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## LIPDUBS AS AN INSTRUMENT TO OVERCOME INVISIBILITY IN THE MASS-MEDIA

*A study of four enthusiastic cases recorded in Quebec, USA, Catalonia and the Basque Country*

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**Abstract.** This paper summarizes the principal conclusions of an investigation into *lipdub* as an instrument used by social movements in order to get more social influence. Since its creation in 2006, the phenomenon of *lipdubs* has increased considerably. This research presents an analytical model for this type of video, providing general data, figures about the number of participants, characteristics of the song used and information about the profile of the audience. The work highlights the main hypothetical features and components of a good *lipdub*. Four videos with high impact on Youtube are analyzed. This work claims that, at this time, a good *lipdub* can be a crucial tool for social movements in order to overcome the invisibility with which the mass-media often punishes any expression which challenges mainstream tendencies.

### 1. Introduction

Nice to watch, easy to spread and fun to make. That's the *lipdub*, a modern communication phenomenon which has been increasing unstopably since its birth in 2006. *Lipdub* or *lip-dub* is a type of music video that has had an impressive development on the net thanks to websites like *Youtube* or *Vimeo*. Maybe, as happens with all events that become popular on the Internet, sooner or later, their popularity may decrease, making them 'out of fashion'. But now *lipdub* is *the newest*. This tag triumphs in our society, *the newest*. Although it seems extremely simple, everything labelled as such continues creating a particular atmosphere that becomes attractive to important sectors of public opinion. Even though the phenomenon is becoming unfashionable, it is evident that its value needs to be examined. That is the reason for the following questions: What exactly is a *lipdub*? Where do they come from? What are they for? How are they made? Who makes them?

## 2. Main Objectives, Methodology, Hypothesis and Research Questions

The main objective of this research is to investigate the principal features of one good *lipdub* and determine the keys to getting a successful video on the net. Apart from that, the researcher wants to study the values which are socialised through this phenomenon and check if the quality is a *sine quanon* condition in order to get the maximum audience. Also, the work has explored the profile of the typical audience of this kind of music video.

The methodology used in this work is based on an analysis chart made by the author which summarizes the principal features of each *lipdub*, all of them brought together in three main categories:

General figures: Title, link, upload date, total hits and hits per day, duration, languages used in the video, opinions (I like it / I don't like it), category, main tags, number of commentaries, socialised values.

Participants: Number (approximately), profile, authors of the video, reasons for the video.

Song: Name, author, kind of music and language used.

Taking into account this model of analysis, the research began from the following hypothesis and research questions:

### 1. Hypothesis

The success of phenomena like *lipdub* on the net is due to the growing desire for wider social sectors to create new spaces in the public sphere, using new instruments of social communication in which the subjects are common citizens and not political, social, cultural, artistic or sporting elite.

R.Q. What is the profile of the protagonists of these videos?

R.Q. When do these videos get their "peak" audience?

### 2nd Hypothesis

*Lipdubs* are part of the artistic expressions socialized by post modernity and, as result of that, they often glorify hedonism, individual freedom and the myth of eternal youth.

R.Q. What are the most shared values transmitted through this type of communicative expression?

R.Q. What kind of music is most used?

R.Q. Which category prevails?

R.Q. What are the languages most used?

### 3rd Hypothesis.

More and more different social groups use new instruments such as *lipdub* in order to raise public awareness or social agitation. This kind of method is specifically appropriate to try and catch the attention of young people or other sectors which are traditionally reluctant to be convinced by conventional methods.

R.Q. What is the profile of the audience?

### 4th. Hypothesis.

The Internet audience rewards the quality in the production of this type of artistic expression.

R.Q. What is the image definition?

R.Q. What is the production quality (technical resources used, the work of actors, lighting, photography, etc.)?

RQ What type of complementary information does it supply (subtitles, credits at the end)?

## 2. Origin and Definition of *lipdub*

The term *lipdub*, in fact, means lip dubbing. It is a type of video that combines lip synching and audio dubbing to make a music video. It is made by filming individuals or a group of people lip synching while listening to a song or any recorded audio then dubbing over it in post editing with the original audio of the song. *Lipdubs* can be made in a single unedited shot ([shot filmmaking](#)) that often travels through different rooms and situations within a building in a travelling style using a [steadicam](#). *Lipdubs* have become popular with the advent of mass participatory video content sites like Youtube or Vimeo. While the video is being recorded, the attention goes from person to person, one by one. *Lipdub* needs the complicity of extras (non-professional actors or participants), in order to project an image of strength and cohesion. Successful videos require methodical preparation, for example thinking in advance about all possible camera movements. The people involved in the video recording sing in playback or [lip sync](#). They hear the song performed on a portable audio player. The quality of the audio they are hearing does not matter, because the original song will be inserted later in the final edition of the video. The fashion of the phenomenon is, undoubtedly, a consequence of the development of the net. All kinds of groups, associations, universities and companies have used this instrument to spread their ideas or concerns throughout the world. Teamwork is essential in this kind of music video, and an atmosphere of complicity and entertainment among participants is crucial. Teamwork, creativity and a participatory environment are the necessary tools.

References to current actors or criticisms of popular people are very common in *lipdubs*. The Spice Girls [Wannabe's](#) (1996) video clip is considered a pioneer in *lipdub* (in fact, today it would not be considered as *lipdub*). In truth, the term *lipdub* was born on 14th December 2006. The author of the term, Jakob Lodwick (founder of Vimeo, the video social network) created the *lip dubbing* expression through the edition of this video: [Lip Dubbing: Endless Dream](#). He explained its occurrence as the following:

*I walked around with a song playing in my headphones, and recorded myself singing. When I got home I opened it in iMovie and added an MP3 of the actual song, and synchronized it with my video. Is there a name for this? If not, I suggest "lip dubbing".*

## 3. Viral Culture

As post-modern French philosopher Lipovetsky Guillen said (Lipovetsky, Hernandez, & Lopez, 2002; Lipovetsky, Vinyoli, & Pendanx, 1995), mass consumption has revealed an entirely new way where new forms of socialization and individualization appear in all their fullness and this formula breaks the prevailing pattern which was the

model in the XVII and XVIII Centuries. We live in a *flexible* society, where the needs of stimulation, sex, the human factor, spontaneity, humour, sympathy are essential. Hedonism is everywhere. Personal liberation, relaxation, freedom of expression, honesty ... will become the new gods. Society wants to live *here and now*. The logic of individualism dominates everything, and the right to personal development has been made sacred by human beings. Narcissistic values are the mirror in which our society tries to find its authentic model. We have gone from personal individualism to a total individualistic pattern.

