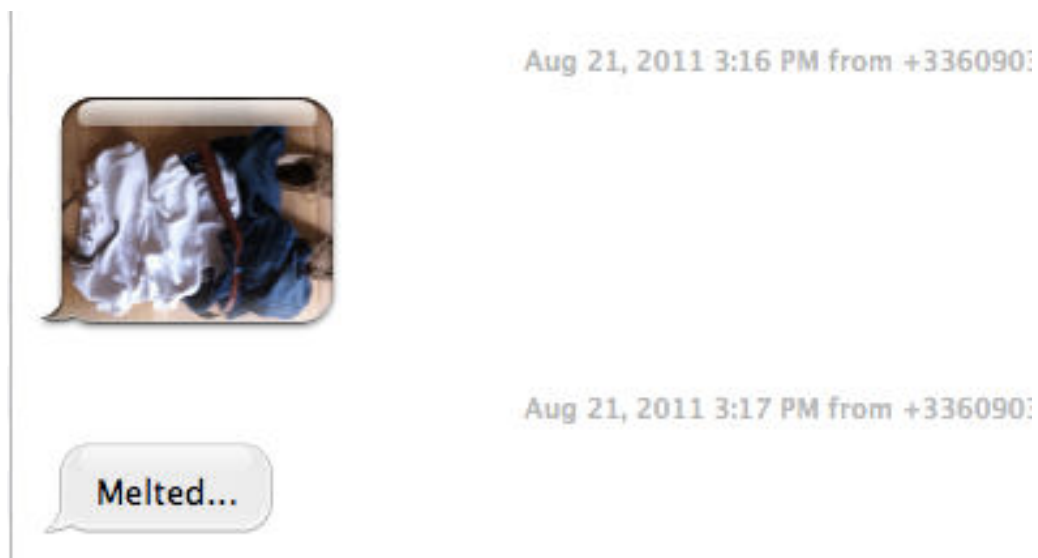


Figure 96. David, G. (August 21, 2011). Melted [MMS and SMS exchange between Xtof and Gaby]. Screenshot.

⁷⁵⁵ Vetere, F., Gibbs, M. R., Kjeldskov, J., Howard, S., Mueller, F., Pedell, S., Mecoles, K., & Bunyan, M. (2005). Mediating Intimacy: designing technologies to support strong-tie relations. CHI 2005, April 2–7, 2005, Portland, Oregon, USA. *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*. New York: ACM Press, pp. 471–480.

⁷⁵⁶ Kurvinen, E. (2003). Only When Miss Universe Snatches Me. Teasing in MMS Messaging. *Proceeding of Designing Pleasurable Products and Interfaces DPPI03*, June 23–26, 2003. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA, emphasis in original.

⁷⁵⁷ Also called “dick pics”.

Humorous language, metaphor or irony, and double coding are always part of human communication, and images are not the exception. On the contrary, they enable various interpretations. As all intentional human communication, images work when a communicator produces a piece of evidence, a piece of meaning; Sperber and Wilson denominated it: “the ostensive stimulus”.⁷⁵⁸ The addressee then infers meaning both from the piece of evidence, and the context. Linguistic utterances are just one type of ostensive stimulus. All communication is always context-sensitive and thus inferential. In this case, as in all my previous MMS examples, the images can be understood in many different ways. Yet again, “the meaning is recovered not by decoding but by inference”.⁷⁵⁹

Nevertheless, it is difficult to compare stereotyped sexy mobile images, those showing only a specific part of the body, to more original and non-explicit images. Firstly, because images that are specially made for someone, seem to have an added value: uniqueness. Furthermore, added to the fact of making it especially for someone, subsequent sending demonstrates either a robust confidence in the relationship,⁷⁶⁰ a fact that can make the attraction stronger as well (as seen in *Porte de Choisy*, discussed in chapter one), or maybe just a *non-smart* move, as seen in many sexting cases especially among adolescents. Mobile images circulate, can be re-sent and forwarded from one contact to another, but it seems that when they are part of intimate, consenting adult relationships, they are never, or rarely ever, sent to more than one person at a time. Nevertheless, since in intimate flirting relations, all gestures - even the smallest ones - are used as signs to designate the other’s personality. Received images may sometimes be forwarded to an intimate friend in search of an objective opinion to help understand what the photo in question should represent, or for another point of view on a particular issue.

⁷⁵⁸ Sperber, D., & Wilson, D. (2008). A deflationary account of metaphor. In R. Gibbs (Ed.). *Handbook of Metaphor and Thought* (pp. 84-105). Cambridge UP.

⁷⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁰ Mauss, M. (1934). Les techniques du corps. Article originally published in the *Journal de Psychologie*, XXXII, ne, 3-4, 15 March - 15 April 1936. Communication presented at the Société de Psychologie, 17th May 1934. Jean-Marie Tremblay (online digital edition), Cégep of Chicoutimi, 17 February 2002.

Mobile communication is undeniably important, and has many benefits for the user. However, through these examples I wanted to portray the difficulties that this enhanced and fervent means of communication might also be facing. Texting, MMS and mobile image exchanging experiences in general, are manifold and mostly successful. However, in many cases the message is not conveyed: those cases are unusually acknowledged, but as a researcher I understand they should be analyzed as well. Mobile image sharing has many technological and economic constraints. Yet, it should always be taken into account that mobile image sharing is part of a larger set of image and private communication possibilities, such as social networking, and voice over Internet Protocol VoIP (like Skype), and can circulate in all of these. The role of social interaction, may that be in mobile communities of practice or friend groups that act as such, is achieved in similar ways as the Snapr (Flickr) culture did.

But, one of the most important parameters to take even more account of when sharing mobile images, is the relation between the parts, the implicits, the intersubjectivity, the connivance of common contexts and shared cultural backgrounds and references. This is even more evident in mobile culture because images are even more transient; quicker, circulate fast, and most of the private message exchanges in adult friendship relations are related to everyday life and its most simple, banal moments. These moments are meaningful to the sender-receiver dyad. There is still a tendency to amalgamate *private* and *hot* (sexually provocative), but it is not because of their degree of intimacy or *hotness* that these images remain private. After some celebrity scandals related to intimate mobile image leaks, all of my interviewees proved to be very aware of the possible risks and said that they share their hot shots infrequently or almost never. The myth that most private photos are hot or sexy intimate photos is still a present trope. Of course intimate photos can be sexy photos, usually exchanged between sexual partners. To my interrogation

do you exchange mobile messages with someone or are you only in IG (Instagram)?

Lali replied:

Well, to send something personalized I use WhatsApp or Couple (for love). For things that anybody can see I use IG.

So do you have things that not everybody can see?

Argh, no well, I do not have anything... what do you propose, to have a secret board in Pinterest? There only you and me could upload pictures.

But as she is a very close friend of mine, I knew she was teasing and pulling my leg, I asked again.

Seriously; do you exchange private photos via WhatsApp, Viber or Couples? It is not that I want to see them; I just need to know what type of pictures and with whom.

The truth is that I do not share “private” or “hot” mobile photos because, basically, you do not know where they can end. In fact, many of the cases that appear in the media are “hacked phones” and actually come from celebrities who have sent pictures to boyfriends or whatever and ... end up on TV. For example, a consejala (which is as a deputy of a unimportant town) ended up with a video of hers masturbating on Youporn. The best I can do is send an email with a link to some of the thousands erotic photo's that are in Tumblr. Like in a plan of “there is nothing more to add.” But pictures with me, no way Jose.⁷⁶¹

What the mobile image does is materialize the relationship in a more ludic, incomplete, and ambiguous way, and that is what is being nurtured with the image exchange. This is another form of communication beyond words, a sort of imperfect, open message that

⁷⁶¹ Lali, 36, personal communication, 14th and 15th of March 2013.

demands even more conversation and affective implicitness; another form of eliciting to continue the dialogue. Indeed, mobile image sharing is quick and sometimes as ephemeral as real time, but the examples shown here highlight the fact that, even in strong ties, when the image received is not what is expected, not properly contextualized, or fully explained in an accompanying text, the photo is not a transparent message and does not speak for itself. The message the sender wanted to put across might not be understood, even in strong ties.

The share of images is the demonstration of wanting to share an experience. When more private, they happen mainly through closed sharing channels, such as mobile messaging apps, or through MMSs; and work more as signs that wink, represent and denote other messages or objects than those what the image actually portrays, as an *a priori* implicit sign of empathy. Mobile images have a lot of implicit levels and innuendo, maybe even more than SMS textual dialogues, and thus need a greater degree of meta-level implied communication and pre and post dialogues. This implied knowledge/share of experience suggests that if the mutual understanding is not achieved, it doesn't really matter, because, in any case, the interlocutors will talk about it later. Sometimes operating as an inside joke, private sharing of mobile media demonstrates that if I send an image and the receiver can understand it, there is a lot of complicity and common culture among the parts. Therefore, even within strong ties, where the teasing is supposed to be understood, if the image is sent alone without the proper contextualization, misunderstandings might occur. In any case, even if it is misunderstood, the sent mobile image helps to reinforce the strong tie. Neither the photo quality nor the actual understanding is important *per se*. The sending and reception of a personal mobile photo operates as a sign of strong relationship. When mobile images are shared in open mobile social networking sites, the circulation occurs through public/semi-public channels. In these cases, images can be addressed to a specific person, but the user is aware that they will be seen by a larger number of people, mainly by weaker ties. Therefore, the shared mobile image becomes illustrative of the management of a self-mediation.

4.3.4. Sexting, a Scandalous Recurrent Narrative

“If they are to find or see me naked, I’d prefer they see my butt and not my face.” M. S.

Since 2009, sexting - the word coined to express the act of sending via text message a sexually explicit message, mainly photographs via mobile phone - has been described in the traditional mass media as bad and mischievous, as a practice that should be morally punished or banned. When talking about digital reputation, sexting is supposed to be one of the most dangerous *boomerangs* that one could suffer. Many well-known instances could exemplify both people’s and media’s negative attitudes towards sexting, especially among celebrities. Nowadays, this image sharing practice is anchored and, mostly seen as risky, if not as the riskiest way of sharing naughty images, making people vulnerable to defamation, in what has been named *revenge porn*. But, how can a habit, which is mainly perceived as bad still be performed by hundreds of thousands of people all over the globe? Where do we all go wrong? As Amparo Lasén wisely remarks, the practices of measuring personal exposure also contribute to the modulation of intimacy, in the public display or in the erotic games and forms of self-pornification.⁷⁶² As Lasén continues it is clear that

Different uses ask for different measures to be taken. The need for protecting intimacy in the case of self-pornification photographs promotes additional forms of control, if we do not want to see our self-pornification become ‘in-voluntary porn’, as the unwritten rule of never displaying your face and your genitals in the same picture, especially when the photograph is displayed in a semi-public platform or exchanged among strangers.⁷⁶³

⁷⁶² Lasén, A., & García, A. (2015). ‘... but I haven’t got a body to show’: Self-pornification and male mixed-feelings in digitally mediated seduction practices. *Sexualities*, 18.

⁷⁶³ Lasén, A. (2015). Digital Self-Portraits, Exposure and the Modulation of Intimacy, pp. 61-78. In Carvalho, J. R. & Tellería, A. S. (Ed.). (2015). *Public Private, Mobile and digital communication approaches to public and private*. Portugal: LabCom Books, University of Beira Interior. Retrieved from <http://www.livroslabcom.ubi.pt/book/141>

In order to study what sexting is, my analysis will echo, Lounsbury, Mitchell and Finkelhor's article *The True Prevalence of Sexting*.⁷⁶⁴ The article clearly summarizes the conceptual problematic around sexting. To begin with, the authors criticize the concept of sexting as having many diverse definitions. Depending on which source and from which age range it is taken, the definition of "sexting" changes. The authors have remarked that it can either be: "sent, or posted online, nude or semi-nude pictures or video of themselves"; "[S]ending sexually suggestive text messages or emails with nude or nearly-nude photos"; "[S]ending or forwarding nude, sexually suggestive, or explicit pics on your cell or online"; or "the sharing of explicit images electronically" and "any of your friends shared intimate pictures/videos with a boyfriend or girlfriend"; [sent or received] "sexually suggestive nude or nearly nude photo or video"... "using your cell phone". The main problem is the amalgam of minors and risk, mixed with a zest of morality judgment.

