**8. Mobile Journalism:**

**Reflexive storytelling in the co-produced public sphere**

Smartphone filmmaking and mobile media has become a regular feature in broadcast news and there are more than a dozen mobile, smartphone and pocket film-festivals around the world. Following the accessibility of video production cameras, now post-production is becoming more accessible. Major software companies are producing non-linear editing software such as Adobe, Apple and AVID launched mobile and/or tablet versions for non-linear editing software. Last year the British Broadcasting Corporation started offering training courses for journalists in ‘mobile journalism’ (mojo). Mobile Journalism is the current umbrella terminology that includes mobile content creation on the move and encompasses mobile filmmaking, mobile-mentaries (Schleser 2010), mobile photography (or iphonography) and digital storytelling. As a novel cultural form, this phenomenon is said to have extended the public sphere, not only by opening new venues for ordinary people and alternative voices, but also by paving the way for a more reflexive culture in discursive spaces (Goode, 2009).

In this chapter we argue that digital stories are a significant influence on accounts of collective resonance by enabling a more mobile and complex demonstration of public impact. To make sense of this we theorize digital video, especially the kind that is produced with mobile phone cameras, as a narrative element that is self-reflexive in nature. Understanding the self-reflexivity of mobile footage is an important step towards making sense of developments in processes of media content production that used to be explained as the by-product of auteurist endeavours, largely ran by editorial gatekeepers, but which are nowadays more fruitfully explained as co-produced assemblages. The assemblages we work with refer to events or happenings that have triggered heated episodes of public debate in India and Mexico after footage segments were uploaded to platforms like YouTube and used by mainstream media to produce news packages. To view these episodes through the lenses that we are suggesting one needs to take several conceptual detours which are required to reflect on the importance of mobile phone video in the nature of contemporary public spheres. While the broadcasting industry functions within the diverse cooperate or public funding models, structures, policies and agendas one can observe how mobile filmmaking appeared as a phenomena internationally and now changes some of the structures within the broadcasting industry internationally. This notion of audience involvement means that face-to-face interactions are brought into a more hierarchical organization of media dissemination. Glocal impact creates subjectivities and representations within a 21st century discourse. As a cultural practice mojo allows audiences to define their agenda.

**8.1 Mobile Journalism in the contemporary mediascape**

The sociological and cultural concept of reflexivity is central to our intervention. The concept mobilised here can be approached as an extension of Anthony Giddens’ work on self-identity as the reflexive project of modernity (1991). As he put it, a person’s self-identity can be found ‘in the capacity to keep a narrative going’, (p. 54). We can redirect this to Schleser’s perspective on self-reflexive mobile filmmaking as a means to ‘establishing personal connections and sociability’ (2014: 149). Thus depicted subjectivities and locations become part of ‘a public online space’ where ‘self and life’ adopt ‘audiovisual form’ (p. 154). If self-identity amounts to the reflexive understanding of one’s own biography as part of a continuous narrative, collective identities are also formed on the basis of shared narratives (Bhabha, 1990). Indeed, as Arjun Appadurai (1996) convincingly argued, the widespread availability of new media forms and platforms has triggered alternative ways to imagine social projects, frequently outside the encompassing authority of traditional institutions like the nation-state. Furthermore, these mediated “workings of the imagination” are frequently subject to contestation, and paraphrasing Johnson, become accounts of ‘how we struggle, individually or collectively, for some integrity’ (1986: 301).