Nowadays, communication has become a god, often without paying attention to the content. Express something by the simple fact of doing so. As Lipovetsky says, "we live in an empty age" (Lipovetsky et al., 2002). The flow of messages is constant but communication speed makes sustainable social conscience difficult. Nothing is permanent, everything is ephemeral. Fascination with new technologies, fashion seduction... the new attraction fascinates all sectors of society and classes. Hedonism has become the backbone of modern culture.

In that context, short, fun audio-visual messages have a good chance of being successful, because citizens are continuously looking for "something different". That is more evident nowadays when the technological paradigm is king. Websites like Youtube or Vimeo are the perfect speakers for new phenomena such as this. *Lipdubs* use viral marketing and viral culture's techniques (Del Pino, 2008). *Lipdubs* manage social networks in order to sell products or spread services, ideas and messages. Their echo is expanded like a virus. The Internet hugely amplifies the extension of their influence. If the video is good, it could get a great audience in a short time. A large number of videos often get enormous audiences thanks to "word of mouth" communication. Even this way -in certain contexts- could be more effective than the mass-media. But is all this really something new? Or are we reinventing the wheel?

In a strict sense, it is not possible to say that this phenomenon is something new. In fact, this occurrence has a connection with important artistic trends, like performance art, which began developing in the decade of the 60s, in the USA and in Europe (especially in France). On the other hand, experts coincide in saying that the real pioneers of *performance art* were really troubadours and poets of the Middle Ages (although that term was not used then). Later, in the 60's and 70's, an important group of artists like Andy Warhol, Yves Klein and others such as Joan Jonas, used this label -*performance art*- to denote this expression. During these decades of the 20th century, political left wing and artistic movements used a wide range of these techniques in their urban actions or in their concerts, in order to express their emotions and statements. They were the voice of the artistic currents of the vanguard. In those *performances*, improvisation, creativity and collective participation were fundamental.

The mechanisms used in viral marketing and *flashmob* influence the expansion of *lipdubs*. These techniques have been used since ancient times in the world of advertising. Mattelart said that "these strategies are old stories" (Mattelart, 2000). This is very clear and evident in the case of viral marketing. In short, they are old techniques applied to new media (Del Pino, 2008). The viral effect adds novelty and grandeur to the phenomenon. Alfonso Mendiz says more (Mendiz Noguero, 2007, p. 57): *Novelty is not a consequence of media formats; it's a result of the use of them*. Anyway, according to the majority of authors, it is evident that to transform the essence of a message its

forms need to be revolutionized (in the words of Del Pinop, *revolucionar en las formas para evolucionar en los fondos*)

Viral marketing creates viral culture. Technique is very useful and valid in several contexts, not only in the business world, but also among social movements. Thanks to the Internet, the cost to individual broadcasters is very low and allows communication person to person (one to one). Furthermore, it is necessary to add the “sneezer effect”. This term is used by Godin to illustrate the contagion effect provoked by someone when he or she sneezes (Godin, 2001, 25-31). People have the tendency to assimilate new ideas quickly. It is not only that: people fascinated by this media behave more actively in the expansion of new ideas. They participate in the communication process as volunteers, both actively and spontaneously. *Sneezer* is a key element; it is essential for viral culture. In Godin’s opinion, these people are the heart of the idea-virus because the complicity and identification with new ideas is the key to the seduction process and to the articulation of them. There are different kinds of *sneezer* (Del Pino, 2008: 68): experts, sellers, collectors, obsessive fans and amateurs. All of them are necessary for viral dissemination of ideas. Godin distinguishes only two categories of sneezer: *promiscuous* and *powerful*. The first are always open to new ideas, the dissemination of virus. In fact, they are not opinion makers; their opinion is not always taken into account, but they are very present on social networks. Sometimes they can work in exchange for money. In fact, multinational companies such as Amazon, for example, have hired promiscuous sneezers to expand its ideas through the net. *Powerful sneezers*, however, are pure opinion makers. They are very creative people but do not work in exchange for money. As a result, their credibility and objectivity are very highly regarded in important circles, and obviously, their opinion has a greater impact on society.

#### 4. Features and Components

The following reflection is attributed to Federico Fellini: *A good video is like a good wine. It lasts just a moment, leaves a taste of glory in your mouth and creates and recreates the same experience with each new taster.* The quotation varies depending on its user. Some authors put *film* in place of *video*. Anyway, it is, without a doubt, an interesting thought.

It is now time to introduce another point about the necessary features and components of a good *lipdub*. Summarizing the principal contributions made by experts (Bosch Dols, 2011, Johnson 2011, Del Pino, 2007) we could say that there are seven essential features necessary for making a successful *lipdub*. These characteristics need another seven key components in order to achieve the main goal: social influence. Features and components are not so directly related as the table below could suggest. However, it is advisable, when editing a *lipdub*, to conveniently mix these components, always thinking about the following features:

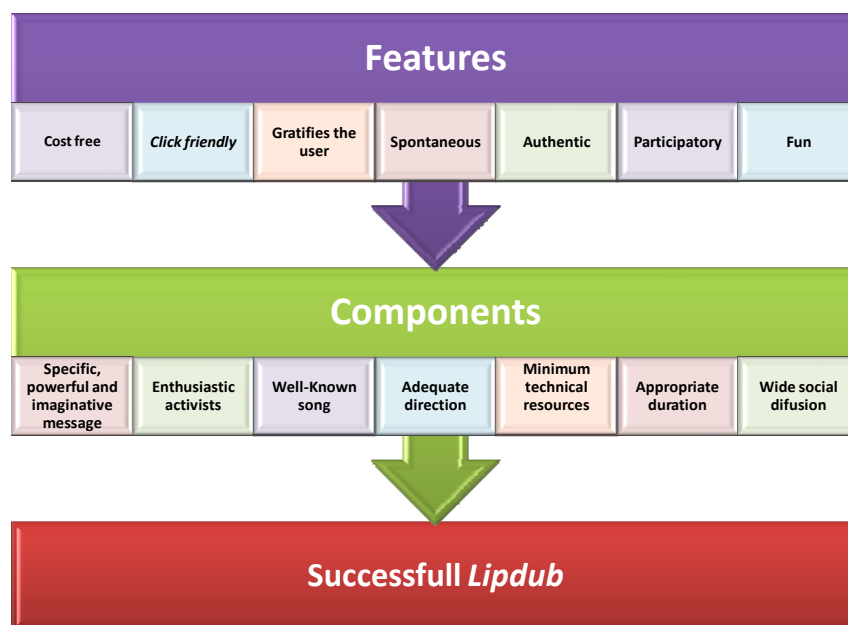


Figure 1. Features and components of successful lipdub

It is important to state clearly at the outset: Making a good *lipdub* means hard work, involves a lot of people with minimum technical knowledge and, above all, engages people who are very clear about the message to be sent. Let us now analyze the principal features of a good *lipdub*: free cost, click friendly, gratifies the user, spontaneous, authentic, participatory and fun.

**Cost free.** The message transmitted by *lipdub* must be free of charge. Otherwise, the receiver would reject it. The opposite is impossible to understand today in the era of the Internet. This culture is widespread around the world and it would be ridiculous to try to oppose it. Nowadays, the most usual and normal thing is to create free e-mail accounts, using free software and enjoying other free services on the Internet; access to the net is even free in more and more public spaces. So it would be totally crazy to think that somebody would be prepared to pay to download a *lipdub*.

**Click friendly.** Complex systems are destined to failure. Today, being on the net means being fast and easy. Time is crucial. Websites, audio files, videos, posts, must be easy to download. It is the same with *lipdubs*. Easy download ensures rapid extension of the message. It would be totally unthinkable to force somebody to fill in a form or a survey in order to view a video. *Click friendly* means few mouse clicks to achieve fast and fun results.

**Gratifies the user.** Crisis, negative messages and bad news are all too present today in the media, so the user of the net really appreciates pleasant sensations, good moments and relaxed atmospheres. Citizens rarely hear / read / see this kind of message in the mass media. Therefore they are necessary messages which draw a smile or generate

complicity. Users of the Internet also value debate issues, reflections to share in groups; easy messages to carry around and easy messages to transmit fast. New technology users do not accept passive attitudes.

Spontaneous. At least that is the image which a good *lipdub* should transmit. It is like, suddenly, someone had a brilliant idea and he or she has been able to put it on a video; or as if someone took a video camera and began recording images spontaneously; or if someone convinced a group of friends to sing a well known song in *playback*. This is not true. In spite of the image of freshness suggesting the contrary, there is normally a lot of hard, quality work behind a good *lipdub*. An example of spontaneity was the first *lipdub* done by Jakob Lodwick, a self-recorded *playback* of the song *Flagpole sitta*.

Authentic. People who are involved in the video, who are performing, who are making the video have to spread an image of truthfulness, because the sensation of authenticity is essential for the success of the message. For that, it is decisive that participants are very clear about what exactly is the main purpose of what they are doing, what is the key of their "performed madness". In short, they need to believe in the project. Otherwise, too much time and a lot of energy and resources will be wasted. And today, nobody likes wasting time.

Participatory. Today, the average number of participants in a *lipdub* is around 200 people. This is a lot of people. A project like this requires a large number of accomplices. But, although quantity is important, more important are the people's mood and attitude. While the project is being carried out the harmony and good feeling among participants are essential.

Fun. People who are taking part in the *lipdub* have to enjoy the situation. This atmosphere has to be reflected in a natural way, without over-acting. If, during the recording, participants feel good, if they are really having fun, it is much easier to achieve the main objective. Then, the circle is completed.

These characteristics are not sufficient to create an attractive and successful *lipdub*. Based on these features, it is necessary to consider the following components in order to achieve the perfect video. These are the following: Specific, powerful and imaginative message, enthusiastic activists, well-known song, adequate direction, a minimum of technical resources, appropriate duration and wide social diffusion.

Specific, powerful and imaginative message. Before making the *lipdub*, it is essential to know what it is being made for, what are the objectives and values being spread, who is the potential target group and how far the promoters want to go with this initiative. The message should be clear, not complex, without needing additional interpretation. As mentioned above, current society requires everything "here and now". At the same time, the message should be powerful and clear. If it is vague, indirect or difficult to interpret, the possibilities of achieving success are ridiculous. Imagination, creativity, humour, intrigue, irony and complicity are also welcome. In addition, if the message is emotive and touches the heart, all the better to achieve the aim much more easily. The rules used in advertising are also useful here. The leaders of the project could have a brilliant idea, but if they do not do the work with the correct format, the result could be a complete disaster. It is essential to respect the features and the idiosyncrasy of the promoter group.

Enthusiastic activists. This type of video is not improvised. Although when people view the video a sensation improvisation is transmitted, the reality is quite different. It

is necessary to have the complicity of an enthusiastic activist group, a team ready to work hard; people able to share ideas, human beings who believe in concrete projects, in teamwork. Making a good *lipdub* means a lot of meetings and many contacts. Voluntary work is normally the rule as there is no money for activists. They are citizens working in favour of an idea or in defence of a specific project. For that reason, it is very important that the pioneers are actually a *sneezzer* team, a group of entrepreneurs, and enthusiastic people capable of overcoming difficulties and beating possible setbacks.