Lounsbury, Mitchell and Finkelhor point out that the definition of what age constitutes a teenager also varies. Some define it between 13 and 19, even if in this range those "teenagers" that are more than 18 actually *are legally considered adults* and *not* teenagers. But, on the other hand, the findings are not broken down by age, and this is another of its drawbacks. To continue debating, there is also the subjectivity of their content: in other words, some people consider sexting the sending of nude images, and others also consider it to include semi-nude pictures via smartphone. But then, are images in bathing suits also taboo? In addition to this, there are many diverse laws to regulate sexting. Therefore, sexting regulations and judgments are difficult to follow. The authors claim that one of the most troubling issues, which the press and media particularly misinterpret and make light of, relates to the figures that come from white papers and articles. Moreover, even if sexting has most commonly been used to describe the creation and transmission of sexual images mainly by minors, and with the majority

⁷⁶⁴ Lounsbury, K., Mitchell, K., & Finkelhor, D. (2011). The true prevalence of "sexting." *Crimes Against Children, Research Center*, (April). Durham, NH. Retrieved from http://cola.unh.edu/sites/cola.unh.edu/files/research_publications/Sexting_Fact_Sheet_4_29_11.pdf

of attention directed toward sexting via cameraphones, the term can apply to any digital media, such as email, instant messaging, and social networking sites.⁷⁶⁵

To conclude, although these findings are often reported in distorted or exaggerated ways by the media, leading to public misperception, the authors present a number of suggestions to future researchers and journalists wishing to cite statistics on sexting. As a start, they call for a more clearly defined use of the samples, limiting them to the usage of under-age teenagers, and not mixing the statistics with adults' exchanges, even if they are young adults. Second, they suggest the use of a common term "youth-produced sexual images."⁷⁶⁶ Thirdly, they propose a study to see with whom these youths are sharing the sexual images. To sum up, they suggest that journalists simply say: "there are no consistent and reliable findings at this time to estimate the true prevalence of the problem."⁷⁶⁷

Nowadays it is true that, "through camera phones, teenagers and younger children have a camera of their own that is not shared with any other member of the family. In addition to the camera, children have access to the Internet via their mobile phones and computers."⁷⁶⁸ Due to the varying countries and cultures, and lack of (consistent) legislation over use, it is difficult to frame these practices theoretically, conceptually and therefore in more pragmatic terms.

As understood from the previous chapter, there seems to be less interest in photographs as memory documents, and more value placed upon their social interaction and identity-building functions,⁷⁶⁹ in a perpetual beta state.⁷⁷⁰ All the adolescents interviewed in the former chapter understood the risks in sexting, and as for the adults, most of them have developed their own security measures. These can range from sending their headless explicit images, to finding more explicit images online and sending those. However, as I

⁷⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 4.

⁷⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁸ Sarvas, R., & Frohlich, D. (2011). *From snapshots to social media: The changing picture of domestic photography*. R. Harper (Ed.). London: Springer-Verlag, p. 169.

⁷⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁰ Leaver, T. quoting Helmond (2010). Cf. Leaver, T. (2015, July 20). Birth and Death on Social Media, Lecture given at Curtin University, Perth, Australia, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rQ6eW6qxGx8>

finish writing, Snapchat launched a six page Parent's Guide to Snapchat.⁷⁷¹ It seems that the company does not want to take any risks.

The almost imperceptible image below is a sext I once received. At first sight I believed it was a joke, nearly completely black, I thought that the dark MMS was a mistake, a kind of bug. However, in a second and more careful look, moving the smartphone, tilting the screen angle, I was able to make out a male torso. The backlit screen of my mobile revealed it I no longer felt that it was a joke and found the headless-selfie a very subtle image.

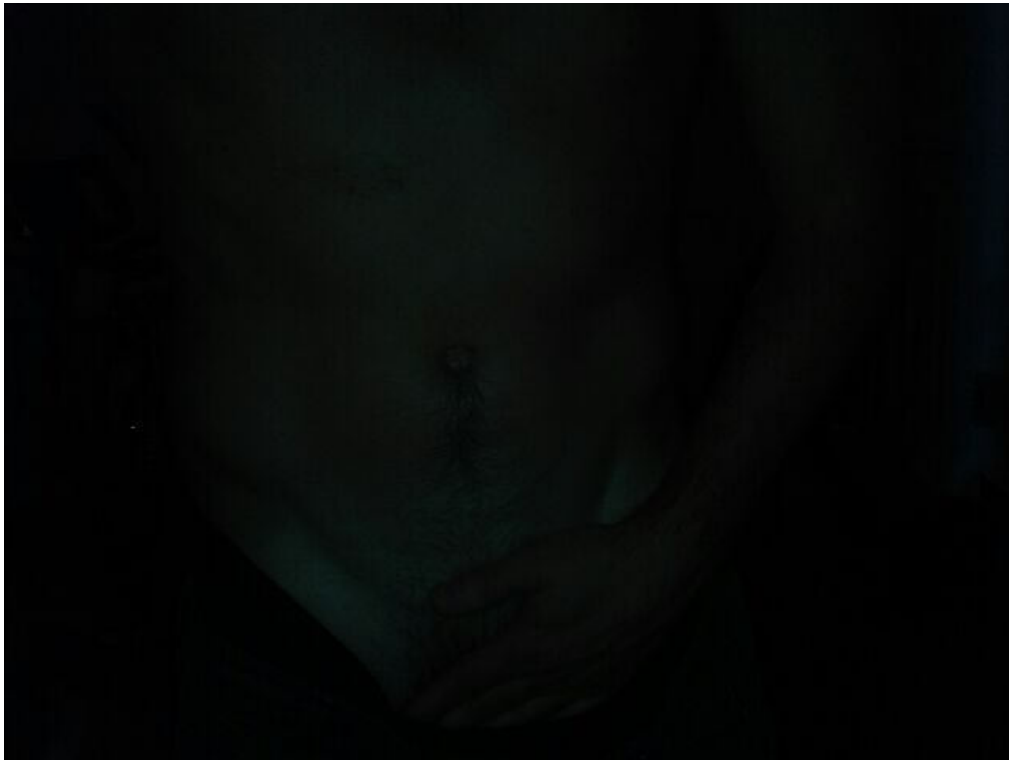


Figure 97. Ptt Clem. (2013, Sept 21). Black torso [Sext sent by Ptt Clem through MMS]. Personal collection.

As mobile self-produced visual data signify different and multifaceted structures, narratives are constructed around hot mobile images (in a more literal and intimate sense). More ludic mobile images that consist of, mainly, sexting and selfies, just

⁷⁷¹ Parent's Guide to Snapchat. (July 2015). Retrieved from http://www.connectsafely.org/wp-content/uploads/snapchat_parents_guide.pdf

become transient mobile image sharing situations, as seen in the former chapter, and can flee and flow to hook up apps. During the last years, “mobile phone adoption and the widespread use of social networking sites have increased the frequency for [sic] which people communicate through photographs.”⁷⁷² Besides, image apps have become more agile and there has been “aggressive marketing and adoption of the front-facing phone camera and the growing popularity of online photo-sharing platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, SnapChat, Tumblr, WeChat, and Tinder”,⁷⁷³ have developed and become more readily embraced each day; personal mobile image sending has been converted into an everyday, common action. In the following part, I move onto analyze personal image exposure within private dating apps.

4.4. Reflections on Selfie Reflexivity

Designating photographic and self-exposure practices, and winning, over bitcoin⁷⁷⁴ and twerk,⁷⁷⁵ the first online entry of the word *selfie* dates 13th of September 2002. Anecdotally, it comes from an anonymous Australian guy who, drunk, on his 21st birthday, took a picture of himself, and uploaded it. He had fallen, and split and cut his lower lip. And after having it stitched, the man photographed himself, and affectionately tagged it: *selfie*. Australians are known to like abbreviations, and have the tendency to shorten and end words in “ie” or “ey”. Thus, the fact of taking his own photography, in other words, of being subject and object, and the immediacy of its sharing came tagged with the word *selfie*. As time passed, the keyword gained in popularity, until 2013, its peak moment when it became the word of the year.

⁷⁷² Hunt, D. S., & Langstedt, E. (2014). The Influence of Personality on Digital Photo Sharing. *The Journal of social Media in Society* 3(2).

⁷⁷³ Senft, T. M., & Baym. N. K. (2015). Selfies Introduction ~ What Does the Selfie Say? Investigating a Global Phenomenon. *International Journal of Communication* 9, pp. 1588–1606. Retrieved from ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/download/4067/1387

⁷⁷⁴ According to the Oxford Dictionary bitcoin is “a type of digital currency in which encryption techniques are used to regulate the generation of units of currency and verify the transfer of funds operating independently of a central bank: bitcoin has become a hot commodity among speculators”.

⁷⁷⁵ According to the Oxford Dictionary twerk refers to a “dance to popular music in a sexually provocative manner involving thrusting hip movements and a low, squatting stance”.

Some scholars, such as scholar of communication and cultural studies, Katie Warfield, defy the Oxford Dictionaries' definition and point out the limitations of definitions in general. According to Warfield, the Oxford definition - "A photograph that one has taken of oneself, typically one taken with a smartphone or webcam and shared via social media" - does not take into account the use, purpose, or the meaning of the selfies.⁷⁷⁶ Her query totally aligns with my way of thinking and analyzing images. Therefore, despite the Oxford Dictionaries' definition, the precise multiple possible meanings and values of the selfie are not totally clear. In fact, they cannot be clarified. They can encompass many genres, purposes and styles. Therefore, similar questions to the ones Lounsbury *et al.* proposed, which arose and were examined in the previous discussion on sexting,⁷⁷⁷ could and should be posed, when analyzing selfies. For instance, if we agree to say that a selfie is a picture taken by oneself, what happens if more than one person's image is in it? Who is the author? In copyright terms, whose selfie is it? Does it belong to the person who pointed the camera or is it the owner of the phone? Or, is it the person who uploads it to the social network sites. These, and many other questions have been raised, and unpacked in *The Selfies Research Network* (TSRN), an international, open Facebook group, created in February 2014, and composed of more than 2500 world-wide scholars and people with interests related to the topic (as of July 2015). Once again, and as somewhere mentioned, the selfie practice as such, *already* existed within the amateur image production before receiving a name, but, when it became the epitome of the vernacular networked image, it thus also established the *year of the selfie*.

As considered would happen, the selfie as a research subject became quite popular, and an increase in scholarships for the topic means there are countless works available to read and many ways in which they can be used. Original research has been, and is, conducted to look at selfies in a vast array of topics. First and foremost I would like to mention the special edition that the founder of TSRN group, culturalist Theresa Senft

⁷⁷⁶ Warfield, K. (2014, March 26). *Why I love Selfies and Why you should too*, Public Presentation at the Kwanlen Polytechnic Library Talk. Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/8213772/Why_I_love_selfies_and_why_you_should_too_Public_Presentation

⁷⁷⁷ Lounsbury, K., Mitchell, K., & Finkelhor, D. (2011). The true prevalence of "sexting", Crimes Against Children. *Research Center*, (April). Durham, NH. Retrieved from http://cola.unh.edu/sites/cola.unh.edu/files/research_publications/Sexting_Fact_Sheet_4_29_11.pdf

and researcher Nancy Baym, edited: a special “Selfie” issue, published in the *International Journal of Communication*. The publication gathers 18 articles from diverse origins, and the authors confirm the status of: “the selfie as cultural artifact and social practice.”⁷⁷⁸ Moreover, as Anne Burns claims the: “discussion of selfies has a disciplinary effect, as the prescription of practice – a multitude of tips, prohibitions, and the ridicule of subjects who do not follow the rules – also extends to the construction and control of subjects”,⁷⁷⁹ they demonstrate the need to analyze and discuss these many topics.