The accounts in question can be redirected to storytelling as an act through which meaning is conveyed. While journalism is one of the dominant practices through which stories are told in contemporary societies (Park, 1999), it is however necessary to consider how mobile media and smartphones are reshaping the way in which stories are told. A new generation of journalists and public communicators areexploring the potential of novel media types and platforms, a process described by Quinn as ‘storytelling or presentation convergence’ (2005: 6). These are narrative elements formed by video footage, audio clips, timeline infographics and interactive animations, providing not only attractive multimedia environments but also a variety of entry points to suit the interests of multiple users, including the inclination to engage in forum discussions. ‘Storytelling is [arguably] social in character’ (De Lange, 2010: 174). The interactive potential of storytelling in the new media ecology is also found to be of high significance in the case of what Bradshaw and Rohumaa identify as ‘clickable interactives’ (2014: 132). This form of storytelling is seen as a potential fix to the ephemeral nature of journalism, supporting long-forms of rather timeless journalism to which people may return for reference reading (Steensen, 2011). Another significant point about storytelling made by Bradshaw and Rohumaa is in relation to the essential role of ‘eyewitness footage’ for storytelling in journalism, especially when captured by a mobile phone as ‘it is often the rawest, unedited coverage that has the most visceral impact on the viewer’ (2011: 106). Following aesthetic developments in mobile, smartphone and pocket cameras one can also observe the impact of mobile media on the domain of digital storytelling. These developments are beyond the technological reshaping of storytelling tools found in apps and online platforms, and require investigation as cultural forms if one is to make sense of particular space and places (Schleser, 2014: 154). The emerging locations give way to ’micro-narratives’ (Hjorth, 2005). Even the act of uploading said narratives operates as ‘a quasi-text, in which symbols provide the rules of interpreting behavior’ (Ricoeur, 1984: page number needed). The ‘aliveness’ of the event has huge potential for suggestivity, stemming from ontological metaphors of intimacy, natural light, shaky frames and subjective framing of subjects and space invoked by mobile phone video practice also create experiences that persuade and put forth shared experiences. These so called *aesthetics of mobile media art* (Baker et al 2009) seemed to be ignored by the broadcasting industry for a lack of technical standard for a decade but are now a defining quality of “mojo”. With the advancement of video resolution in smartphones personal engagement with stories is unique. As a special feature of video produced with mobile phones, spatial experiences of mobile journalists can be further explored through the affordances of location services (i.e. GPS, afforded by smartphones. GPS as a standard feature in smartphones.. Furthermore, Even though mobile devices are hyper-location aware, annotation helps transcend geographic places (Tuters and Varneles, 2011), which facilitates the tracing of people, places and occurrences. Alongside the implicit ethical issues raised by localised “mojo”, one should reconsider how these developments modify traditional paradigms about its nature

**8.2 Co-production acts**

In order to make sense of mobile journalism and its acts of digital storytelling one needs to account for the nature of the practice as a co-production. We are informed here by Hudson and Zimmermann’s discussion about digital media as ‘a process of assemblage’ which renders the somewhat invisible and intangible processes of digital documenting as collaborative, reflexive and interactive (2015: 100). Jenkins notion of ‘participatory culture’ (2006: 3) can be invoked here to recognise that the inputs of the public are essential for the survival of media flows across platforms at the heart of what he terms as convergence culture. Such recognition is present across various sectors of the cultural industries and in general across economic activities (Benkler, 2006). We find this in the way in which news editors and marketers have embraced buzz terms like “citizen journalism” and “interactive advertising” (Deuze, 2005), as they seek to capitalize on the advantages of integrating ‘the people formerly known as the audience’ (Rosen, 2006) to their business models, and even adapting them to a process of co-creative labour (Banks & Deuze, 2009).The idea is ever present in what Boczkowski labels as ‘distributed construction’ (2004: 143), whereby users of online resources acquire access to regimes of news production as constant providers of knowledge and information on which newsroom workers rely. In this context, Hill and Lashmar identify the emergence of the ‘social journalist’ or ‘social news gatherer’, whose job consists of collecting, authenticating and reproducing content produced by the public (2014: 18). The phenomenon has been significant outside profit-driven environments, as documented by Sambrooks (2005) account of the BBC’s reliance on content such as photographs, amateur video, messages and tips from its audiences. The inputs are frequently described as user-generated content (UGC), ‘a general term for when non-professionals produce online content’ (Hill & Lashmar, 2014: 18). UGC is heavily mediated by the ‘social journalist’ (ibid), whose job largely requires him to source information from the internet to produce collaborative journalism ‘where journalists work with members of the public to research stories’ (ibid). Outside the institutionalized site of the newsroom, Foot (2002) has noted how all political actors, whether citizens or political professionals, become co-producers of the so called political Web. Professional journalists do indeed understand their jobs depend on their ability to investigate and cover news stories in a collaborative ecosystem (Bradshaw & Rohumaa, 2011: 144-148). Indeed, the tendency of news organisations to “crowdsource” money and manpower to produce, investigate and cover stories has put an end to the traditional idea that journalists are extraordinarily resourceful mavericks (Hill & Lashmar, 2014: 134). During emergencies, calamities and disasters, in particular, the mobile phone establishes a rhizomatic network of eyewitness accounts, alerts and updates. The mobile phone video establishes a community of ‘citizen-journalists’ that can often provide evidence that affects policy and response.