Well-known song. The song selection is determinant. The song is the driver of the video, the axis around which everything pivots. It is a crucial piece. The song will mark the profile of the target group and will define the seduction strategy of the audience. If the selected song is well known, the possibilities of seducing a massive audience will be greater. The songs used in *lipdubs* are usually very popular. The objective is to invite the viewer to take part in the performance, to feel the same sensations that the participants are experiencing in the video. The most used styles are pop and rock, but they are not the only ones. The minimum characteristics of a successful song should be the following: well-known, great rhythm, appropriate melody and a chorus which is easy to remember. With these components, success will be easier to obtain.

Adequate direction. There are important differences among *lipdubs*. Nowadays there are companies dedicated to producing *lipdubs* professionally. In spite of the majority of the work being voluntary, usually the technical resources are insufficient. Every *lipdub* needs a director with a minimum experience in the audiovisual world. At least, the director should have some knowledge of art, image, sound, edition and photography. The team manager has many tasks to guide and coordinate related with pre-production, production and post-production of the film. The director cannot manage everything. Each task needs one or more people responsible for it. The director has to reach a consensus on a timeline with the rest of the work team. This is very helpful and necessary.

Minimum technical resources. A minimum of technical resources is essential to make a *lipdub*. For example a steadicam, a portable music system and video-editing programme. The last two can be very cheap or free. The first one, however, is more expensive. Steadicam is a brand of camera-stabilizing-mount for motion picture cameras that mechanically isolates it from the operator's movement, allowing for a smooth shot even when moving quickly over an uneven surface. During the recording of the video, the direction team has to carry with them the portable music system, close to the *steadicam*. While the song plays, participants walk through the designated itinerary and practice lip sync as best they can, following the lyrics of the song. In theory, *lipdubs* have to be done in a single unedited shot (shot filmmaking), but this requirement is often not fulfilled. It is advisable to record the video at least twice. In this way, any problems in the performance can be corrected later. After recording, a video editing process is required.

Appropriate duration. As Fellini said, a good video lasts just a moment, but it has to be a 'taste of glory' moment. How can we measure that moment? The most successful *lipdubs* on the net last between three and ten minutes. There are exceptions, of course; videos that last more than 10 minutes, but they are special cases. It is much more difficult for those videos to maintain the attention of the receivers. It is very easy to escape from them.



Wide social diffusion. The work does not finish with the editing of the *lipdub*, or with the uploading of it to Youtube or Vimeo. After that, the communication plan to make the video visible on the Internet begins. All the techniques related with the promotion of the product, connected with the tools of web 2.0 and with e-marketing are essential. That supposes a variety of tasks; for example the immediate uploading of the video to the organizer's website, a strategy designed to place the *lipdub* in a good position thanks to the correct use of the net's browsers, the use of social networks to improve the relevance of the video until it achieves the category of favourite *lipdub*. On the other hand, there are other interesting techniques available: the sending of a press release about the work to the media interested in it because the issue is close to them, or the massive distribution via e-mail of a short message announcing the uploading of the video to potentially interested organizations and/or individuals.

## 5. Analysed *lipdubs*

Having outlined the features and components of a good *lipdub*, we can now examine four examples that, for different reasons, obtained significant notoriety on the Internet. Mainly, the criteria used for this selection were three: the impact on the net (visits on Youtube), number of participants in the video and a nationwide viewpoint (the most successful *lipdub* in the Basque Country until 2012,). This research has only taken into account videos categorized as *lipdub*. That means that other kind of expressions, like *flashmobs*, or music-videos haven't been examined here because they were outside our main objectives, and because that research would suppose the implementation of a different methodology.

The research provides two different data in terms of number of visits: total visits and visits per day. The study was carried out on 5th January 2012. In accordance with the criteria mentioned above, the four *lipdubs* analyzed were as follows:

Table 1. Analysed *lipdubs*

<i>Lipdub</i>	Origin	Uploaded on	Total visits (05/01/12)	Visits per day	Participants	Duration
<a href="#">I Gotta Feeling (UQAM)</a>	Quebec	10/09/2009	9,757,435	11,520	172	04:55
<a href="#">The Grand Rapids Lipdub- Independència</a>	USA	26/05/2011	4,467,630	19,944	5000	09:49
<a href="#">Lipdub- Independència</a>	Catalonia	27/10/2010	1,613,387	3,709	5,771	06:36
<a href="#">Lipdub Kukutza</a>	Basque Country	02/07/2011	199,130	1,065	Hundreds	10:15

### 5.1. I GOTTA FEELING (UQAM)

This work systematizes the analysis through the use of a chart for all cases. Some videos showed more data than others due to the editors putting their statistics on-line. Thanks to that, it was possible to know, for example, the profile of receivers and which were the most popular areas where the video was watched. The proposed chart of

analysis shows different data gathered in four sections: general data, participants, features of the song and other interesting information. The first analyzed *lipdub* is I gotta Feeling (UQAM). It was the most visited *lipdub* on Youtube on 5th January 2012.

Table 2. I Gotta Feeling

<b>I Gotta Feeling (UQAM)</b>	
<b>General data</b>	
<b>Address</b>	<a href="http://www.Youtube.com/watch?v=-zcOFN_VBVo">http://www.Youtube.com/watch?v=-zcOFN_VBVo</a>
<b>Uploaded on</b>	10/09/2009
<b>Total visits (05/01/2012)</b>	9,757,435
<b>Visits per day</b>	11,520
<b>Duration</b>	04:55
<b>Language(s) used by the author of the video.</b>	French and English
<b>Received assessments</b>	Likes 41,382 (97.53%). Dislikes 1045 (2.46%)
<b>Category</b>	Entertainment
<b>Tags</b>	lip dub UQAM, initiations, Black eyed peas, I gotta feeling, Quebec
<b>Number of comments</b>	19,495
<b>Transmitted values</b>	<i>Enjoy the night, enjoy life</i>
<b>Participants</b>	
<b>Number of participants</b>	172
<b>Profile of participants</b>	Young students, girls and boys, around 20 years of age.
<b>Author of the video</b>	Students of Communication at UQAM Université du Québec à Montréal
<b>Reasons for the video</b>	“Initiation week” (New Students of Communication)
<b>Song</b>	
<b>Name</b>	<i>I gotta feeling.</i>
<b>Author / group</b>	The Black Eyed Peas
<b>Type of music</b>	Pop
<b>Language used in the song</b>	English, except a little bit in French at the end

