VISUAL FRICTIONS

Selfies beyond self-representation: the (theoretical) f(r)ictions of a practice

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Abstract
Drawing on a wide corpus of ethnographic research projects, including on photography practices, young filmmakers and writers, and current research with young unemployed people, we argue that contemporary understandings of selfies either in relation to a "documenting of the self" or as a neoliberal (narcissistic) identity affirmation are inherently problematic. Instead, we argue that selfies should be understood as a wider social, cultural, and media phenomenon that understands the selfie as far more than a representational image. This, in turn, necessarily redirects us away from the object "itself," and in so doing seeks to understand selfies as a socio-technical phenomenon that momentarily and tentatively holds together a number of different elements of mediated digital communication.

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This paper is part of the Special Issue: *Visual Frictions*. More papers from this issue can be found at www.aestheticsandculture.net

The "selfie" phenomenon is trending across a number of academic disciplines and current research agendas. Even the Oxford Dictionary declared that "Selfie" was the word of the year in 2013, suggesting that it has also become a common reference and practice in popular media.[1]

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The selfie has been understood in relation to rapid "documenting" of the self[2] as a "socio-cultural revolution" about "identity affirmation"[3] a "condition" of social media,[4] a political convergence of the object and subject of photographic practice,[5,6] and as a neoliberal, even narcissistic but increasingly normative mode of "self-branding."[7] Set within this corpus of work, two issues become clear. First that selfies are widespread, contextually specific and nuanced—so that to speak of selfies as homogenous is increasingly disingenuous. Second, selfies resonate wider socio-cultural, political, and visual practices and how we approach them has political, ideological, and cultural significance.

Alongside this corpus, there are also identifiable trends in recent work on selfies, which we would like to elucidate. The first positions them within a long tradition of visual culture where the images are read as representations to be interpreted. Seen here, selfies seem to evidence "visual probes" of "depicted realities" (see, for example, Manovich's project selfiecity[8]), and they are claimed as evidence of an intentional author (a political convergence of object and subject, for example, or a "documenting of the self") or seen as an objective window into cultures and communities, values, and ideologies (a neoliberal, narcissistic identity affirmation). We find this problematic, not least because it bleeds into a discourse of individualism but also because it centres and elevates both the visual image "itself" and the methods for analysing the image, which we argue undermines—if not negates—the wider practices, discourses, and ideologies that constitute the selfie *phenomenon*. Perhaps more importantly, this approach does not represent our experience of the selfie within our fieldwork, where it is the practices and contexts of selfies that are articulated (rather than the image "itself").

A second issue with the accounts above is that they seem to exclusively frame selfies within a long-standing study of online self-representation, storytelling, and impression management.[9] This, in turn, approaches selfies as a mostly positive force practiced by a fixed (gendered, expert, and reflexive) subject who uses selfies as a calculated resource for self-representation. We have a number of issues to note here. The first relates to the way that individualistic discourses of the digital technology user are re-evoked here,[10] so that the underpinning and normative constructions of the user as the powerful force remain unproblematised.

As the long history of feminist new media theory and STS reminds us, the user engages in a socio-technical mediation in which she or he is positioned as well as positioning. The second issue, and a consequence of this, is a flattening out of the practices of the selfie "itself," whereby the selfie becomes positioned as a communication method that is itself caught up in positive technologically deterministic rhetoric. Seen here the selfie is not simply a new communication tool; the selfie is posited as a *better* communication tool—faster, more representative, more immediate (for example), and thus, the rhetoric here feeds directly into the fetish of new technology as always positively novel.[11] We would also note here that even when selfies are framed as a narcissistic practice,[12] the examples that are cited usually result in a kind of micro-celebrity status for the user that is itself (of course) caught up in a more positive discourse of individualism because of the complex overlap between narcissism and a more positive, agential form of self-branding or celebrity.[13] Our argument here is that these approaches need to be unpacked if we are to disrupt (rather than repeat) problematic assumptions and approaches to wider digital culture. They approach the selfie as a communication "tool" for an intentional and agential author and in so doing undervalue or negate the selfie as a socio-technical phenomenon, which nuances the relationship between the user and technology.