Whilst one may be sceptical about the reach of the collaborative journalism we describe, its public significance continues to require our attention insofar as the paradigms that link it to democracy (Hampton, 2010) and the public interest continue to bear influence upon the trade (Kovach and & Rosenstiel (2001). Ideas of public impact can be derived from the practice of journalism itself, whereby practitioners have distinguished what it means to produce information that matters to audiences. This may be via “hard news” which has a direct or indirect impact on people’s existences or “soft news”, described as ‘the lightweight material that people like to gossip about’ (Boyd, Steward & Alexander, 2008: 22). Once we assume footage from pocket cameras is a key ingredient of journalistic it merges into the type of knowledge which draws the attention of societies to present concerns whilst affording individuals a slow but progressive accommodation into their worlds (Park, 1940). Significantly, news captures the public mind via acts of communication that create social tension or attention. Park considers news affords societies the knowledge to ‘understand what is going on about us’ (p. 672) rather than ‘what actually happened’. Since, as Park notes, news is formatted to ‘be easily and rapidly comprehended’ without significant ‘effort of the reporter to interpret the events he reports’ (p. 670), we could argue the mobile video is similar in that it brings about the experience of the bystander to the rest of the community. Individuals typically react to the news with ‘a desire to repeat it to someone. This makes conversation, arouses further comment, and perhaps starts a discussion.’ (*ibid*.) The ensuing discussions quickly move from the events themselves to the issues these raise, leading to the formation of ‘consensus or collective opinion’. At the heart of what the public considers being of relevance lie the sets of values held by communities, which as Anderson (1983) has shown, are frequently imagined across large geographic areas on the basis of shared meanings and experiences.

**8.3 Digital narratives from the global south**

The opportunities to bring stories from the everyday life into the newsroom or prime-time news have increased through more and more video footage being in circulation and made available via video streaming sites. The separation of authors’ intentions in filming and the framing through institutionalised voice over as much as the juxtaposition of journalistic commentary shows how video footage flows through a number of cultural layers. While a number of news stories originate from PR, press agencies and western newsrooms, mobile media can drive localised or glocal content. India and Mexico as countries with huge mobile and smartphone media uptake suggest themselves for critical analysis. Such is the case because we believe academic discourses about citizen journalism mostly derive from research thrusts in the global north, where accounts on the phenomenon are typically linear. By linearity in this context we refer to the fact that citizen journalists, their platforms and practices such as data gathering, sourcing and authoring are rather unproblematic (i.e. one knows who the citizen journalist is).

Here, the case of amateur footage on video blogs like YouTube as being essential for news storytelling will be addressed to reflect on how factual content is assembled in modes which are collaborative, reflexive and interactive, as opposed to exposed, observed or personalized (cf. Hudson & Zimmermann, 2015: 100). The work of news camera operators and photojournalists has traditionally been represented and understood as the by-product of a creative effort in which individual knowledge, experience, talent and skill are combined to tell stories that matter to an audience. More recently, research has implied the work of digital and/or citizen journalists is the result of individual agency (Holt & Karlsson, 2015; Johnson & St. John III, 2015; Wallace, 2009). One may paraphrase Hudson and Zimmermann to claim that conceptions of storytelling through digital content of audiovisual characteristics are grounded in ‘analogue assumptions’ (2015: 100). Such assumptions are insufficient to explicate forms of collaboration and interactivity in the production of audio-visual journalistic accounts that are either taken for granted or overlookedThe patterns in question are captured in an online news feature that curated “[5 VIDEOS about discrimination and abuse in Mexico: Of “gentlemen”, “ladies” and the bully of a candy-selling child](http://www.sinembargo.mx/28-07-2013/700284)” (Sin Embargo, 2013). The videos became the object of significant public attention and controversy after they were circulated in social networks and/or edited by broadcasters as digital packages. The feature draws on footage taken from various sources and posted on YouTube between August 2011 and July 2013. The spread of the dates suggests the clips are but a sample of a growing collection of audiovisual segments on YouTube which illustrate a societal culture of power abuse. Such a culture has in recent years become a recurrent trending topic tagged with the English-language words “Lady” or “Gentlemen”, which for Mexicans invoke the idea of refinement and decor. The terms have been used sarcastically in reference to the exposed corrupt nature of individuals who abuse positions of power acquired from occupying jobs in high public office or from being famous and well-connected.