The video was made on 10th September, 2009. 172 new young students of the Faculty of Communication at UQAM (Université du Québec a Montreal) took part in the shoot. The reason was to show “Initiation week”. The filmmakers, Luc-Olivier Cloutier and Marie- Eve Hébert, needed two hours and fifteen minutes to make the video recording. It is unknown how much time was necessary for the preparation of the video. At the beginning of 2012, the video had registered almost ten million visits only on Youtube. The key reasons for that could be the following: the frenetic rhythm of a well-known song, the implication of the participants, and especially the young, informal and festive atmosphere which surrounds the whole event. The resources used are not especially relevant. The lip sync of the participants is not particularly good, but what is very evident is the desire of all of them to enjoy the party. In other University *lipdubs*, the presence of teachers was discreet. Here if it does exist it is not noticeable. Most of the protagonists are young girls. It is evident that during the recording of video all the participants had a great time.

The chosen song makes everything easier. [The Black Eyed Peas](#) is a very famous US group that plays American hip-hop, rap, R & B, pop and electronic music. They formed in Los Angeles in 1995 and have won six Grammy awards. In two years, the official music video of the song [I Gotta Feeling](#) had 107 million visits on Youtube (January 2012). When the students of Quebec uploaded their work the official video was not on Youtube. It was uploaded on 22nd December 2009. Therefore, it can be said that the students of UQAM were pioneers. The official video is not a *lipdub*; it is a music video, made with good resources.

Turning to the *lipdub*, the video of the students of UQAM had 19,495 comments on 5th January 2012. They were written in English and French. The majority were in favour, but not all. The language often marked the profile of the comments. In spite of the original song being in English, at the end the participants repeated the song's chorus (*that tonight's gonna be a good night*), but in French (*que cette soir sera une bonne soirée*). It seems like some of the Anglo-Saxon population of Canada disliked this detail. In fact this was the origin of some xenophobic and/or sexist comments (in English and in French), such as the following: *French Canadian? Even worse; Ugh, French Canadians; Les Québécois, vous êtes incroyables!! Les Francophones d'Afrique saluent ceux d'Amérique!; There are some hot women at this University. Too bad they're French*. These comments reveal that the identity of Quebec is difficult to accept for some Anglo-Saxon people. Other comments criticise the defence of alcohol consumption that the video players seem to make. This *lipdub* had an important echo both on social networks and in the Canadian media (Anglophone and Francophone). Even a year later the video continued generating reports in the media. The stars of The Black Eyes Peas also praised the work done by the students of UQAM.

## 5.2. THE GRAND RAPIDS

This *Lipdub* is a landmark in the history of this kind of video. At the beginning of 2012, it held the record for number of visits per day (nearly 20,000). Both the resources used and the participation were really extraordinary. It was made on 22nd May 2011 and four days later was uploaded on Youtube. In spite of holding the "New World Record" due to, according to their data, more than 5,000 people taking part in the video recording, in fact this is not totally exact. The World Records Academy recognizes this title as belonging to the Catalanian video *Lipdub Independència* in which 5,771 people took part. However, all the details of The Gran Rapids video are very impressive and well done. Table 3 shows the principal data.

[Grand Rapids](#) is a city in the U.S. state of Michigan. It has a population of around 200,000. Kent County is the administrative centre. *Newsweek* weekly magazine published on its website a report titled *Grand Rapids dying city*. The report illustrated the theoretical decline of the city based on data extracted from the census. The work made the citizens' blood boil. It provoked a lot of negative comments and criticism on social networks and mobilized social actors against it. The *lipdub* was the result of this anger. Aware of the sensation created by the report, *Newsweek* had to give explanations. They said that, in fact, it was not a work done by the magazine's journalists, but by professionals of the website *mainstreet.com*. However, *Newsweek* accepted the publication of the report based on the agreement that they had with the mentioned

website. In any case, they accepted that the published work did not really reflect the atmosphere of the city. They even applauded the initiative and declared they were in love with the *lipdub*.

Table 3. The Grand Rapids

<b>The Grand Rapids</b>	
<b>General data</b>	
<b>Address</b>	<a href="http://www.Youtube.com/watch?v=ZPjjZCO67WI">http://www.Youtube.com/watch?v=ZPjjZCO67WI</a>
<b>Uploaded on</b>	26/05/2011
<b>Total visits (05/01/2012)</b>	4,467,430
<b>Visits per day</b>	19,944
<b>Duration</b>	09:49
<b>Language(s) used by the author of the video.</b>	English
<b>Received assessments</b>	Likes 36,861 98.07(%). Dislikes: 722 (1,92%)
<b>Category</b>	Entertainment
<b>Tags</b>	Lipdub, grand rapids, Michigan, rob bliss
<b>Number of comments</b>	10,718
<b>Transmitted values</b>	Grand Rapids city's pride, fun, community, energy
<b>Participants</b>	
<b>Number of participants</b>	5000 more or less
<b>Profile of participants</b>	All kinds of people.
<b>Author of the video</b>	Thousands of citizens under the direction of Rob Bliss.
<b>Reasons for the video</b>	A report in Newsweek entitled <i>Grand Rapids dying city</i>
<b>Song</b>	
<b>Name</b>	<i>American Pie</i>
<b>Author / Group</b>	Don McLean
<b>Type of music</b>	Folk-Rock
<b>Language used in the song</b>	English

The whole city was mobilized by this *lipdub*, from the mayor of the town to the fire brigade. The city centre came to a standstill for some hours. Throughout the video, different cultural and sports groups show their complicity with the initiative, making very visual demonstrations and fashionable performances. The aim of the project was to demonstrate that *Gran Rapids* was synonymous with fun and energy and not a *dying city*. Four factors were the key in this work: the implication of the participants, the art direction and production of the video, the selection of a well-known song and the support of important sponsors.