Finally, there is an increasing corpus of work that understands the selfie as a visual signifier of the self (as another form of self-representation). This understands the content of the selfie in relation to representational significance—reading *into* the visual image so that the object—despite being located as an effect of a practice—is made meaningful as a stand-alone representational signifier. Underpinning this approach to the selfie is specific history of photography, particularly in relation to the pictorial portrait, self-portraits, and art photography that is evoked in order to read aesthetically *into* the selfie and draw conclusions based on content. As Paul Frosh details,[14] this approach, although insightful, it does not go far enough in understanding the wider socio-technological practice of the selfie. Indeed, such accounts position the selfie as a continuation of the pictorial portrait, self-portraits, and art photography[15] and assume that many of the characteristics of self-portraits[16] (namely the reflexive subject producer of an image)

are also present in selfies. Against this, we have previously argued[17] that understanding the role of photography in the digital age requires us to think about photographic practices instead.[18] This means that the photographic image becomes one of several elements of the photographic process (sometimes not even the most important, for example when postprocessing changes the original image or when the image forms a context in itself like in memes). In the digital age, image making is but one element of several connective processes, inclusive of the power dynamics, design of, and normative practices of social networks. Seen here, photography through mobile phones is especially relevant because of its ubiquity, mobility, and seamless integration with social networks.[19]

Our intention in detailing these approaches to the selfie is twofold. Firstly, to note the growing corpus of research on this phenomenon—that is both rich and sustained. Secondly, to set up our main argument: that there are alternative ways to understand the selfie and that the process of doing this reveals a number of frictions. The central friction is the continued use of traditional semiotics in analysing the image of the selfie—which many of the approaches above repeat rather than problematise. For us, this elevates not only the selfie as an image, but also the object-oriented approach of much visual culture that seeks to construct and then understand practices in relation to artefacts—reading intentionality *into* them. For the selfie, such an approach elevates the image over the practice, and continues to prioritise the visual and aesthetic over (and this is our contention) the power relations in which the image is situated. At the same time, it is the multitude of selfie practices that is what marks them *as* a phenomenon, as nuanced, as complex, and it is this that we need to underscore in critical work on the selfie. Elevating the visual within visual culture through visual methods perpetuates rather than problematises the visual as powerful: and in digital culture, our contention is that perhaps the visual might actually be a smokescreen for, or one element within, other far more pervasive power relations. Offering a non-medium centric approach to the selfie, however, is not without its own frictions: the object of the selfie, the image, is not "in" this paper because in arguing that this is problematic, we found it untenable to then repeat it methodologically.

ALTERNATIVE GENEALOGIES OF/FOR THE SELFIE

Durable selfie

At a moment when the term "selfie" is increasingly becoming mobilised in ways that are constructing it as normative shorthand for photography *per se* (especially when used to describe photos taken by primates,[20] robots[21], or drones[22]), it seems important to take stock of the underlying presumptions and claims around the selfie. Our starting point, in keeping with Paul Frosh,[23] is that selfies should be understood as a wider social, cultural, and media phenomenon that positions the selfie as much more than a representational image. Approaching the selfie as a phenomenon rather than an artefact locates the practice within alternative genealogies, which we would like to elucidate here. This, in turn, necessarily redirects us away from the object "itself" and instead understands selfies as a socio-technical phenomenon that momentarily and tentatively holds together a number of different elements of mediated digital communication. The second consequence of this is to acknowledge the multifaceted nature of the selfie—which is temporary, contextually specific, changeable, situated, as well as durable and stable.

We are not negating the connections noted above between pictorial and representational forms and digital images; we are setting alongside this narrative some alternative and equally persuasive ones. Our alternative genealogies are not intended to replace one problematic correlation with another, but to add to and nuance the approaches to the selfie detailed above. Our genealogy is perhaps as synthetic and simplistic as our critique of existing literature, but it is a tool to underpin our later and more substantive argument. We propose that there is a close relationship between specific technical affordances and the stabilisation[24] of certain practices that allow the development of new technologies in a "complex continuum." This complex continuum serves as a basis for our first alternative genealogy.

Selfies as chats

Our departing point is to locate selfies not within a history of photographic practice, but one of mediated communication. Crudely: What if we think about selfies as a "visual chat"? Indeed, the

app Snapchat, one of the most important platforms for digital image exchange, seems to be exactly premised on this idea. If we consider the genealogy of chats (in any form, such as BBS, IRC, forums, Newsgroups, etc.) in relation to the selfie, we pull out dominant features—if not ideologies—of mediated communication that prompt (in a mediated and rhizomatic way) development and vice versa. What is interesting about this history is that the visual elements—that are so centrally claimed and positioned within contemporary approaches to the selfie—are repositioned here as something that is arrived at, that emerges through—but is *not* necessarily determining of, chat culture. Our simple point is that this alternative genealogy shifts some of the presumptive claims around selfies, and consequently how we are able to then frame and approach them as a phenomenon.