Due to the emphasis of the videos in question on abuse of power, the trend could be thought in relation to ideas of citizen journalism documented by various authors (Allan, 2007; Sambrook, 2005). Notably, the videos described above were said to have caused some form of public outrage and in every case, the individuals involved had to face justice in court, paid fines or were removed from their jobs. This could be taken to be an extension of the now popular notion that journalism sheds light on power abuse and injustice, frequently acting as the first draft of history. In the age of mobile phones and vblogs, these first drafts are the result of patchy strands of collaborative endeavours rather than individual journalistic doggedness. Authorship is no longer the repository of a single creator and narrative arcs emerge via metadata - #hashtags, hyperlinks, comments, ratings and shares. The exposition, reproduction and even re-appropriation also create crises of authenticity and origin. “There is a post-modern paradox of authorship. Real people are censored and anonymous people have a right to say everything” (Subrahmanyam, 2015: para 7). There is a conceptual (and productive) blur between affect-driven infrastructures and the movement of media. Ficto-graphic atrocity stories (images, sounds, videos) circulate and attach themselves to sites of violence; in India, for instance, “fake” videos have been held out as reasons for disturbances in various cities and for the intimidation and killing of minority populations” (Sundaram, 2015: para 16).

The [first of the videos](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FhGcqVfaeLg) shows infamous entrepreneur Miguel Sacal beating and verbally abusing Hugo Vega, a receptionist at Sacal’s luxury residential building in Mexico City. The attack started after Vega refused the demand that he changed a flat tire in Sacal’s vehicle, which to start with was not part of Vega’s job duties. The footage, which was widely reported by national broadcasters and the press, was entitled “Abuse and violence”, uploaded by a YouTube user identified as “suy020204” who claimed to have retrieved it from an unidentified human rights group. The footage was edited with dramatic music in the background, and included halo effects for emphasis on each of the participants; it also included subtitles that provided both narration and interpretation of the events, such as: “Sacal leaves his jacket on the desk and walks towards Vega to beat him. He also insults and humiliates him.”

The second video featured was entitled “[Las Ladies de Polanco](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6QCrGKm8mg4)”, which shows a former Big-Brother contestant and a female friend in a wealthy part of Mexico City swearing at a policeman and calling him “working-class piece of shit[[1]](#endnote-1)”. The evidence was widely commented by Mexican newscasters and social media users as evidence of uncivil behaviour from a foul-mouthed second-tier celebrity, but it also generated debate about the failure of the police to inspire the respect of citizens. Here again, the source of the video was sketchy; the video had originally been uploaded to a YouTube account and then changed to a different account. The footage was framed in a narrow vertical shot and whilst it was taken at night it clearly captured the threatening body and verbal language of the women, as well as the indistinct conversation of the individual shooting the video with other witnesses. At one point, one of the police’s assailants told the person with the mobile to make sure he’d get a clear shot with the face of the policeman, who appeared embarrassed through the 84 seconds of the recorded fracas.

The third video referenced shows footage of a drunken man Francisco Arias at a police station. The private assistant to the major of Oaxaca city, he repeatedly abuses and challenges a municipal cop to a fight. The footage was part of a piece presented by a news reader and broadcast on pay TV by the national news media group Milenio, which itself uploaded the edited segment to YouTube. The package included subtitles announcing: “Major’s PA fired”, followed by information noting the location of the story and that “footage was released in which he (Arias) verbally abuses cops”. The “footage was released” bit in the subtitle suggests the video was not produced by Milenio’s journalists and that it was indeed passed on to the newsroom by someone at the premises of the police in Oaxaca where the events took place. By watching the video, in which Arias slaps his left biceps warning a circumspect cop how he would suffer from one of his punches, one can further speculate that it was taken with a phone camera, as the good visibility of close range actions turned grainy when the subjects became slightly farther from it.