The implication of the participants. This factor was crucial. It was the necessary spark to light the fuse. People were upset with the report and wanted to express their opinion. But they considered their reaction carefully. They did not want to organize a reactive answer; they preferred a pro-active reaction, charged with positive energy. Today our society is overcome with negative energy, therefore the receivers are grateful

for messages with other connotations. Thanks to this *lipdub*, now we know that in this US state, apart from the lakes of Detroit and Michigan, there is a city called *Grand Rapids*, a creative and active town capable of reaction against a misinformed report. Without a doubt, this initiative helped to put this city on the map.

Art direction and production. The director, producer and editor of this video were Rob Bliss, Scott Erickson and SEF video company respectively. Their experience and leadership was essential for the success of the project. They created a professional, high quality product. This impetus was determinant in explaining the echo that the *lipdub* immediately achieved, as much in social media as in other areas of the Internet. The credits which appear at the end of the video illustrate the special awareness and dedication invested in the idea.

The selected song, [American Pie](#) was listed as the No. 5 song on the RIAA (Recording Industry Association of America) project *Songs of the Century*. *American Pie* is Don McLean's magnum opus and his signature song. He wrote it in 1971 and it tells the story of *The Day the Music Died* (on 3rd February 1959, as a result of a plane crash, the rock stars Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, and The Big Bopper -Jiles Perry Richardson, Jr- died). The parallelism between the hypothetical *dying city* and the theoretical *the Day the Music Died* was sufficient to ignite the spark of creativity. All experts agree the song is one of the major musical contributions to U.S. cultural heritage.

Support of sponsors. The long list of sponsors that appears at the end of the video illustrates the scandal provoked by the Newsweek report. The initiative had a budget of \$40.000 (31.492 euro) money which was collected thanks to the voluntary work of a wide group of people. There were different levels among the sponsors: platinum, gold, silver and bronze. The money collected made it possible to use important material resources. An example of this were the final images taken by a helicopter.

All these factors explain the success of the *lipdub*. Another piece of information is that only 1.92% disliked the video. That is the lowest rate among all *lipdubs* analyzed in this work. Important U.S. media such as NBC, ABC television broadcasters (among others), many newspapers and radio stations covered the echo achieved by the video in the social media. In all cases, the media highlighted the work of director Rob Bliss.

### 5. 3. LIPDUB - INDEPENDÈNCIA - WORLD RECORD (OFFICIAL)

This is a *lipdub* in favour of independence for Catalonian countries. It was recorded on 24th October 2010; in the city of Vic. According to World Records Academy, this video has the title of [most people participating in a lipdub](#) due to the 5,771 people who took part in the recording. However, it is necessary to say that the Guinness Book of Records does not recognize the record yet. Apart from the controversy about official records, it is evident that it is a very populous and colourful video which had a very large and fast impact on the Internet.

The promoters of this initiative were varied. More than 30 different groups were among the promoters: separatist groups, small and medium companies, sports organizations, cultural groups and institutions like the Council of Vic, for example. The video's main objective was to spread around the world the idea that Catalan countries have the right to self-determination and, therefore, they aspire to being an independent

state. This statement was based on the peculiarities that characterize these countries like their common idiosyncrasy, language, and own culture. The recording in the narrow streets of the medieval part of Vic was complex. The organization was vital and the volunteers needed to overcome the technical difficulties. Nevertheless, the organizers were not happy with the first recording and made a second one. The director and editor were Daniel Feixas and Santi Hausmann respectively. The screenwriter and stage manager was Giordina Rieradevall i Tarres. Here is the chart with the principal data:

Table4. Lipdub-Independència

<a href="http://www.Youtube.com/watch?v=muTMLuGWrp8&amp;feature=feedlik">Lipdub-Independència - world record (official)</a>	
General data	
Address	<a href="http://www.Youtube.com/watch?v=muTMLuGWrp8&amp;feature=feedlik">http://www.Youtube.com/watch?v=muTMLuGWrp8&amp;feature=feedlik</a>
Uploaded on	27/10/2010
Total visits (05/01/2012)	1,613,387
Visits per day	3,709
Duration	06:36
Language(s) used by the author of the video.	Catalan, Spanish, English, French, German, Italian, Basque, Galician and Asturian (Bable).
Received assessments	Likes: 9,324 (87.10%). Dislikes: 1,379 (12.90%)
Category	News and politics
Tags	Independència, lipdub per la independència, world record, catalunya, vic
Number of comments	65,129
Transmitted values	Need of Independence for Catalanian countries, national identity, collectivism, defence of own language, tradition, energy.
Participants	
Number of participants	5,771
Profile of participants	Wide age range
Author of the video	Different collectives in favour of Catalanian independence.
Reasons for the video	Right to self-determination for Catalanian countries.
Song	
Name	<i>La flama (The flame)</i>
Author / Group	Obrint pas
Type of music	Rock
Language used in the song	Catalan

The keys of this successful *lipdub* would be the following: enthusiasm of all participants, the significant choreography promoting the Catalanian identity, the frenetic rhythm imposed by the well-known song, the special effort made to get the maximum expansion of the video using multilingual subtitles and the quality of the product.

**Enthusiasm.** All the 5,771 participants who took part in the recording worked with great enthusiasm, from the first minute until the end. That is very palpable in the video.

**Identity.** During the video several significant elements of the Catalan culture like *gegants, gegantons, castellers, sardanistes, capgrossos, bastoners...* appear among separatist symbols. The festive atmosphere contributes to the natural manifestation of emotions and feelings. As several comments say, in some moments, the video could make one's hair stand on end. At the end, all the participants join together in the main square of Vic, to sing *Els Segadors*, the national hymn of Catalonia while they demand Independence.