Senft and Baym ask: “What precisely is a selfie?” And as answer propose

First and foremost, a selfie is a photographic object that initiates the transmission of human feeling in the form of a relationship (between photographer and photographed, between image and filtering software, between viewer and viewed, between individuals circulating images, between users and social software architectures, etc.). A selfie is also a practice – a gesture that can send (and is often intended to send) different messages to different individuals, communities, and audiences. This gesture may be dampened, amplified, or modified by social media censorship, social censure, misreading of the sender’s original intent, or adding additional gestures to the mix, such as likes, comments, and remixes.⁷⁸⁰

I agree with the authors when they state that the selfie it is not only a photographic object, but also an interactive practice that keeps on adding layers to itself, as a complex “cultural artifact and social practice”.⁷⁸¹ There are countless possible practices people

⁷⁷⁸ Senft, T., & Baym, N. (2015). Selfies Introduction ~ What Does the Selfie Say? Investigating a Global Phenomenon. *International Journal Of Communication*, 9, 19, p. 1589. Retrieved from <http://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/4067/1387>

⁷⁷⁹ Burns, A. (2015). Self(ie)-Discipline: Social Regulation as Enacted Through the Discussion of Photographic Practice. *International Journal of Communication*, 9, pp. 1717-1733. Retrieved from <http://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/3138/1395>

⁷⁸⁰ Senft, T. M., & Baym, N. K. (2015). Selfies Introduction ~ What Does the Selfie Say? Investigating a Global Phenomenon. *International Journal of Communication* 9, p. 1589. Retrieved from <http://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/download/4067/1387>

⁷⁸¹ Ibid.

might be engaging in, when making and sharing selfies. People taking selfies are seen in multiple places and in many expressive appropriations. Everybody can *do* selfies, but *not* everybody *does* selfies. Nevertheless, a selfie made by celebrity Kim Kardashian, or by president Obama indubitably has a different media impact than one shot by a totally unknown person. However, the fact of seeing that those celebrities produce them as anyone else does, reveals a doubled sided practice. On one side we want to emulate them, and on the other side we learn from them. Selfies can be indicative of cultural values and norms. Evaluating snapshot culture Sarvas and Frohlich remarked that

We learn the snapshot culture in the ways in which our parents, friends, and acquaintances use cameras and photographs; the ways in which these technologies are advertised; the ways in which news, magazines, operating manuals, and guidebooks present photography; and the ways in which the people and activities we idealize are depicted.⁷⁸²

Since selfies belong to the snapshot culture, similar ways of thinking could apply. Scholar Veronika Tzankova states that selfies are the “*ultimate democratization of the self-portrait process*.”⁷⁸³ In her talk she demonstrates, that this diversification in the types of selfie production does not only represent the democratization of ourselves: they also signify the “ways we tell the stories of our lives; and not only the story as a final result, as a biographical reference, but the process of telling the story too. So, we democratize *both: the final result, and the process in which we tell the story*.”⁷⁸⁴ Selfies have therefore become the visual manifestation of a self-reflexivity. In a similar line, sociologist Laurence Allard asserts that the mobile is a self-expression tool that, which not only enables to communicate with the others but also, notably with oneself.⁷⁸⁵ This was also

⁷⁸² Sarvas, R., & Frohlich, D. (2011). *From snapshots to social media: The changing picture of domestic photography*. R. Harper (Ed.). London: Springer-Verlag, p. 8.

⁷⁸³ Emphasis added. Tzankova, V. (2 Feb. 2015). The Body as an Object of Design. Our Pixilated Eyeballs Course, *The Visual Media Workshop*. Kwantlen Polytechnic University, Surrey, Canada. Class Lecture. On line, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3W282ue8DBs>

⁷⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁵ Allard, L. (2014). Express Yourself 3.0! Le mobile comme technologie pour soi et quelques autres entre double agir communicationnel et continuum disjonctif soma-technologique, pp. 139-161. In Allard, L., Creton, L., & Odin, R. (Ed.). *Téléphonie mobile et création*, Paris: Armand Colin, Coll. Recherches.

one of the main points in Katrin Tiidenberg's doctoral thesis. While acknowledging that taking self-portraits has been called a narcissistic practice, a manifestation of vanity, the author claims that selfies can be a very meaningful identity tool: "Selfie-practices function as knowledge devices that allow experimentation with the self and one's body. They help to develop self-reflexivity and offer a sense of control when used and shared in safe online environments."⁷⁸⁶

Through the self-produced image, selfies represent the ridding of *the Other* as our image taker. The subconscious relation between the subject and the object of the image moves *entirely* to the one same person. Not only is there no inter-human relationship, but we also become main actors and producers of our own stories. Not only in terms of image taking but also in terms of image sharing. In the book he coedited, mobile filmmaker and scholar Max Schleser, reflects on emergent creative practices as well as digital ethnographies of selfies, new visualities, and socialities associated with smartphone cameras in everyday life.⁷⁸⁷ We curate our selfies. We become agents of our selfies. And to top it all, even if sometimes contested, today, selfies are (for many) a reflex mobile habitus, where, the selfie stick is its most visible tool.

Again, many topics can be approached using selfie making as pretext. For instance, selfies have enabled much exploration around self-identity issues, that range from Lasén's early observations on subjectivity, self-agency and the ambivalences of self-pornification,⁷⁸⁸ to the niqabis use in Piel's proposition.⁷⁸⁹ Because of an intrinsic relation between the selfie-taker and his/her body, selfies and sexuality have also been the subject of a number of studies, for instance as dealt by Tiidenberg,⁷⁹⁰ by Gómez

⁷⁸⁶ Tiidenberg, K. (2015). *Image Sharing, Self-Making and Significant Relationships: Understanding Selfie-Practices*, (Doctoral dissertation). Estonia: Tallinn University.

⁷⁸⁷ Schleser, M. (2014). Connecting through Mobile Autobiographies: Self-Reflexive Mobile Filmmaking, Self-Representation, and Selfies. In Berry, M., & Schleser, M. (Eds.). (2014). *Mobile Media Making in an Age of Smartphones*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

⁷⁸⁸ Lasén, A. (2012) Autofotos. Subjetividades y Medios Sociales. In Nestor García-Cancelini and Cruces F. (Eds.) *Jóvenes, culturas urbanas y redes digitales. Prácticas emergentes en las artes, el campo editorial y la música*. Madrid: Ariel, pp. 243-262.

⁷⁸⁹ Piel, A. (2013) I am Just Doing my Bit to Promote Modesty: Niqabis' self-portraits on photo-sharing websites. *Feminist Media Studies*, 13(5): 781-790.

⁷⁹⁰ Tiidenberg, K. (2014). Bringing sexy back: Reclaiming the body aesthetic via self-shooting. Cyberpsychology. *Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace*, 8(1). Retrieved from

Cruz and Miguel,⁷⁹¹ as well as by Tiidenberg and Gómez Cruz,⁷⁹² for intimacy construction and negotiations. Nishant Shah goes beyond the instances of revenge and non-consensual pornography to look the phenomenon of “selfie-shaming” and women’s problems of consent and agency online.⁷⁹³ Gender and female related issues can be understood through a selfie’s optic, as in the motherhood case in Boon et al.,⁷⁹⁴ and in another piece of Tiidenberg’s research, when studying the presentations of femininity in Russian-Speaking pregnant women’s Instagram accounts.⁷⁹⁵ From life to death, selfies at funerals is a topic that has stirred a lot of media sensation. As Meese *et al.*⁷⁹⁶ demonstrate, morality and authenticity can be examined through studying selfies too. Like Burns, Gunthert is also interested in the discourse constructed around selfies. Gunthert’s article demonstrates that media controversy triggered the perception of the selfie phenomenon to be(come) a moral panic.⁷⁹⁷

Teenagers’ use of selfies has been analyzed by countless scholars; among the last, and just to name a couple: Albury⁷⁹⁸ focuses on the analysis of the Australian selfie culture; Allard⁷⁹⁹ who develops the idea that the selfie is a tool for personal and self-expression. In fact, making, sending and receiving selfies can also represent learning how to be *ludic* among friends, as I have argued with regard to ephemeral teenager Snapchat

<http://cyberpsychology.eu/view.php?cisloclanku=2014021701&article=3>

⁷⁹¹ Gómez Cruz, E., & Miguel, C. (2014). I’m Doing This Right Now and It’s for You. The Role of Images in Sexual Ambient Intimacy. In Marsha Berry and Max Schleser (Eds.). *Mobile Media Making in an Age of Smartphones*. New York: Palgrave Pivot, pp. 139–147.

⁷⁹² Tiidenberg, K., & Gómez Cruz, E. (2015). Selfies, Image and the Re-making of the Body. *Body and Society*, pp. 1–26.

⁷⁹³ Shah, N. (2015). The Selfie and the Slut Bodies, Technology and Public Shame. *Review of Women's Studies*, April, Vol. N° 17, pp. 86–93.

⁷⁹⁴ Boon, S., & Pentney, B. (2015). Virtual Lactivism: Breastfeeding Selfies and the Performance of Motherhood. *International Journal Of Communication*, 9, 14. Retrieved from <http://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/3136/1398>

⁷⁹⁵ Tiidenberg, K. (2015). Selfies, Odes to Heteronormativity: Presentations of Femininity in Russian-Speaking Pregnant Women’s Instagram Accounts. *International Journal Of Communication*, 9, 13. Retrieved from <http://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/3222/1397>

⁷⁹⁶ Meese, J., Gibbs, M., Carter, M., Arnold, M., Nansen, B., & Kohn, T. (2015). Selfies, Selfies at Funerals: Mourning and Presencing on Social Media Platforms. *International Journal Of Communication*, 9, 14. Retrieved from <http://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/3154/1402>

⁷⁹⁷ Gunthert, A. (2015). The consecration of the selfie. *Études photographiques*, N°32. Retrieved from <http://etudesphotographiques.revues.org/3537>

⁷⁹⁸ Albury, K. (2015). Selfies, Selfies, Sexts and Sneaky Hats: Young People’s Understandings of Gendered Practices of Self-Representation. *International Journal Of Communication*, 9, 12. Retrieved from <http://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/3132/1396>

⁷⁹⁹ Allard, L. (2014, January 14). Selfie, un genre en soi. Ou pourquoi il ne faut pas prendre les selfies pour des profile pictures, *MobActu*, <http://www.mobactu.fr/?p=904>

practices.⁸⁰⁰ In hindsight, I understand it as intrinsically related to a *selfie burgeoning*, hidden, more private circulation; hence being more related to the invisibility of the connected image, as discussed in the previous chapter.

One of the first and most significant, yet very contentious global studies on selfies is the *Selfiecify* project led by Lev Manovich. According to the website's About page, the study "investigates selfies using a mix of theoretic, artistic and quantitative methods".⁸⁰¹ In his turn, Losh does not hesitate to disapprove of some of the *Selfiecify* project methods, yet praise some of its advantages.⁸⁰² Another collective endeavor was the selfie citizenship and activism workshop day organized by Adi Kuntsman, Farida Vis and Simon Faulkner, which centralized discussions on *visibility* (as declarations of witnesses to events) and on *control*, more specifically about the hidden infrastructures through which our digital lives, including selfie-cultures, are managed and circulated.⁸⁰³ The selfie boom has demonstrated to be meaningful in many diverse situations, including a range of causes such as #blacklivesmatters.⁸⁰⁴ Another project that is being carried out is in Spain, with the objective of studying personal narratives, is *Selfiestories*, led by Gemma San Cornelio Esquerdo. The project seeks to analyze the stories around the selfies generated by users on social networks, taking as a case study the selfie as a current example of the modes of self-representation, so especially popular among both young people and women. The project makes a central focus of the conception of personal images, the body, intimacy, and privacy. Also to access to data itself in the context that is raised by digital technologies.