In [the fourth video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0NS5f9lqrKE) Francisco Romo, a local councillor of Ixtapaluca County is shown at a street food stand under the influence of alcohol proffering abuse to a policeman as he demands that he submits to his authority. The policeman, who was with some of his colleagues who appeared in the footage, remained calm recording with a mobile camera as Romo swore and gesticulated at him. At some point the former questioned the latter’s authority suggesting his erratic behaviour would left him exposed. It’s worth noting that this piece of footage was uploaded in raw format by national newscaster MVS Noticias, which simply used elements of information within the video itself to write the title on YouTube: “I give the orders, respect those above you”, says member of Conservative party, aka “the Ixtapaluca gentleman”. This suggests MVS Noticias gave little if any attention to who recorded the video or the question of who was captured in it, an aspect which was nonetheless specified in the feature by the news site which assembled the five videos in question.

The same Sin Embargo feature further documented the specifics of [the fifth video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IxVv9w_XlBw), allegedly made public on Twitter by a local lawmaker and uploaded to YouTube by Canal TVX, a broadcaster from El Salvador. The footage, which was apparently produced by Canal TVX, captured the moment in which local trade inspector of Villahermosa (capital of Mexico’s southern state of Tabasco) Diego López allegedly ‘humiliated’ Manuel Díaz, a kid from an indigenous community. In the footage, Diego is shown holding a straw basket from its handle as little Manuel cries whilst emptying the basket from candies he was trying to sell in the street. Once he emptied the basket Díaz is seen leaving the scene, after which a man is seen putting Manuel’s products back in the basket whilst the child squats and cries with his head sunk between his knees.

**8.4 Of gender violence, injustice and corporal punishment**

Eponymously named after the duo filmed in a mobile phone video that went viral,[[2]](#endnote-2) the ‘Rohtak sisters’ or ‘Sonepat sisters’ [video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZopUkgU7CSw) was uploaded on 28 November 2014 and subsequently embedded in news reports with anchor links and voice over. The footage shows two young girls retaliating against a group of ‘molesters’ in a bus in India. The physical scuffle between the two parties is captured clearly in the footage. After the video was uploaded journalists, women’s commissions and politicians lauded the bravery of the girls. The police rounded up the alleged molesters soon after and while the investigation was on another [video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GkA77v8Y4oc) went viral a few days later. This showed the same duo in physical conflict with another group of boys. Were these ‘serial bravehearts’ or ‘bullies’ asked the press and online users. What was the footage an index of? On 4 December, 2014 yet a third [video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vgu3ibsHwDI) in this saga was released which showed the boys from the bus being chided and disciplined by their parents. With the latter two videos going viral, public opinion turned against the sisters. As if on cue, several female witnesses emerged, stating the sisters had misrepresented a dispute over a seat as a case of harassment by releasing the first video. Questions were raised about the first video being ‘unedited’ thereby undermining its credibility as a witness account. Any critique of the passivity[[3]](#endnote-3) of the mobile cameraperson during the altercation is turned on its head when the woman who recorded the event testified that she began the recording at the behest of the two sisters *after* they had argued with the man about the seat. The sisters volunteered to undergo a polygraph test to silence all counterclaims, but failed it. The plot took a further turn when morphed images of both sisters began circulating on social media and they in turn had to file a complaint with the cyber-crime cell of the police. This provides an interesting insight into public notions of social injustice.

Another stamp of co-produced content in India stems from a September 10, 2015 mobile phone video in which a teacher beating a 10 year old boy with a fractured arm went viral. The teacher is seen constantly haranguing the boy about his caste and brutalising him. Though the incident occurred in April of 2015, the footage was released many months later and led to a police complaint by a Dalit[[4]](#endnote-4) organisation. The conduct of the teacher would have gone unnoticed had it not been for the anonymous onlooker who filmed the act and uploaded it. It is not known, whether the teacher was aware of being filmed but the episode unleashed public anger, triggering calls to address what was perceived as an act of impunity and Twitter hashtags such as #everythingwrongwithIndia. Both corporal punishment and caste-based abuse are not uncommon despite both being punishable offences in the country. The footage is an important testament to the power of the mobile phone video as a catalyst for political and social justice, albeit belated. The video, originally shot in Mangalore, trended immediately after its release but has been removed for alleged violation of YouTube's community guidelines. Grainy [screen grabs](http://images.indianexpress.com/2015/09/mangalore.jpg) ([here](http://www.mangalorean.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/veda-teacher.jpg) as well) remain in online news articles whose two-dimensionality can never do justice to emotional and psychological dimensions of the incident. The absence of the complete video and the conscientious comment by the corporate video aggregator play up the dialectic of how these co-productions re-enact the role of journalism as they seek to break silences, whilst subject to traditional editorial processes practiced within mainstream media organizations. However, the multiplier effect of such videos can be seen as part of automatic playlists where students are mercilessly being subjected to corporal punishment.