**The song.** The symbiosis between the objective of the *lipdub* and the message of the song is perfect. The rhythm imposed by the song *The flame* adds vitality to the video and makes the viewing easier. Another important factor is the appropriate duration: 06:36. *Obrint Pas (Breaking Through)* is the author of the song. They are a group from Valencia who play a mixture of rock, ska and reggae with *dulzaina* (a traditional instrument) rhythms, always in the Catalan language. The group helped with the production of the *lipdub*.

**Multilingual diffusion.** Since the beginning the authors of the video were clear that they wanted the maximum diffusion of their product and for that a multilingual perspective was essential. They used subtitles in eight languages: Basque, French, Galician, Spanish, English, Italian, Catalan and Korean and showed information about the video in nine (all the mentioned plus the Asturian language).

**Professional quality.** The video shows tidy and careful production. The participants demonstrate quite good lip sync. The image definition is the highest: 1080p HD.

The statistics of the video are on line in this case. That is an important novelty. Thanks to that, Internet users can discover, for example, that the progress of visits has been quite continuous and homogeneous in this case and how the profile of the audience is characterized by a majority of men aged between 35-64 years old. It seems like the political connotations of the video, apparently, have seduced more men than women, or simply that men use the Internet more than women.

Another data is the considerable number of comments (65,139). Among them, opposing points of view are very evident. There are very effusive comments in favour and against and a significant number of people do not like the video (12.90%). It is evident that the Catalan nationalist profile of the *lipdub* mobilized the Spanish nationalist view in its most enthusiastic perspective.

This video is a clear statement in favour of a concrete political and cultural idea. That does not fit with other *lipdubs* available on the Internet where the mainstreams are hedonism and post-modernism.

#### 5.4. LIPDUB KUKUTZA

The promoters of this *lipdub* show the different activities that they did in the Youth Centre called Kukutza III, located in the district of Errekalde, in Bilbao. In 1998, youth groups from Errekalde occupied an abandoned old factory. This kind of occupation is quite normal in a lot of districts of the Basque Country. The building had four floors and 6,000 square metres. After the occupation, local youth groups managed the building

through a self-management system until 21st September 2011. On that day, amid significant controversy, Kukutza III was demolished following a judicial order and using an important display of police force. During the thirteen years that Kukutza III was working, the place came to be an active reference of underground culture. Apart from traditional music concerts, all kinds of workshops and courses were organized there. The objectives were very diverse: juggling, puppet shows, traditional Basque dances, *sebillanas* dances, body expression, children, youth and adult activities, climbing wall, library, mechanics courses, medicine, plants, electricity workshops, second hand shop, vegetarian restaurant (where after finishing, all users had to wash their own dishes), theatre, etc. Thousands and thousands of people visited and used Kukutza III; people of all ages: children, young and elderly. International demonstrations and meetings were organized there; for example, about circus or about juggling. Moreover, Kukutza III was a stage for poetry recitals, theatre performances and other cultural events. The local managers were committed to various ideas, one of those being particularly memorable: all possible economic benefits derived from performances done in that place were to be used to improve or maintain the building.

The initiative of the *lipdub* arose from the bosom of the Kukutza III. As a consequence of the claim presented in Court by the owner of the abandoned factory, the threat of evacuation and subsequent demolition increased considerably. In that context, the most active groups of Kukutza III decided to make a *lipdub*. On the one hand, they wanted to communicate all the different activities held in the building and, on the other hand, they used the video to mobilize people against the probable imminent demolition. Through this *lipdub*, they specifically wanted to expand a social network in order to promote the international demonstration announced on July 16th 2011, in Bilbao. The video was uploaded on July 2nd 2011, and was immediately successful on the net, becoming the most viewed *lipdub* in the Basque Country at the beginning of 2012 with nearly 200,000 visits.

Table 5. Lipdub Kukutza

<b>Lipdub Kukutza</b>	
<b>General data</b>	
<b>Address</b>	<a href="http://www.Youtube.com/watch?v=e2VieT5ksyo">http://www.Youtube.com/watch?v=e2VieT5ksyo</a>
<b>Uploaded on</b>	02/07/2011
<b>Total visits (05/01/2012)</b>	199,130
<b>Visits per day</b>	3,709
<b>Duration</b>	10:15
<b>Language(s) used by the author of the video.</b>	Basque, Spanish, French, English, Italian and Catalan.
<b>Received assessments</b>	Likes: 1,308 (96.31%); Dislikes 50 (3.68%)
<b>Category</b>	News and politics
<b>Tags</b>	Kukutza, gaztetxea, desalojo arriskua, errekalde, bilbo, euskal herria
<b>Number of comments</b>	615
<b>Transmitted values</b>	collectivism, festive atmosphere, multi-use space, self-management, young impetus and enjoyment.
<b>Participants</b>	
<b>Number of participants</b>	Several hundred



<b>Profile of participants</b>	Young people, especially girls, but children and elderly people too participated in the recording.
<b>Author of the video</b>	Kukutza III Youth Centre.
<b>Reasons for the video</b>	The <i>Kukutza III</i> youth centre was in danger of being demolished. In the face of that possibility they promoted an international demonstration on July 16th 2011.
<b>Song</b>	
<b>Name</b>	Kukutza III
<b>Author / Group</b>	Group <i>Zea Mays</i> with the collaboration of the following: Naroa (group <i>Amaiur</i> ) and groups <i>Fenómenos de la Naturaleza</i> , <i>Berri Txarrak</i> and <i>Ken Zazpi</i> .
<b>Type of music</b>	Rock and rap
<b>Language used in the song</b>	Basque

According to statistics on line, during the first two and a half months, the number of visits was good, but the events which happened around 21<sup>st</sup> September 2011 were determinant in the explosion of the audience. The traumatic evacuation of the building and its demolition and the subsequent [serious incidents](#) (dozens of people were wounded and arrested by the Autonomous Police) were televised and they had an important echo in the public opinion. As a result of that, in the next two months, the number of visits nearly quadrupled.

The controversy provoked by the police intervention attached an added value to the *lipdub*. In fact, after the demolition, the message of the video was clear: “*The power destroyed this freedom space*”.