⁸⁰⁰ David, G. (2015). All What We Send Is Selfie: Images in the Age of Immediate Reproduction, pp. 79-100. In Carvalheiro, J. R. & Tellería, A. S. (Ed.). (2015). *Public Private, Mobile and digital communication approaches to public and private*. Portugal: LabCom Books, University of Beira Interior. Retrieved from <http://www.livroslabcom.ubi.pt/book/141>

⁸⁰¹ The Selfiecify study, <http://selfiecify.net>

⁸⁰² Losh, E. (2015). Selfies, Feminism Reads Big Data: "Social Physics," Atomism, and Selfiecify. *International Journal Of Communication*, 9, 13. Retrieved from <http://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/3152/1390>

⁸⁰³ Wright, D. (2015). Selfie Citizenship: Visibility, control and the mediated self, *Culture Matters*, http://blogs.warwick.ac.uk/ccpsresearch/entry/selfie_citizenship_visibility/. The entire programme can be found at <https://sites.google.com/site/selfiecitizenship/home>

⁸⁰⁴ "Black Lives Matter is an American movement that started after the July 2013 exoneration of George Zimmerman in the Florida shooting death of African-American teen Trayvon Martin. It received fresh impetus from the 2014 shooting of Michael Brown, an African-American teen. The movement has received worldwide media attention." Wikipedia page, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Lives_Matter

In a more engaged, but this time, politics related approach, studies can vary from Miltner and Baym's reflections on the Obama selfie scandal;⁸⁰⁵ the selfie use in Brazilian slums;⁸⁰⁶ the political work of the selfie in the 2014 Indian General Elections,⁸⁰⁷ or to the ways in which a specific Singapore parliament member managed his visual image and his public role, as in Abydin's talk,⁸⁰⁸ and also studies how profit can be made from it.⁸⁰⁹ The selfie has also been analyzed through a celebrity studies' approach; amongst the many, as a way to harness fame as in Marwick's demonstration, and also from the perspective of evaluating the uses of selfies as a form of activism to see how they can play a relevant role in advocating social causes, as Samita Nandy, also weighs.⁸¹⁰ If once personalities and prominent people were emulated by the masses, now these well-known personalities also emulate the masses. One of the obvious advantages of expressing ourselves through selfies is that there is no necessity to know photography and that very few digital skills are needed. It is exactly within the snapshot logic: instantaneous, and does not take the selfie shooter away from the moment.

4.5. The Swipe Logic

In contemporary times, mediated signs of attraction demand that we dive into the visual anthropology of seduction. Within this modern everyday life mobile habitus of

⁸⁰⁵ Miltner, K., & Baym, N. (2015). Selfies, The Selfie of the Year of the Selfie: Reflections on a Media Scandal. *International Journal Of Communication*, 9, 15. Retrieved from <http://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/3244/1394>

⁸⁰⁶ Nemer, D., & Freeman, G. (2015). Selfies, Empowering the Marginalized: Rethinking Selfies in the Slums of Brazil. *International Journal Of Communication*, 9, 16. Retrieved from <http://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/3155/1403>

⁸⁰⁷ Baishya, A. (2015). Selfies, #NaMo: The Political Work of the Selfie in the 2014 Indian General Elections. *International Journal Of Communication*, 9, 15. Retrieved from <http://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/3133/1393>

⁸⁰⁸ Abidin, C. (2015, April 16). Vote for my selfie: Politician selfies as charismatic leadership, keynote at the *Selfie Citizenship* workshop, The Shed/Digital Innovation. Video retrieved from <https://sites.google.com/site/selfiecitizenship/home>

⁸⁰⁹ Abidin, C. (2014). #In\$tagLam: Instagram as a repository of taste, a brimming marketplace, a war of eyeballs. In Berry M and Schleser, M. (eds) *Mobile Media Making in the Age of Smartphones*. London: Palgrave Pivot, pp. 119–128.

⁸¹⁰ Nandy, S. (2015). Persona, Celebrity, and Selfies in Social Justice: Authenticity in Celebrity Activism, pp. 101–122. In Carvalheiro, J. R. & Tellería, A. S. (Ed.). (2015). *Public Private, Mobile and digital communication approaches to public and private*. Portugal: LabCom Books, University of Beira Interior. Retrieved from <http://www.livroslabcom.ubi.pt/book/141>

“mediated intimacy”,⁸¹¹ or, as I would say *mediated intimacies*, the action of *touching* the small screen and its display space, has become an intrinsic characteristic and a typical habitus for those immersed in mobile cultures. Even if there are antecedents like IBM and BellSouth’s *Simon*, (a touchscreen mobile phone that could be used as a pager, a calendar, a scheduler, an address book, a calculator, a sketchpad, and a platform on which to read e-mail) which was released way back in 1993; very few of those people who are reporting on, studying, blogging about, or praising the Apple iPhone (2007) - especially in regard to its touchscreen user ‘innovative’ interface - are aware of Simon. Similarly, there were non-marketed smartphones and other devices that had touchscreens long before smartphones came to the market.⁸¹² Along with these interfaces, users have become accustomed to what we will explore in regard to the haptic aspects (seen in mobiles, tablets, phablets and smart watches among other devices) of swiping, thumbing and touching. More specifically, gestures such as pinching, dragging, scrolling, zapping, and “liking”, transmit a desire to plunge into images and dive into a strange intimacy, and where, according to Tinder’s motto: “Any swipe can change your life”.

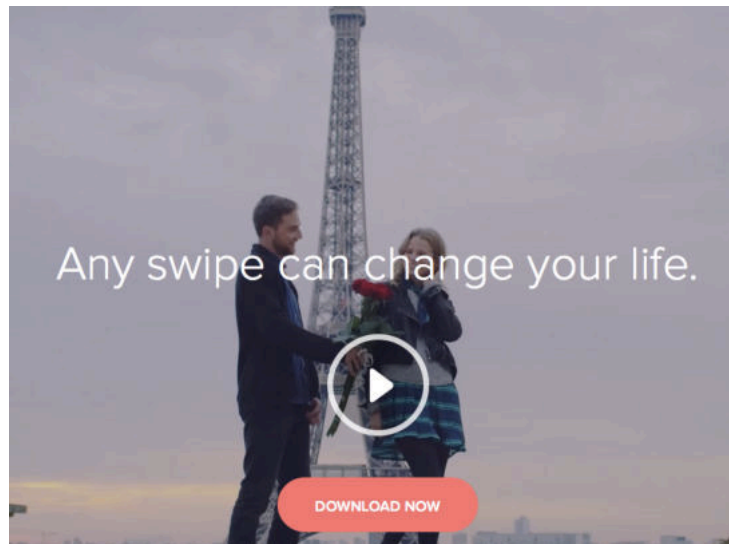


Figure 98. Tinder home page. Version 4.5.0 (August 5, 2015). Any swipe can change your life. [Photography]. Screenshot. Retrieved from <https://www.gotinder.com>

⁸¹¹ Vetere, F., Gibbs, M. R., Kjeldskov, J., Howard, S., Mueller, F., Pedell, S., Mecoles, K., & Bunyan, M. (2005). Mediating Intimacy: designing technologies to support strong-tie relations. CHI 2005, April 2–7, 2005, Portland, Oregon, USA. *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*. New York: ACM Press, pp. 471–480.

⁸¹² Sarvas, R., & Frohlich, D. (2011). *From snapshots to social media: The changing picture of domestic photography*. R. Harper (Ed.) London: Springer-Verlag, p. 7.

I refer to *the swipe logic* as something that demands just a firm, decisive, micro-action. Easily done with one only finger, browsing and swiping belong to the “slide to unlock” convention seen on the mobile screen when we want to start using our mobile device. The verb ‘to swipe’ literally has many meanings. It can be a synonym for blow, rob, hit, strike, but also even ‘to swipe’ as when inserting a card in a card reader. It is something quick, that relates to transiency. As acknowledged, identity can be constructed and reconstructed through and via selfies. In this section I ask: How are these hook up apps worked by users? To what extent does the curated selfie contribute and influence the swipe logic of appearance and disappearance?

One of the places where selfies can be seen most is in online dating app profiles. Strongly image based, many of these apps propose the act of swiping to decide if the profile pleases or not. Once again, this logic began a long time ago with FaceMash, which was Facebook’s antecedent.⁸¹³ In 2007, even the Times magazine declared OkCupid.com one of the Top 10 dating websites, but it was mainly oriented towards desktops. As years passed, many other similar online dating sites continued to emerge, as for example, Meetic.com, Match.com, etc. But, it was six years after FaceMash, in 2009 - with the continued roaring success of digital photography, 3G and the app boom - that Grindr, a mobile location-based real-time dating (LBRTD) app appeared and cause the market to explode. The men-who-have-sex-with-men (MSM) app’s logic is based on two parameters. One is geolocalization, users set a distance frame to meet people who are near; and the second, once that frame is set, they choose to meet someone that appeals to them from these local profiles. In 2009, Grindr already had over 3.5 million users, in 192 countries.⁸¹⁴ LBRTD apps come from the Location-Based Social Networks (LBSN) family, that are described in detail in de Souza and Frith’s book, *Mobile Interfaces in Public Spaces: Locational Privacy, Control, and Urban Sociability*.⁸¹⁵

⁸¹³ The website allowed visitors to compare two student pictures side-by-side and let them choose who was “hot” and who was “not”. Facebook’s Wikipedia page, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Facebook

⁸¹⁴ Blackwell, C., Birnholtz, J., & Abbott, C. (2014). Seeing and being seen: Co-situation and impression formation using Grindr, a location-aware gay dating app. *New Media & Society*, pp. 1-20.

⁸¹⁵ de Souza e Silva, A., & Frith, J. (2012). *Mobile Interfaces in Public Spaces: Locational Privacy, Control, and Urban Sociability*. New York: Routledge.

As online dating sites had already penetrated the markets and become ordinary (by 2008, in France alone, Marie Bergström had already reviewed 1045)⁸¹⁶ and mobile hook up app practices continued to evolve. The LBRTD generative dynamic that was previously a male, homosexual, not mainstream behavior, became popularized through Tinder (2014). Tinder is a nowadays-mainstream app, and became a worldwide adopted, mainly hetero normatized and legitimated practice. The company won't disclose its figures, but a 2014 estimation states that 50 million people have signed up.⁸¹⁷ Tinder has been accepted not only in the Western world, but also in countries such as India, where people are trying to use these types of apps to extend their social circles and to circumvent very closed social norms of matchmaking through families.⁸¹⁸ Grindr⁸¹⁹ and Tinder⁸²⁰ are both "self-selection mobile applications"⁸²¹ and gratification apps.

In order to understand the specific ways hooking up apps standardize self-presentation propositions; those that entail online self-presentation, through selfies, through photography, through short text and even voice recording, leaving the door open for potential interviewing encounters; I resume the autoethnographic approach I previously followed. Methodologically, it was by reporting and examining my use and thoughts towards the disclosures of these online public sphere presentations. Hence, my following characterization is a personal memoir based on my own, on and offline practice, of this swiping logic and related experiences I had over a period of six months. My thoughts are based on participatory observations I gathered between March and

⁸¹⁶ Bergström, M. (2011). La toile des sites de rencontres en France: Topographie d'un nouvel espace social en ligne. *Réseaux* 2/2011 (n°166), pp. 225-260. Retrieved from <http://www.cairn.info/revue-reseaux-2011-2-page-225.htm>

⁸¹⁷ Guiliano, K. (2015, March 2). Tinder swipes right on monetization, *CNBC, Social Media*, <http://www.cnbc.com/id/102469979>

⁸¹⁸ Behal, A. (2015, April 27). Could This Dating App Be India's Take On Tinder?, *Forbes*, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/abeahal/2015/04/27/could-this-dating-app-be-indias-take-on-tinder/> ; Cf. Raja, S. & Renninger, B. (2015). Remediating the matchmaker, arranging marriage online in the south Asian diaspora in America. In Degim, A.I. & Johnson, J. & Fu, T. (Eds.). *Online Courtship, Interpersonal Interactions Across Borders*, pp. 117-132.

⁸¹⁹ Cf. Blackwell, C., Birnholtz, J., & Abbott, C. (2014). Seeing and being seen: Co-situation and impression formation using Grindr, a location-aware gay dating app. *New Media & Society*, 1-20.

⁸²⁰ Cf. James, J. L. (2015). *Mobile Dating in the Digital Age: Computer-Mediated Communication and Relationship Building on Tinder* (Master thesis). Texas State University. Retrieved from <https://digital.library.txstate.edu/bitstream/handle/10877/5529/JAMES-THESIS-2015.pdf?sequence=1>

⁸²¹ Ibid. p. 7.