Embedded in TV news reports, videos from pocket mobiles are used as continuously used as commentary on the need to challenge social tolerance of physical and emotional violence. Another such [video](https://youtu.be/EWsDJoNiiVc) emerged in May 2015, showing a college principle caning his students as well as reactions of students who witnessed the event. The naturalisation of violence is evident when a student, over whose shoulders the mobile video is being recorded, turns with a grin but immediately stops on realising that his position as an approving spectator may become irrefutable. A little further in the video, another student realises that the video is being made and tries to clear the line of sight of the mobile camera. He and the other student clearly recognise the implications of the mobile video being created. A little later, one of them even pulls out his own mobile phone, as if inspired to film from the front row. This performance of complicity with the anonymous student who filmed the event is a demonstration of how mojo transgresses and redresses boundaries. In this case, a classroom as a site of violence becomes released from the fear and hierarchy through its visibility. In a news-report, in which the video is embedded, the creator asserts that silence was not an option. The emphatic insistence of the police on verifying the veracity of the clip is however ironically directed at investigating whether it was doctored and not. The inability to convert witness footage to evidence in a judicial context points to the limitations of such footage. The purpose and outcomes of mojo may not converge in many instances, but in this case the entire student community decided to file a case en masse so as to not jeopardise the anonymity of the creator of the mobile video. Since both videos of corporal punishment originated in the same region (southern state of Karnataka), one could speculate with the possibility that the creation of one was inspired by its May predecessor.

As demonstrated by the students’ coordinated strategy it is clear that actions in the offline world can be triggered by *mojo*. Thus, lack of consensus on the events that took place on the bus ride and questions about the authenticity of video can be overlooked in favour of understanding the political implications of this generalized condition of mobile video content in circulation. This can be redirected to the notion that ‘With the cellular phone, a growing section of the postcolonial population is now the source of new-media output—which in turn links to online social networks, mainstream television, and peer-to-peer exchanges of text, music, and video’ (Sundaram 2015: para 10). Mobile phones are also repositories of “found footage”’ (i.e. videos that have the potential to be circulated and carefully curated in terms of duration and point of release). Those who put capture or circulate the footage in question in fact ‘expose the failings of public and private institutions and their personnel, and sometimes become celebrated opinion- leaders’ (Goode 2009: 1290). At the same time, ‘sense making’ of the videos is shaped by traditional gate-keepers and agenda shapers. Academic work too has raised serious objections[[5]](#endnote-5) about the significance of the input from non-professional journalists (Buckingham, 2009; Wardle, 2007). We should therefore consider some of the problems with the nature of the videos where the label “citizen journalism” could be more accurately replaced with participatory (Henig, 2005), witness (Wallace, 2009) or random (Holt & Karlsson, 2014) journalism, particularly when it comes to questions such as the role of the author in mobile video. Because it is common to deal with footage that has no indication of having been obtained with typical journalistic purposes, one could at best argue for the agency of ‘witness contributors’ (cf. Buckingham, 2009: 98). In the case of the videos discussed the question of who shot the videos is highly problematic in that there are little if any clues as to the identity of the camera operators. This raises several problems, including a somewhat historical tendency to consider the work of professional camerapersons as somewhat secondary, and therefore unaccredited, to that of news presenters and reporters. One could of course raise questions as to the editorial professionalism of mainstream news organisations that simply chose to acknowledge the source of content from witness contributors or more problematically, to provide any evidence that measures were taken to ensure the content was reliable in the first place. There is then the fact that well before the emergence of mobile cameras news was being packaged with ‘found footage’ from CCTV facilitated to news organisations by institutional sources who were key providers of content for OOVs (short for “out of vision” digital packages) (Hill & Lashmar, 2014: 105). At present, the distinction between video from participatory interventions and surveillance cameras is short of straightforward. Certainly, footage from CCTV generally provides a soundless *fly on the wall[[6]](#endnote-6)* sort of perspective whilst the one obtained with a phone camera will be normally level to the ground and with some form of audio. But the final result will be very similar in that footage will tend to feature grainy, poorly lit, with reduced frames, occasionally blurry but good enough as evidence to support the claim made by professional journalists in their digital packages.