The video has three very different parts. The first one lasts one and half minutes and runs without music. The only accompaniment is the environmental noise. In this part, some people appear going to the youth centre using different forms of transport: cycles, skateboards, wheelchairs, etc. Before entering the building, some circus characters on stilts and acrobats turn their attention to the camera. The second part begins after 01:33, just at the moment when the music starts playing and the camera enters the building. The song is *Kukutza III* like the place name and the author is the group called *Zea Mays*, born in the same district as the youth centre, in Errekalde (Bilbao). The song was / is very famous especially among Basque young people and it was made to commemorate the tenth anniversary of that space. The principal vocalist is Aiora Renteria, the singer of *Zea Mays* but she is not the only protagonist. Together with her, other vocalists and groups put their voices to the song: Naroa (group *Amaiur*), *Fenómenos de la Naturaleza* rap group and the well known Basque rock groups *Berri Txarrak* and *Ken Zazpi*. The third part begins at 7 minutes and 21 seconds into the video. The camera arrives at the top of the building, on the flat roof. From there, the view that appears below is a square where a hundred young people move their bodies following the contagious and lively rhythm of *batukada* percussion. At the same time, the video viewer is warned of the danger of possible imminent demolition and is encouraged to take part in the international demonstration announced for July 16<sup>th</sup>. Thus concludes the video after 10:34.

The necessary keys to understanding the success of this video are the following: the events surrounding the demolition on 21<sup>st</sup> September, the selected song and the enthusiasm demonstrated by the participants.

Events post-demolition. These incidents received important attention both in the Basque and Spanish media. Thousands of people were mobilized in Errekalde and the whole city against the announced demolition. The police intervention was seriously criticized from different sectors. Dozens of young people were arrested and injured. Due to this attention, a local issue was transformed into a global event. The severity of the police intervention provoked solidarity demonstrations in the whole of the Basque Country. The visits on Youtube rocketed.

The selected song. If, before the building demolition the selected song was appropriate, it was much more after that. The song's chorus does its particular bit *taupada bakoitzaz koloreztatuz zuri beltza* (with each heart beat colouring black / white); *taupada bakoitzaz irribarre bat* (one smile for each heartbeat). The underlying philosophy which appears throughout the song facilitates the propagation of the message: *-deiak bultzatuz erabakiak, ideiak batuz eraikia, ideiak nahastuz zabaldua* (take decisions promoting calls, build projects joining ideas, spread feelings mixing ideas).

Enthusiasm. From the first moment, the atmosphere of complicity among all the participants is very evident. They believed in what they were doing and this harmony increases throughout the video. The proximity of the demolition emphasized much more the necessity to appear enthusiastic and effusive.

Nevertheless, the video has some aspects which can be criticized; for example, the absence of subtitles and credits at the end, and the long duration. (Another political *lipdub* such as the video made in Vic, for example, had subtitles in eight different languages. That was one of the most important keys to its success: its multilingualism and its *making of* video.) Apart from that, the long duration of the video makes its complete viewing difficult. Before concluding, it is also worth mentioning that the lip sync of some of the participants is not very good.

## 6. Main conclusions

1. Six years after its birth, *lipdub* continues to be a phenomenon in permanent growth on the Internet. As has happened with other similar expressions included in the context of CMC (Computer Mediated Communication), its success is due to a desire and need of anonymous citizens to be present in the public sphere. In a strict sense, it is not possible to say that this phenomenon is something new, but a re-edition of old trends popularized in the 60s and 70s like, for example, art-performance. In this case novelty is not a consequence of media formats; but a result of the use of them. The viral culture protects this phenomenon and, thanks to the *sneezer effect*, incredibly amplifies its echo in society.

2. The four analyzed *lipdubs* show a *flexible* society; a pattern where the needs of the human factor, spontaneity, humour, friendliness, free expression of feelings, a mixture between a festive and clamorous atmosphere and the demand for social recognition are essential. Hedonism is everywhere. The logic of individualism

dominates everything. The right to personal development has been made sacred by human beings. Narcissistic values are the mirror in which our society tries to find its authentic model. As Guilles Lipovetsky says we have gone from personal individualism to a total individualistic pattern.

3. In spite of this dominant individualistic pattern, the analyzed *lipdubs* show the necessity of wider social sectors to create new spaces in the public sphere, using new instruments of social communication in which the subjects are common citizens and not the political, social, cultural, artistic or sporting elite. Nowadays a wide spectrum of social movements uses *lipdubs* as an efficient instrument in order to get more social influence and as a way of overcoming the invisibility with which the mass-media often punishes them, expelling them from the mainstream tendencies.

4. *Lipdubs* are a specifically appropriate tool to attract the attention of young people. They are the main protagonists in the majority of videos. Moreover, they are compulsive consumers of new technologies and traditionally reluctant to be convinced by conventional methods. In addition to that, it is necessary to take into account the attraction ignited by the spark of social agitation among young people. In fact, many *lipdubs* have their origin in a situation that their promoters consider unjust or removed from reality. That situation acts like a glint of energy capable of converting negatively connoted events or ideas in positively charged actions. This phenomenon is very evident, for example, in the last three *lipdubs*.

5. The four analyzed *lipdubs* show that the Internet audience recognizes the quality in the production of this type of artistic expression. In addition to an appropriate duration, well known song and a contagious rhythm it is very necessary to consider other factors like image definition, production quality (technical resources used, the work and the number of participants, lighting, photography, etc.) and the presence of other complementary information like multilingual subtitles, credits at the end, statistics on line, *making of* video, etc.

6. Looking to the future it is possible to predict that this phenomenon will continue at least in the next few years. If *lipdubs* are able to respond to the challenges that constantly arise from new technologies, new formats and new media, the survival of this kind of video is ensured. The *Lipdubs* of the future will be shorter, more spectacular, more massive and equipped with better technical resources. Social movements have an important ally in *lipdubs*, a necessary instrument to expand their social influence, a tool to make visible the invisible. That is becoming more important nowadays in a context where, as Ignacio Ramonet says, *the transition from the mass-media to a mass of media* is an increasingly evident reality.

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