August 2015, and on eight non-directed face-to-face interviews with users (4 men, 4 women, aged 19 to 43). To be clear, this study has some limitations that should be considered. Similarly to Birnholtz et al.⁸²² I believe it is reasonable to consider these data quasi-public, as they are visible to anyone who downloads the free applications and users are instructed by these apps' privacy rules.

I have chosen to center this analysis on Tinder for three reasons. First of all because of its popularity within my age frame. As of now, 2015, Tinder has 50 million global users and thus it can be considered as symptomatic of, and revealing of, trends in computer-mediated communication dating interactions. Secondly, it is a useful example of an LBRTD application with significance for self-presentation and expression; and thirdly, because it was the one I was most familiar with and from which I can draw upon my own experience. However, I strongly believe there is a need to critically examine how discursive and algorithmic modes of regulation are interrelated. For all of the above, I favor a non-exhaustive, empirical and micro-study.

4.5.1. Thumbing Selfies

Tinder is a LBRTD, *predominantly* conceived to find dates, have sex, or meet people, but as it happens in the majority of the cases, and most of the time, its parameters are circumvented. How does Tinder work? By pre-setting a limited geographical perimeter, age frame, combining images and the device geolocalization, possible matches appear. The four previously set parameters make up a user's profile. Working as a geolocalization app Tinder recognizes the user's localization and the user delimitates the furthest distance in km the liked person can be. Then the gender/s the user wants to meet. Users are invited to upload images from their Facebook page. Six may be uploaded, but as Instagram is linked in this app, if the user has an Instagram account, many more images may be used. Some profiles do not have images and, instead, the

⁸²² Birnholtz, J., Fitzpatrick, C., Handel, M., & Brubaker, J. (2014, September). Identity, Identification and Identifiability: The Language of Self-Presentation on a Location-Based Mobile Dating App. *Social Networks & Input and Interaction MobileHCI 2014*, pp. 3-12. Retrieved from <http://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?doid=2628363.2628406>

Facebook avatar is seen as the profile picture. Lastly, the user might post a self-presentation text. This is not mandatory so many users do not bother to post one.

The user decides either to swipe to the right, if the profile pleases, or to the left, if it does not. This means that with a quick decision, both parties could immediately meet offline, if they desired. When the proposition pleases the user, s/he swipes to the right. If, on the contrary, there is no wish, or attraction, they would swipe to the left. However, because the decision gesture is quick, and sometimes because of involuntary action, users can tend to *slip-up* or just go too fast and then slip-up in their choice. There is therefore a paid option, 'Tinder Plus' that gives users access to a 'Rewind' feature, allowing the reversal of the mistaken swipe. Moreover, because the algorithm limits the number of likes a user can make in a consecutive 12-hour period, the premium option enables unlimited liking capabilities. The 'Passport' feature enables users to change their geolocalization, and allows them to connect with people anywhere around the world.⁸²³ Because I mainly used these apps to understand its iconographic particularities, and to see to what extent the features work interlinked with the other platforms - locking the user - and profiting (or not) from the other ecosystems, I decided not to download the payable option.

For instance, Tinder is linked to the user's Facebook account. So, by displaying verified profiles, and consequently reassuring its users, the interface shows the common connections both users have. In other words, one can see the mutual friends you and your potential match have. This adds more contexts, and an extra degree of connection to every swipe,⁸²⁴ and a sort of safe haven of trust. For instance, had I wanted, I could have gone to any of the Facebook profiles of these three friends of mine, (Teresa, Lev, Paulo; See figure 99), and in a couple of clicks find Cezar's Facebook profile, then verify, and find more of his personal data and contact him through Facebook. In this app anonymity does not work, and in a triangular form, new ties are connected to strong and weak ties, or as Ling said: new tech reshapes cohesion and creates new ties.⁸²⁵

⁸²³ Tinder blog, <http://blog.gotinder.com>

⁸²⁴ Ibid.

⁸²⁵ Ling, R. S. (2008). *New tech, new ties*. Cambridge, MA: Mit Press.



Figure 99. David, G. (June 2015). Common links [Tinder profile]. Screenshot. Personal collection.

As Tinder photographs are chosen from the user's Facebook page, if the Tinder profile is exceptionally pleasing, and there is no mutual connection, a quick mobile screenshot can be made, the image uploaded to any Reverse Image Search, such as TinEye or Google Image, etc., and subsequently, the Tinder user's Facebook profile or any other site where that user has posted the same photo will easily be found. The aforementioned examples of these kinds of apps and profile pictures signify the very strong power images can have in regard to personal disclosure and data retrieval.

Because Instagram was acquired by Facebook in April 2015, Tinder then integrated Instagram. Users are (still) free to decide if they want to link both of their accounts and therefore give more visibility to their Instagram account. There are few linked accounts. Unless there is a real will to be recognized, it seems that most users are reluctant to share a larger quantity of their private images with an unknown audience. When both accounts are linked, as in Paul's profile below, one can see not only the six photos in the

Tinder app, but if wanted, it is possible to browse through a much larger quantity of images on the user's Instagram's page: 2318 photos. (See figure 100). Nevertheless, in Tinder, the esthetics, the likes, and the originality that the photos and images have, are not ends in themselves. Unlike other online dating sites where users can see who has visited their profiles, in Tinder there is no way of finding out. Here you either like it or not. There is no way of flashing, poking, or sending a previous message. This logic follows more of an *invisible path*, a *lurker* one a *hide and seek trail* that I have previously recounted. Mobile images are used for self-presentation and much less for self-expression.



Figure 100. David, G. (June 2015). Connecting towards Instagram [Tinder profile]. Screenshot. Personal collection.

Hook up apps are areas where identity is constantly under construction, and like any social media, they illustrate “the changing pictures of domestic photography”.⁸²⁶ Furthermore, as visual apps become more adopted, in a cyclical way, produced images

⁸²⁶ Sarvas, R., & Frohlich, D. (2011). *From snapshots to social media: The changing picture of domestic photography*. R. Harper (Ed.). London: Springer-Verlag.

(and self-produced people wanting to meet other self-produced people), advertise themselves in a sort of self-branding empowerment. One could even link this to the famous *carte-de-visite*, (business card), the portrait photography format for mass production that was so popular between 1860s and 1880s, when hundreds of millions of *carte-de-visite* were estimated to have been sold.⁸²⁷ The difference is nowadays the “impression motivation” – “how much people are motivated to control how others see them, and impression construction: choosing an impression to create and deciding precisely how to do so”⁸²⁸ – is in a continuous retro-feedback. Following the approach of sociologist Erving Goffman, these numerous everyday life photographs and images, those that shape the enormous data base that constitute the dating/hooking up app, can be considered as an incessant learning route to self-mediation, towards the editing, curating, and construction of a pseudo self-authenticity.

Among the most hetero normatized and stereotyped cliché profiles, I was able to see photographs of cars, motorbikes and ships, capitalistic symbols of wealth and masculinity. Following Bergström remarks on online dating sites, I consider that the organizational features of a hook up app differ radically depending upon whether they are heterosexually or homosexually targeted; and that they are thoroughly segmented in function of other socio-demographical elements, such as age, religion or nationality.⁸²⁹ I have also seen profiles that display photographs of kids, families and even wedding pictures, making it rather bizarre for me to find those types of images as profile pictures in an app that is supposed to be a hook up app.

As of July 2015, and throughout my viewing, I repeatedly found profiles displaying the ‘*Je suis Charlie*’ slogan created by Joachim Roncin, the artistic director of the magazine *Stylist*, and which was mass adopted shortly after the Charlie Hebdo shooting on the 7th of January, 2015. This fact makes it evident that many Tinder users do not update their profile images very often. Views of beaches or ski scenes, even pets and drawings seem

⁸²⁷ Ibid., p. 35.

⁸²⁸ Ibid.

⁸²⁹ Bergström, M. (2011). La toile des sites de rencontres en France: Topographie d’un nouvel espace social en ligne. *Réseaux* 2/2011 (n°166), pp. 225-260. Retrieved from <http://www.cairn.info/revue-reseaux-2011-2-page-225.htm>

to be cool ways of not displaying and therefore non-displaying one's body. But amongst the typically stereotyped smiling, smoking, and drinking faces, I have also seen some distinctly original profiles: ones that confirm that the app's swipe logic can be used for many other purposes other than displaying monotonous selfies. Those distinct *other practices* could range from brand marketing, such as pizza images for pizzeria promotions, to theater play advertisement posters. For example Bertrand, 43, (figure 101), who in a sassy unashamed self-promotion mode uses the profile description space to advertise his own profiles in other sites: Viadeo, Linkedin, Facebook, Twitter, and even a link to his personal website and curriculum vitae.



Figure 101. David, G. (June 2015). Tinder as display [Tinder profile]. Screenshot. Personal collection.

Another occurrence, a more humorous one, refers to ones I had already seen several times, relayed online in sites such as *Damn you autocorrect*, except that this was the first time I was actually experiencing it. It seems to be a stupid joke, but it relates to text messages screwed up by the autocorrect feature on smartphones.

The guy sends me a first teasing message, and ends it with a smiley. After that he writes: “*Be my fat poney*”. To what I ask *Fat poney?*, *Neither one nor the other*. He replies, “*Did I write, poney??? Oh shit (autocorrection) be my love honey. Thanks Android*” [sic] (See figure 102). This type of anecdote very much relates to Chalfen’s last book *Photo Gaffes: Family Snapshots and Social Dilemmas*, where he describes many of the possible gaffes related to photography.⁸³⁰



Figure 102. David, G. (June 2015). Merci Android auto correction [Tinder chat]. Screenshot. Personal collection.

⁸³⁰ Chalfen, R. (2012). *Photo: Family Snapshots and Social Dilemmas*. Dog Ear Publishing.

Another problem faced, is that users are not informed of how the app works. After the app decided to go for a subscription privilege offer, the standard model switched to taking away matches. For instance, one night I was *tindering* together with one of my interviewees (among users the noun is employed as if a verb). We wanted to check if we had the same propositions. We set the same parameters, sex, age, and distance. We were in the same physical place and we got different propositions. How could that happen? We realized that the algorithm initially favored proposing those candidates with whom you had a common link. But then what else? We did not understand why one of us had more propositions than the other. It was only through this research that I managed to figure it out. The frequency of use and the quantity of matches are inversely proportional. The more you use the app; its algorithm will decrease the offers. Furthermore, unless you opt for Tinder Plus, you have a limited number of swipes, and as you swipe, the pile of offers of propositions of potential Tinder, matching candidates slowly drains too. Once empty, you have to wait until it tops up again before you can search for hookups once more. All of my interviewees knew that changing your settings from “searching men & women”, to “searching only men” or “searching only women”, led to a new bouquet of other users, but all said that, somewhat lazily, they do not do it all the time. But, “when my number of swipes finishes, and I really want to continue swiping, I change my settings and then another collection of would-be-matchers appears”, one of my interviewees said, describing this trick.

If gestures denote practices, they also represent ways of thinking. Currently, other dating apps are using this one finger gesture and have installed the swipe logic. For instance, Wyldfire (2014), an app that is quite similar to Tinder, and Teazie (2015), an app whose home page promotes the site as a place to send photo-messages (see figure 103).

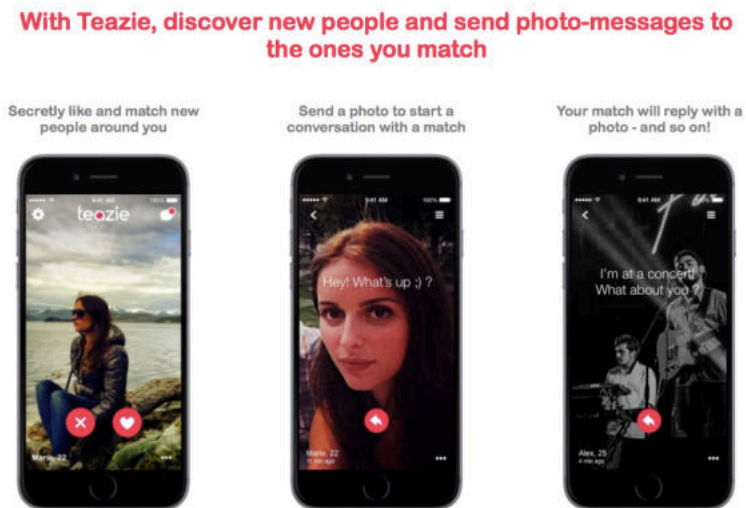


Figure 103. Teazie home page. Version 1.1 Screenshot. (July 2015). Retrieved from <http://www.teazieapp.com>

Until the 28th of July 2015, in Teazie the average age of the user was not even displayed. But, even if since then it is, I can confirm that the age target/the market profile is young: in their Facebook page they have publicly posted a job offer to high school and university students. Teazie works as a sort of hybrid app between Snapchat and Tinder, where images with full bleed are bigger (see figures 103 and 104), and fill in the entire mobile device screen in a more imposing way.