**8.5 Mobile Media as an agent for change in the digital public sphere**

While mobile camera phones were never intended for filmmaking when they first appeared, filmmakers and creatives defined the aesthetics and working practices. The beauty of mobile filmmaking is exposed through the creative exploration of filmmaking and its break from established rules and conventions. Writing in *Spectator, Film and the Mobile Phone*, Roger Odin argues that cinema is no longer only a matter of films but has become a language of communication; “…today film language, when it is not used to make ‘cinema’ is no longer confined to certain areas of specialized communication, but is mobilized by the space of everyday communication. The era of film language has truly arrived.” (Odin in Christie 2012: 169). Access to smartphone technology has meant that more works[[7]](#endnote-7) are surfacing from countries beyond western screens and broadcast networks. In combination with the opportunities to disseminate videos great opportunities for more diverse content from a number of countries emerges. The next generation of filmmakers will utilise the mobile device according to their own ideals and agendas. Mobile filmmaking and MoJo is engaged in a constant innovation process that is influenced by multiple vectors. It is emerging as a field with its own aesthetic qualities. Mobile films capture a space that is often overlooked - revealing moments of life, capturing the mundane in a poetic way reminiscent of the essay film. Whether waiting at a bus stop, inline or going through a car wash, the smartphone is always with us. Our thoughts in these moments, which allow us to reflect upon the current moment and live is captured using mobile visual media.

While the editing process allows filmmakers, creatives or journalists to reflect upon the captured action and craft this into a story format, user-generated content is normally understood as a form of video that has minimal or no editing. As we have shown with the above outlined examples the editing is replaced by discursive forces in these witness accounts. Mobile video and especially mojo is thus shaped by an institutional voice-over. Historical precedents such as Zapruder 8mm footage or the VHS of the Rodney King incident have demonstrated (Nichols in Renov 1993) the context of video footage and its placement into sociocultural contexts. Besides the form of news, celebrity and yes also ‘cat videos’ some forms of live streaming (Ustream, Mini WebCam, TwitCasting or Bambuser) can be referenced to the form of actuality videos. The well-known and theorised *L'arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat*  (Auguste and Louis Lumière 1896) or *La Sortie des usines Lumière à Lyon* (Auguste &Louis Lumière, 1895) mirrors contemporary micro-formats of Vine, Instagram Videos or Vyclone. The notion of mobility is characterized by its detachment from desktop production, linear distribution and a more user-focused approach to film exhibition. These transformations are increasingly driven by a horizontal media ecology and dynamic mediascape. Messages are personal, intimate and immediate. Some of these works are reflections on life and others on art and culture. Their meanings are powerful as we can connect to the thoughts of the filmmakers. Some works tackle social problems through a strong statement while others allow us to understand situations of people and their lives

Before we look into the future and make futuristic predictions we can look back to the properly first ever mojo producer and digital storyteller Dziga Vertov.

“Freed from the boundaries of time and space, I co-ordinate any and all points of the universe, wherever I want them to be. My way leads towards the creation of a fresh perception of the world. Thus I explain in a new way the world unknown to you.” (Vertov 1927: 18)

By means of exploring reflexive storytelling to theorize mobile filmmaking we demonstrated some considerations that need to be attached to mojos shaping as a format. As a global phenomena we choose examples of media stories from India and Mexico as one can observe how mobile media now contributes to the development of digital public sphere. The Internet’s potential for non-hierarchical dissemination of content through peer-to-peer networks obviously opposes the industries structures. While mojo can emerge from audiences in a grass roots bottom-up fashion, the dissemination is flowing through a broadcasting model that conceptually did not change notions of dissemination since its proliferation in the 50s and 60s.