These photo-messages arrive *as if* one inseparable cluster, similar to the ones analyzed in chapter three. And I would say, because of the chat history this app has, if one wanted to go backwards and reread them, it would only be possible to review and see the texts exchanged, and not the photos. This suggests that image storage needs much more memory than text storage. It also relates these fleeting mobile practices to the concept of the ephemeral photo, where mobile image production and consumption underscore the ephemerality of moments in our lives, and our drive to use them.⁸³¹ It seems to be that among these new ties, the “connected” and “conversational” practices that Licoppe identified,⁸³² have become a tense game in themselves. Personally, I have only sent and

⁸³¹ David, G. (2013). The panorama between mobile visual platforms is a sentimental bond. *Ubiquity: The Journal of Pervasive Media*, Volume 2, Issue 1-2, pp. 146-163.

⁸³² Licoppe, C. (2003). Two modes of maintaining interpersonal relations through telephone: From the

received very few Teazies. My very first thought towards photo exchange with strangers is that you need some complicity to be installed to be able to send personal images. Why? Because, unless you already know the person, the conversation becomes discontinuous and broken; in other words, through these types of apps, installing exchanges that are not only driven towards attaining a sexual encounter is a hard conversational goal to attain. As figure 104 shows the dialogue is quite short and then dies. “Good evening. How are you?”- “Fine, thanks and you? Shitty weather in Paris” – “It is always very nice in the South West!!!! Lol. soon on holidays?”

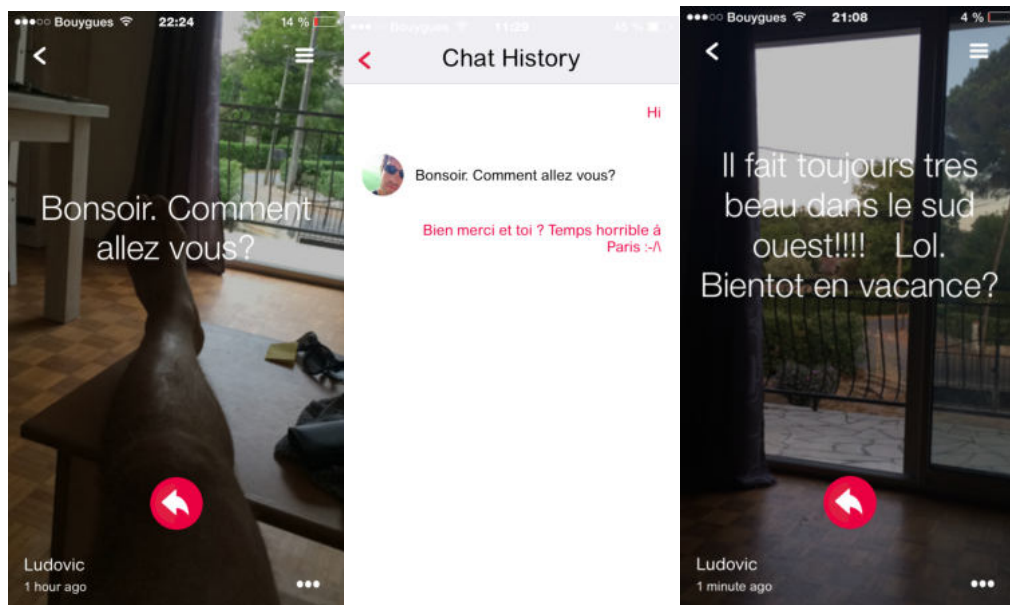


Figure 104. David, G. (July 2015). Good evening. How are you? Fine, thanks and you?... (July 2015). [Teazies]. Screenshot. Personal collection.

Moreover, and similarly to the Snapchat Stories, studied in the last chapter, Tinder has a *Moments* feature, where users can share personal images which are quickly consumed and discarded. In *The panorama between mobile visual platforms is a sentimental bond*,⁸³³ I made an analogy of mobiles operating like personal hybrid memo pads. Since mobile tools facilitate the recording and display of everyday life, mobile images, and thus our own edited selfies, too, became but another commodity to be both produced and

domestic to the mobile phone. In J. Katz (Ed.), *Machines that become us: The social context of communication technology* (pp. 171–186). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

⁸³³ David, G., Op. cit.

consumed at an ever-increasing rate. It seems as though, the more often and the faster we create these mobile images, the faster we go through them.

Nevertheless, even if Teazies does not demand a physical thumb swipe, and thus less sense of touch is required, the disliking swipe concept is already embedded. So, having clicked on the cross and not on the heart, the image animatedly sweeps itself away, once vertically and once to the left. Up to now, August 2015, this app is not location-based real-time dating (LBRTD). Neither is ExChat, another of the many new apps, which instead of trying to match a sexual partner or date, enables a language exchange match: the gimmick is to find someone to chat with. It is therefore language and recording based and users must publicly display what languages they are willing to exchange. In this app the profile images are blurred and, only with a successful match will the blurred profile image become focused. It seems that the matching system within apps is still in its early years.

4.6. Conclusion

Focused on the iconographic side of mobile share, in this chapter I analyzed different ways of mobile interaction and self-presentation, both among strong ties and new ties. I acknowledge this demonstration is partial, subjective and arbitrary, but without a real tool to measure the frontiers of this emerging topic, and with constant change and transformations - should change happen within the websites or the new apps that appeared and disappeared - the result is just an imperfect snapshot of reality. Having asserted such, I wholly support the notion that “the analysis of what users can do and are incited to do [with this device, its software, on these sites and apps] constitutes a preliminary condition to understand what they actually do.”⁸³⁴

⁸³⁴ Bergström, M. (2011). La toile des sites de rencontres en France: Topographie d'un nouvel espace social en ligne. *Réseaux* 2/2011 (n°166), pp. 225-260. Retrieved from <http://www.cairn.info/revue-reseaux-2011-2-page-225.htm>. Translation is my own: “... l'étude de ce que les individus ciblés peuvent et sont incités à faire sur les sites constitue une condition préalable à la compréhension de ce qu'ils font effectivement.”

All through this chapter, the methodology followed has been an autoethnographic approach that draws a personal timeline from my early cellphone to my camphone uses (from 2002 until 2010), and ends with my smartphone/mobile practices. First through strong tie friendship dyads, seven MMS case studies allowed analysis of four of the main topics, and typical habitus of those immersed in mobile cultures: absence and presence, indexicality, implicits, and instantaneity. Next, and even though sexting appears to be a scandalized recurrent moral narrative, I also demonstrated how couple teasing through selfies, and hot pictures can be a trigger for creativity and sexting-circumvention.

After the exploration of what selfie reflexivity means, I delve into screening intimacies, thumbing selfies and the swipe logic. By hinging my analysis on the swipe logic, I make a contribution to the growing literature on hookup apps, screen intimacies and touch. Tzankova reflections are again of help, because the: “ways we tell the stories of our lives; and not only the story as a final result, as a biographical reference, but the process of telling the story too” is important. “So, we democratize *both the final result and the process in which we tell the story*.”⁸³⁵ With the multiple platforms, apps, filters and aesthetic changes, and the almost effortless sharing of these mediated moments, the possibility of sublimating these mobile images also provides evidence of how important these artifacts can be for individual agency and the curatorial self. Besides, as mobile tools increasingly facilitate the recording and display of everyday life, selfies and mobile images have become another *good* to be shared, exchanged, produced and consumed at increasing rates. Mobile image production and consumption underscores the ephemerality of moments of our lives, and our drive to swipe them or not. As previously proposed, there are three main ways of teasing and flirting through mobile photographs: as a personal revelation, as a more open and even maybe sexual tease, or just to amuse and be amused. The miscellaneous perception of what it means to touch and be touched through mediated communication is but a never-ending affaire to master.

⁸³⁵ Tzankova, V. (2015, Feb. 2). The Body as an Object of Design. Our Pixilated Eyeballs Course, *The Visual Media Workshop*. Kwantlen Polytechnic University, Surrey, Canada. Class Lecture, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3W282ue8DBs> Emphasis added.

⁸³⁵ Ibid.

Today, it has become more than apparent that it was the successful marriage of the mobile internet, broadband access, the SNS boom and the apps economy, that enabled both the production and circulation of mobile images to explode; all this stirred with a good dose of *cultural validation, enhancement* and *empowerment* of mobile devices and affordances. Based on a personal participative observation approach, it was of my intention to use and ascertain these facts.

General Conclusion

The result presented here is an imperfect snapshot that describes and analyzes the processes of cultural legitimation that amateur mobile images underwent during the last decade. But, how does one study an object that changes while it is being analyzed, and which, therefore, cannot be studied as if it were the same, unchanging, object of study? How can, or how should, a multifaceted object under study, be decorticated and dissected into several parts in order to be better investigated? I outline some conclusions.

A first and basic conclusion is that the variety and extremely vast heterogeneity of practices that go under the umbrella name of *mobile cultures*, is titanic. Mobile cultures, in this given sense, is a concept of constant change and transformation, which concerns both technological and social concessions; but these phenomenon can often be socially and publicly imperceptible. These modifications happen within the mobile habitus, in the websites that appear and disappear or the new apps people use. Mobile cultures encompass everyday actions that are intertwined in numerous ludic practices of happiness and pleasure, or even in frustrations. Therefore, the method here proposed

was focused on the study of *amateur mobile visual practices*. However, even *just* considering *amateur mobile visual practices*, the scope of analysis is too large. These practices range from intimate video filming, to MMSs, to news or art creation and it is a *complex* task to study their *multiple* processes of cultural *legitimation*. This complicated the creation of an outline and the corpus matter delimitation; not to speak of the manifold, diverse possibilities available when deciding upon approaches and methodologies.

Secondly, I found that semantic structures and cultural narratives of the public/private and the authenticity/worthiness of amateur mobile images are topics that are constantly being discussed, both in cultural and normative spheres. However, these semantic categories are, yet again, continually reconfigured over time to explain the production, circulation, appropriation of use, and cultural narratives. Therefore its discourses are on the move as well. One of the key tasks of this thesis was to understand how these multifaceted parts of the visible public and invisible private, the exposable and the non-exposable puzzle, come together, blurring those lines again and again, and then taking form, in intelligible amateur mobile pictures, that need to be visually, ethnographically and sociologically analyzed. The study I constructed was not solely based on a technological perspective, but also considered the social and contextual subjective understanding of the issues at hand.

The four chapters have been organized so as to demonstrate how legitimation is a fundamental social process that describes the union of distinct practices, meanings, and material structures into coherent, more established conventions. After ten initial grounding years, the changing biography of this cultural phenomenon called *mobile cultures* shows that, after the *macro*, mainstream, institutions (such as Art institutions and mass media), and then the *micro* (the users themselves, as such), validated and legitimated these usages, the practices of amateur mobile imaging gained such a massive adoption, that nowadays, it has turned into an indisputable part of everyday life.

In the first and second chapters, I developed the notion that hierarchizing, and thus categorizing the cameraphone images as something important and worthy, implied that

they became highlighted in popular public infrastructures: hence vernacular mobile productions came to be known and to be valued when seen (or after having been seen) in legitimating spaces. For instance, in the Pocket Films Festival case study, we saw how solid artistic institutions craft a dispositif for creation-value and a taste-making environment. Also, through hard news construction, this mobile adoption created important cultural impact, influencing the range of its conceptualization and popular acceptance. But today, undeniably, mobile images are more than just teenagers' amusement. They speak out for desires, needs and many of our popular culture(s) representations.

Moving on, the second part was where we sought to understand and continue building the analysis of the user self-legitimation processes of mobile image production and sharing. Through focus groups, and on and offline interviews, the third chapter concentrates on studying peer-centered supports, as communities of practice. It highlights the latest transition to a more conversational and connected use of mobile images, where I demonstrate how, the selfie, and the ephemeral snapshot dynamic, influence today's mobile sharing practices. Accordingly, as the process of posting selfies and disclosing personal details is not static; but rather changes in flow of acceptance and appropriation; repeated mediated actions lead to fluctuations between empowerment and commodification of the (mediated) self.

Due to the aforementioned facts, analyses, such as those made within this thesis, mandatorily entail up-to-date ways of doing research which take account of the shifts the object under study, itself, undertakes. Amateur photography and, to its extent vernacular footage, as we understood them in the past, are no longer the same. Creating mobile imagery is now definitely more related to mobile internet, to apps and mobile telecommunications standards (3G/4G/5G), to social networks, and to mobile technology in general, rather than to photography *per se*. Mobiles are a visual dispositif that enables creativity to be expressed, visual communication to be held and many other activities to be achieved/undertaken and enjoyed. They allow people to find information on the go, and facilitate media influence in online spaces. Besides, since website dynamics are renewed and constantly updated as events unfold, cameraphone,

smartphone and mobile technologies become outdated, daily. Indeed, in the near future, the mobile as a device will be better comprehended as a computer. Moreover, it seems crucial to remember that, in this dynamic ecosystem, opinions are formed fleetingly, but gradually and daily, layer after layer, building up over time.

In the affective turn, the desire and craving of sharing and seeing amateur mobile images, has been shown to be indispensable to appropriate oneself of both the device and its affordances. As representatives of globalization, they are devices open to being more fully discovered, transformed, and studied. Therefore, it should be born in mind, that increases in the number of uses and improved ease of use, also generate social changes in collective habits, and therefore also generate changes in the analysis of them. Notwithstanding this, it must be admitted that an increasing majority of academics seem to welcome these everyday cultural changes. At the beginning, the first generation of scholars doing mobile visual studies, were few in number. But, as the enormous amount of mobile images ever continued to rise, the volume of studies also proliferated.

In this dissertation, I study the legitimization of the amateur mobile images from 2005 to 2015. Although legitimization is a dialectical process, I contended that, deep theorizations of everyday mobile visual practices and the procedural changes, must include not only relational mechanisms like person-to-person analysis, but also the study of how cultural and normative structures work as dispositifs, to explain those legitimization and self-legitimation processes. From gadgety cameraphone, to everyday life dispositif, mobiles help enlighten how miscellaneous legitimization processes, and their many negotiations, happen. Through the fruitful research contained within this thesis, I hope to have nurtured the formation of many sound conclusions and that, minimally; my research will be the spark of inspiration for further research and questions.

The possibility of undertaking a doctoral thesis has enabled me to reaffirm my will of ongoing in the pedagogy and teaching paths, but in the visual culture and mobile culture fields. All what relates to doing research, on visual digital literacy, on how to do online visual research, digital literacy, pop culture, vernacular practices and everyday life

relate to my deepest future interests. In order to enrich my researches, I would be blessed to have the chance to put my artistic know-how to create and develop creative visual and global projects, to be pursued with international colleagues.

Index

A

Aakhus · 21, 23, 53, 89, 165, 289, 307, 308, 314, 318, 319
Abbott · 359, 360
Abidin · 357
Agamben · 39, 48
Agar · 15
Ahonen · 135, 175
Akerman · 92, 93
Albarghouti · 166, 167, 168, 169, 172, 173, 174, 185, 186, 198
Alberti · 107
Albury · 287, 355
Allan · 43
Allard · 21, 127, 284, 353, 355
Anastas · 98
Aoki · 227, 272
Appadurai · 47
Araujo · 184
Arceneaux, · 16
Astruc · 11, 76
Aumont · 79
Aziz · 83, 250, 334

B

Baishya · 357
Bakhtin · 134, 301
Bal · 97
Balázs · 99, 101
Barcan · 66, 67, 92

Baron · 224, 281, 305, 319
Barthes · 37, 123, 127, 134, 160, 201
Basten · 200
Battarbee · 21, 100
Baym · 17, 83, 235, 253, 350, 352, 357
Beaudouin · 224, 279
Bégin · 132, 136
Berger · 23, 101, 102, 110, 121, 251
Bergström · 360, 365, 371
Berking · 294
Berry · 354, 355, 357
Besio · 299, 302
Besson · 119
Beuscart · 172, 224
Birnholtz · 359, 360, 361
Blackwell · 359, 360
Blanc · 59
Bledsoe · 51, 59
Boltanski · 10, 254
Bolter · 64
Boon · 355
Borenstein · 145, 146
Bourdieu · 10, 13, 29, 49, 52, 55, 64, 71, 73, 74, 79, 80, 81, 83, 84, 179, 238, 254, 274
Bowman · 42
Boyce · 94
boyd · 83, 164, 235, 288
Boyer · 106
Brunet · 52, 314
Brunner · 229
Bruns · 128, 167, 229, 230
Bucher · 98
Burgess · 11, 18, 21, 24, 70, 97, 139, 183, 193, 226, 314
Buridans · 259, 260
Burns · 352
Bussolini · 39

Butz · 299, 302, 303

C

Cambre · 282

Campbell · 53, 96, 224

Cannon · 156

Capet · 252

Cardon · 172

Carlisle · 277

Caron · 21, 165

Caronia · 21, 165

Cartwright · 57, 65, 73

Carvalho · 229, 296, 346, 356, 357

Casado · 279

Casilli · 179

Castells · 255

Chalfen · 24, 54, 83, 99, 123, 242, 255, 276, 302, 339, 367

Chéroux · 63, 151

Chesher · 21, 139, 225, 226, 227

Chipchase · 34, 77

Cloke · 302

Clough · 209

Cohen · 175

Cokley · 43

Coleman · 309

Compte · 326

Cook · 171

Cornish · 301, 302, 318

Crang · 302

Crowdvoice · 189, 190, 191, 198

D

Dailymotion · 71, 109

Damsgaard · 34

Daston · 65, 120, 155, 173

Davis · 21, 23, 231, 287, 301, 304, 318

Dayan · 39, 47, 48, 50

de Gournay · 21, 23, 308

de Lange · 97, 269, 279, 288, 289

de Souza e Silva · 40, 89, 90, 108, 113

Dennen · 139, 185

Denzin · 105, 299, 306

DeShano · 43, 141

Deuze · 129

Díaz Noci · 158, 291

Didi-Huberman · 121

dispositif · 12, 28, 33, 38, 39, 48, 85, 123, 216, 305, 376, 377

Dittmar · 68

Djerf-Pierre · 153

Donner · 104, 125

Doubrovsky · 119

Downing · 42, 140

du Gay · 53, 54, 66

E

Edwards · 21, 25, 304

Elias · 79, 80

Emerson · 301

Ess · 65, 66

Everett · 34, 185

Eyephonography · 30, 250

F

Fairclough · 144

Falassi · 60

Faulkner · 356

Feldman · 81, 99, 201, 203

Fenton · 180

Fernandez-Ardevol · 255

Fielding · 270

Finkelhor · 347, 351

Fleischer · 51, 97, 98

Fletcher · 282

Flickr · 15, 18, 19, 20, 103, 109, 130, 142, 144, 145, 172, 224, 230, 241, 255, 259, 260, 283, 290, 304, 311, 343

Fortunatti · 21, 129, 164, 221

Foucault · 12, 25, 33, 39, 81, 87, 90, 107, 134, 201

France · 23, 27, 46, 50, 51, 52, 54, 55, 63, 66, 76, 77, 86, 90, 98, 106, 113, 115, 118, 122, 172, 197, 251, 256, 273, 307, 308, 309, 310, 314, 317, 327, 360, 365, 371

Freeman · 357

Fried · 117

Friedberg · 107

Frith · 17, 40, 89, 90, 108, 113, 233, 359

Frohlich · 21, 22, 131, 213, 225, 250, 255, 312, 320, 348, 353, 358, 364

Fuchs · 281

G

Gabri · 98

Gaillard · 49, 57, 58, 59, 62, 70

Galison · 65, 120, 155, 173

Gallagher · 218

Garfinkel · 302, 322

Gauntlett · 209

Geertz · 123
Genette · 151
Gergen · 89, 289
Gibbs · 228, 303, 334, 340, 342, 355, 358
Giddens · 85, 86
Gill · 277, 287
Gillespie · 301, 302, 318
Gillmor · 42, 128, 146
Giomaro · 75
Glaser · 305
Glevarec · 52
Goffman · 97, 110, 118, 119, 288, 289, 331, 365
Goggin · 16, 21, 24, 54, 107, 128, 129, 164, 234, 263, 289, 314, 315
Gómez Cruz · 21, 24, 95, 131, 231, 232, 252, 255, 263, 355
Goodwin · 302
Gordon · 12, 16, 56, 63, 176
GPS · 17, 63, 113
Grace · 21
Granovetter · 185
Gray · 228
Gregg · 209
Griffin · 204
Grindr · 217, 359, 360
Grusin · 64
Gunning · 133
Gunthert · 43, 63, 83, 104, 141, 145, 146, 148, 210, 225, 226, 238, 242, 278, 355
Gye · 21, 83, 171, 247, 278

H

Habermas · 45
Haddon · 263
Hall · 111, 25, 30, 53, 54, 66, 124
Hamari · 282

Haraway · 194
Hardt · 88
Harper · 34, 77, 213, 225, 250, 294, 312, 320, 348, 353, 358, 364
Haski · 51
Haythornthwaite · 185
Hearn · 64, 165
Herszberg · 47, 50, 59
Highfield · 223, 230
Hjarvard · 126
Hjorth · 18, 21, 24, 70, 97, 139, 183, 193, 216, 226, 230, 231, 232, 234, 244, 263, 289, 295,
314, 322
Holliday · 156, 186
Holquist · 301
Hongjing · 180, 181
Hopmann · 153, 161
Horst · 21
Howard · 228
Howe · 63
Hunt · 350
Hussein · 148, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 161, 162, 163, 171, 196, 212

I

Ibrahim · 53
Illouz · 334, 335
Instagram · 132, 137, 217, 218, 223, 229, 230, 250, 252, 253, 254, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260,
261, 262, 274, 287, 289, 290, 294, 296, 337, 343, 350, 355, 357, 361, 363
iPhone · 16, 17, 18, 24, 26, 43, 47, 66, 70, 90, 96, 97, 113, 135, 139, 160, 169, 183, 192, 193,
225, 226, 231, 250, 252, 256, 314, 315, 333, 358
Ito · 21, 23, 24, 83, 170, 171, 221, 227, 289

I

Jaar · 117
Jack-Sey · 255
Jakobson · 228
Jarrigeon · 98
Jarvis · 140
Jeanne-Perrier · 158, 291
Jenkins · 56, 315
Jiayong · 180, 181
Jimroglou · 108
Jobs · 26, 169, 192
Jumin · 302
Jurgenson · 283

K

Kalden · 16
Kardashian · 353
Kato · 221
Katz · 21, 23, 53, 89, 165, 175, 221, 223, 289, 307, 308, 314, 318, 319, 370
Kavoori · 16, 24
Keen · 213
Kennedy · 45, 230
Kindberg · 21, 23, 26, 322
King · 146, 156, 186
Klobuchar · 42
Kodak · 12, 13, 16, 26, 35, 51, 56, 63, 231, 252, 254, 255, 263, 312
Kohno · 277, 287
Koivisto · 282
Koskela · 46, 107, 155, 199, 206
Koskinen · 16, 21, 22, 25, 83, 94, 100, 165, 173, 221, 317, 322
Kovadloff · 86

Kraidy · 199
Krieger · 132
Krumbs · 185, 186, 187, 191
Kuntsman · 356
Kurvinen · 21, 22, 23, 304, 329, 341