The ‘alterity’ of the narratives emerging from mobile phone videos lends them plurivocality. Akin to magical realism, the digital mode is also “…suited to exploring...and transgressing...boundaries, whether the boundaries are ontological, political, geographical, or generic” (Zamora and Faris 1995:5). “It is [therefore] necessary to research and seriously debate the extent to which a culture of – or demand for – ‘reflexive conversation’ matches up to the potential evident in the online news sphere” (Goode, 2009: 1302). Till then we can collectively say - thankfully we have the mobile phone video to frame what happened!

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1. A similar abusive refrain was captured by an Uber customer Juan Cinco who uploaded a [video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bvq07KBfhnQ&feature=youtu.be) of a visibly inebriated Dr. Anjali N. Ramkissoon attacking and swearing at an Uber driver on 19 January, 2016 in Miami. The video went viral soon after it was uploaded leading to outrage and trolling of Ramkissoon, including cyber-abuse such as morphing of her photographs. While Ramkissoon has been placed on administrative leave and has pulled down all her social media accounts, the assemblage of comments, embedding and sharing will icontinue to imbue the event with greater aliveness. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. A headline that is typical in mobile videos is the phrase 'video goes viral'. One can assume that the act of sharing is indexically applied to convey consumption as act of public significance rather than simply as a process of mass communication. Thus these cases allow to conceptualise processes of co-production in digital networks as sites for the enactments of counter-abuse. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. In a road accident in New Delhi in early 2016, 32 year old Manik Gaur was charred to death when his motorbike collided with a stationary tempo. Onlookers shot the gruesome incident while the biker fought for his life. The apathy of the onlookers and the fact that mobile videos were uploaded by several of them under 'entertainment' sections of video platforms online evoked a sharp reaction from the deceased's family. They objected to the apathy of the witnesses and the possible trauma that circulation of the footage would cause to them and are pursuing the case with the Cyber Crime unit in New Delhi. The incident clearly highlights the ethical implications of witness footage and the complicity of the video makers in the outcomes of the event being filmed.  [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Dalit refers to a caste (not a class) in India that were discriminated against and treated as untouchables because of their occupations (manual scavenging, leather work, butchery etc). Meaning 'broken', 'downtrodden' or 'oppressed' the nomenclature Dalit is an act of political self-assertion by those communities that were isolated, discriminated and subject to violence by the rest of society. Even though the caste system has been abolished in India, cases of exclusion and discrimination continue to exist. Pervasive issues affecting Dalits include debt bondage, low levels of literacy, exploitation and impunity of perpetrators of crimes against them. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. See Brennen, Bonnie (2010) “Photojournalism: Historical Dimensions to Contemporary Debates”, Stuart Allan (ed.) The Routledge Companion to News and Journalism. Oxon; New York: Routledge, pp. 71-81 for a discussion on the impact of digital photography on authenticity claims made by photo journalists and documentarists. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. The concept of direct cinema and its fly on the wall approach paved the way for our understanding of contemporary TV and cinema formats. Beyond the recognition of industry formats it is particular interesting for vernacular creativity and formats that emerged out of audience interaction. A number of scholars have critically engaged with this concept and this recognition underpins this chapter. See Winston, Brian (1995) *Claiming the Real: The Griesonian Documentary and Its Legitimations*. London: BFI Publishing, Winston, Brian (2000) Lies, Damn Lies and Documentaries. London: BFI Publishing and Winston, Brian (1996) Technologies of Seeing: Photography, Cinematography and Television. London: BFI Publishing [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. The Mobile Innovation Network Australasia [MINA] aims to explore the possibilities of interaction between people, content and the creative industries. The annual *International Mobile Innovation Screening* and the *Mobile Creativity and Mobile Innovation Symposium* have become widely recognised for the debates within and beyond the fields of media, art and design. In its fifth edition MINA is continuing to grow as a network project between the College of Creative Arts (Massey University, NZ), Co-Lab (AUT University, NZ) and now RMIT University. The 2015 MINA submissions were more than those in the last four years put together. Most submissions were received from the USA, followed by Iran and India. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)