L

Labourdette · 49, 51, 58, 59, 75, 76, 123, 163
Laidi · 131, 132, 134
Langstedt · 350
Lapitsky · 146
Lasén · 21, 66, 95, 279, 296, 337, 346, 354
Lautissier · 207
Leaver · 223, 230, 296, 348
Leblanc · 119, 242
Lee · 21, 24
Lefcourt · 302
Leibovici · 87, 105, 106
Lemish · 175
Lenhart · 96, 165, 170
Lépinay · 51, 59
Licoppe · 21, 221, 223, 224, 227, 232, 233, 369
Lillie · 21
Linchuan · 255
Ling · 21, 96, 104, 125, 164, 165, 221, 307, 316, 318, 362
Losh · 356
Lounsbury · 347, 351
Luckmann · 23
Lyytinen · 34

M

Macé · 46, 52, 158

Macintyre · 270

Maigret · 46, 52, 158

Mäkela · 21

Malinowski · 228

Manovich · 29, 223, 226, 356

Marcel · 218

Maresca · 207, 304, 305

Marie · 79

Markham · 17, 235, 253

Martin · 21, 78, 90, 97, 98, 113, 207

Matsuda · 83, 221, 227

Mauss · 79, 80, 294, 342

May · 18, 42, 64, 165, 175, 288, 327

McDermott · 249

McGee · 301

McLuhan · 64, 89, 124

Meese · 355

Melcher · 207

Meston · 334

Meyer · 24, 131, 231, 232

Michaud · 133, 134, 210, 211

Miller · 21, 25, 59, 302, 304

Miltner · 357

Ming · 180, 181, 182

Mitchell · 347, 351

Moller · 78

Morin · 52, 67, 88, 93, 98

Moulin · 230

Mourad · 199

Murphy · 277

Murray · 227, 255, 259

Myrick · 98

N

Naaman · 230

Nandy · 357

Nasr · 200, 202, 203

Navarro · 165

Neda · 193, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208

Negroponte · 314

Nemer · 357

Nevanlinna · 303

Nokia · 13, 16, 35, 63, 137, 139, 166, 168, 255

Nyíri · 21, 66, 87, 94, 97, 175, 201, 221, 225, 321

O

O'Sullivan · 334

Obama · 286, 353, 357

Ohashi · 62, 63

Okabe · 21, 23, 24, 83, 170, 171, 221, 227, 272, 289, 303

Okada · 21

Oksman · 21, 219

Oman · 229

Orgad · 235, 238

Oudghiri · 52, 314

P

Palmer · 21, 225, 226

Paparacharissi · 45

Pasquier · 164

Pellegrino · 97
Pentney · 355
Pesonen · 303
Pew Internet · 96, 165, 170
Picassa · 15
Piela · 354
Pink · 216, 230, 231, 232
Piotet · 161
Pisani · 161
Pissard · 172
Pocket Films Festival · 12, 28, 29, 38, 40, 47, 48, 49, 51, 57, 61, 67, 71, 119, 122, 123, 251
Pratt · 299
Prieur · 172
Prøitz · 92
Purcell · 96

Q

Qik · 27, 216, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 247, 248, 293

R

Rains · 229
Rakow · 165
Rantavuo · 15, 21, 25
Raven · 78
Rawporter · 188, 189, 191, 213
Recuero · 184
Redden · 129, 180
Regards de Femmes · 30, 217, 250, 252, 253, 254, 263, 294
Rheingold · 314
Rice · 175
Richardson · 18, 21, 24, 70, 97, 139, 183, 193, 226, 314

Rihll · 229, 292
Rivière · 21, 165, 317
Robinson · 24, 43, 141
Roesner · 277, 287
Rogers · 30, 32, 33, 34, 35, 44, 49, 127, 130, 139, 166, 209
Rosen · 128
Rossellini · 54
Roth · 49, 57
Rouch · 98
Rubinstein · 16, 225, 231, 275, 285, 286
Russo · 53

S

Sacks · 331
Salama · 152, 153, 154, 155
Saleh · 153
Salmons · 270, 272
Sambrook · 140, 141, 146
Sánchez · 98
Sarkozy · 27, 77
Sarsa · 282
Sarvas · 21, 24, 213, 221, 225, 250, 255, 276, 277, 287, 303, 312, 320, 321, 348, 353, 358, 364
Scannell · 132
Schegloff · 318, 331
Schleser · 21, 96, 354, 355, 357
Schneider · 87, 201
Schwarz · 65, 94, 109, 110
Scifo · 21, 225, 321
Seguret · 87
Seigworth · 209
selfie · 10, 32, 97, 219, 243, 249, 276, 278, 280, 282, 285, 286, 293, 295, 297, 335, 337, 338,
339, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 359, 372, 376
Senft · 199, 205, 206, 350, 351, 352

Servoise · 105
Shah · 355
Shapiro · 79
Shehata · 153, 161
Shirky · 128, 179
Simon · 245
Skype · 27, 189, 228, 234, 293, 321, 343
Sluis · 16, 231, 275
Smyrnaios · 158, 291
Snapchat · 30, 217, 255, 260, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276,
277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 286, 287, 288, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296,
329, 349, 355, 369, 370
Snyder · 249
Sontag · 134, 148, 155
Sooryamoorthy · 233
Souza e Silva · 17, 233, 359
Spasojevic · 21, 23, 322
Sperber · 342
Spiegel · 277
Stacey · 138, 139, 140, 146, 156
Steinhardt · 34, 77
Sterne · 55, 64, 80
Stringer · 62
Sturken · 57, 65, 73
Surin · 208
Systrom · 258
Szymanski · 227, 272

T

Takhteyev · 287
Taleb · 128
Tarde · 171, 172
Taylor · 294

Tellería · 229, 296, 346, 356, 357
Tiidenberg · 354, 355
Tilley · 43
Tinder · 217, 303, 350, 358, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370
Tisseron · 86, 124
Tomlinson · 125
Touré · 76, 77
Tuan · 90
Tucker · 229, 292
Turkle · 165, 307
Twitpic · 185, 186, 187, 191
Twitter · 130, 137, 175, 183, 184, 185, 187, 189, 193, 194, 199, 200, 202, 209, 211, 216, 229,
230, 366
Tzankova · 353, 372

V

Van Dijck · 21, 129, 130, 158
Van Doorn · 93, 109
van House · 21, 23, 26, 96, 145, 221, 231, 287, 300, 301, 304
Verrier · 40, 65, 66, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 82, 83, 84, 85, 87, 88, 89, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 100, 102,
104, 107, 110, 111, 112, 114, 115, 116, 117, 119, 120, 121, 123
Vetere · 228, 303, 334, 340, 358
Vickery · 70, 145
Viikari · 303
Villi · 21, 26, 103, 219, 295, 300, 303, 318
Vincent · 263
Vine · 28, 217, 329
Vis · 356
Von Pape · 11, 90, 97, 113

W

Wacquant · 79, 80, 81, 274

Wagner, K. · 293

Walker Rettberg · 229, 288

Walkman · 53

Wang · 229, 292

Ward · 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 156

Warfield · 351

Warner · 45, 93

Wei Wei · 179

Welsch · 151

Wenger · 14, 217, 249, 255

Widelius · 136, 137

Wilhelm · 287

Williams · 67, 109, 110, 118

Willis · 42

Wilson · 144, 342

Witschge · 180

Wittkower · 53

W. J. T. Mitchell · 144, 327

Woodruff · 227, 272

Wunsch-Vincent · 70, 145

Y

YouTube · 28, 71, 107, 109, 130, 146, 147, 148, 155, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 166, 174, 177,
178, 183, 184, 190, 194, 195, 197, 198, 200, 202, 203, 205, 206, 207, 209, 210, 213, 214,
239, 241, 242, 284

Yttri · 165, 307, 318

Z

Zago · 184

Zelizer · 133, 205

Zengping · 180, 181

Zhao Zidong · 176, 177, 178

Zhou · 283, 284

Bibliography

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Appendixes

Appendix I.

Spectator reaction – Letter sent to the Pocket Films Festival, and then handed to A. Verrier (2007) - Original Version (French)

Monsieur,

bonjour.

c'est ridicule de vous écrire comme ça de ma part, surtout je risque de vous exploser mon français maladroit d'une étrangère. Comme je trouve aucun forum sur le site de pocket films où on peut donner des avis, je ne peux que vous adresser directement ici.

Je me présente, JJ, fidèle spectateur du festival de pocket films depuis trois ans, et étudiante de cinéma. Je vous écris parce que je suis tout simplement indignée par le résultat du palmarès, il s'agit de certain film qui s'appelle Porte de choisy dont j'ai ignoré l'auteur. Je n'arrive pas à comprendre comment vous avez pu choisir un tel film pour le premier prix du jury, un film si vulgaire, gratuit, simple imitation des films d'exploitation, et qui n'a d'ailleurs aucune qualités audiovisuelles. Comment pourriez vous trouver de la grâce dans les claquements du lit comme ceux-ci dans le fondu-noir de la fin? ceci dit, je ne suis pas du tout contre les films nus (Godard et Jeunet en ont prouvé de la vraie esthétique), mais la nudité montrée avec une telle grossièreté et surtout vous l'avez tellement appréciée, je suis parfaitement choquée.

Je suis parmi beaucoup de spectateurs déçu par une telle sélection et parmi peut-être les seuls qui vous écrivent puisque nous, les spectateurs, on n'a que le droit d'être ému ou déçu, discrètement dans notre siècle.

Vous dites, ce n'est qu'un festival de pocket films, mais vu tout le travail et enthousiasme que les organisateurs et les participants ont investi, on avait attendu un film qui mérite mieux le prix. Et le premier prix du jury,

ça représente quand même en certain degré l'ensemble du niveau du festival. Parmi tous les bons surprises dans les programmes, je suis étonnée qu'un tel film vous ait retenu l'attention. En 2006, vous avez admirablement choisit le Cahier froid et Perle, chaque film parmi la sélection a une conception singulière et une qualité exceptionnelle, malgré les limites techniques du support. En 2007, vos critères de sélection ont été ainsi basculé.

Je n'ai pas le moindre d'intention de critiquer le travail du jury, je trouve tout simplement dommage qu'un festival de goût et qui a une équipe d'organisation si enthousiaste se cloît par un film si grossier.

Je vous écris, en tant que spectateur sincère du festival et cinéophile passionné qui n'a droit de rien et qui ne peut qu'écrire quelques lignes vagues et inutiles, en espérant une meilleure cloîture de la prochaine édition.

Sincèrement,

JJ

Appendix II.

Antonin Verrier interview - September 2012

1. Did the fact of screening *Porte de Choisy* publically change your couple relationship?
2. Did the couple as such (re)view the film later, when, how?
3. Have you made any other films of Cloé?
4. Are you still together?
5. Did you encounter any other type of audiences? Where? How did they react towards the film? How was the reception feeling?
6. Did you raise money for your second film from screening *Porte de Choisy*?
7. What was the technique used to shoot your second film? Why did you change?
8. Do you consider *Porte de Choisy* a home porn footage?
9. Do you feel your second film has the same spirit, style or line of thoughts than *Porte de Choisy* has?
10. Do you consider them soft porn?

Appendix III.

Focus group questionnaire – June 2014

1. How did you come to use Snapchat?
2. Since when?
3. How often do you Snapchat?
4. How would you describe your Snapchat use? It is all about experience?
5. What is your worst/best experience with SMS/MMS?
6. Have you ever had regret feelings of having sent something through SMS or MMS, and therefore are more prone to ephemeral practices like the ones proposed in Snapchat?
7. Have you ever regretted not being able to save a Snapchat; do you screenshot?
8. Which relation is there between your Snapchat practice and other social

networking sites you belong to, or image sharing practices you have?

9. Is there any Snapchat story or anecdote you'd like to share with us?
10. Why do you use Snapchat?
11. After using Snapchat, do you think differently about pictures and what the role of photography is?
12. Suppose that you were in charge of the amelioration of Snapchat and could make one change that would make the app better. What would you do?
13. Can you think of a metaphor to illustrate your practice?