Chats—as a field, as a cultural object, and as a device—were one of the central elements of computer-mediated communication, and formed the basis for the further development of internet studies as an academic discipline.[25] Mediated communication was extracted as a focus of studies within the discipline of Internet studies, where communicative practices of a growing Internet culture were becoming stabilised in everyday life.[26] Indeed, these studies argued that what was significant about chats was their ability to textually communicate, in an anonymous and (a)synchronous way regardless of (or despite) geographic distance through, what was, a technological precursor to the www. Perhaps more important in thinking about an alternative genealogy of the selfie, however, is the SMS.[27] SMS integrated several practices already present in chats and emails, including emoticons. Emoticons, in turn, can be understood as a form of visual and emotional cue pertaining to the user, thus offering a context for/of the text "itself."[28] While limited in their extension (generating therefore further language economies), SMS nevertheless added a new element in mediated communication because of one of the main features of cellular phones: mobility. By extending previously mediated communicative practices to a new device, the later inclusion of internet connections in mobile phones completed a series of stabilisations in digital communication. In this way, several communicative practices, already present in internet interactions, became mobile, more synchronous and "on the spot." One extra example of the cross-pollination between internet practices and mobile phone use could be observed in how both shared many features of new linguistic codes such as "initialism" and "internet slang"[29] that also increasingly operate as visual signifiers in and of themselves.

Selfies as stabilisations

If we *now* think of where photography might be located, it is arguably in the *latest* stage of a number of stabilisations that converge image with text, hyperlinks, audio (what was praised as "multimedia"). These stabilisations also converge photography with (for example) smart phones and wider sharing and internet cultures that shifts toward the visual within chat culture, authorship, "personal media" developments, and self-representation. In other words, photography emerges as one element within a wider corpus, and even here, it is further convoluted by various practices that each renegotiate and reposition what constitutes "photography" in the first instance: cameraphones,[30] immediate and ubiquitous connections, and extensive exchange are all important elements we would note in relation to definitions and constitutions of contemporary photography.[31] In turn, these elements are further nuanced by the increasingly visual nature of mediated communication, and social networks such as Facebook and Twitter, each of which has its own convoluted genealogy inclusive of visual communication. We only have to note platforms such as Fotolog (2002) and Flickr (2004), to recognise this. Indeed, while Flickr supported a notion of "community" based on the exchange of pictures, experimentation and voyeurism, Fotolog, with its calendar-based structured, prompted a disciplining of the photographic practice into a weekly cycle as well as promoting the notion of *constant* updating as a main feature of the platforms. In this way, banality and the mundane also become intricately woven into genealogies of the selfie. Indeed, in the case of selfies, banality and constant updating are closely related to the notion of "social success" as a fundamental feature across different contemporary platforms (where social success becomes measurable through, for example, "like" buttons, favourites, followers and comments). Finally, with the advent of apps

such as Whatsapp or Snapchat, digital imagery became one of the central elements in personal online communication. Therefore, vernacular photography (widely expressed by different scholars[32]), locates the selfies into a very different genealogy that weaves into (and beyond) that of the chat.

Selfies as durable algorithm

Our experiences[33] suggest that the selfie mobilises technologies, cultural norms, and codes that are increasingly embedded in social networks, so that the practice of the selfie operates in a much wider continuum that we need to consider. Indeed, as Van House, (drawing on Suchman) suggests: "we need to turn the question of self-presentation around and ask, not just how people use SNSs, but how the design of SNSs configure members' capacities for action."[34] Our final genealogy relates to what we are calling "durable algorithms" drawing a range of STS scholars including Latour,[35] Manovich,[36] Suchman[37] and Van House[38] who have all argued that an understanding of the social is always, inherently (also) technological (and vice versa). This is, of course, particularly relevant for the selfie, and works to locate the phenomenon of the selfie as one that has also emerged through non-human developments in (for example) software, code, digital design, and digital labour. We are not suggesting that algorithms straightforwardly shape or impact social behaviour. We are in the first instance recognising that algorithms are, to draw on Lucy Suchman, "materialisations of more and less contested, normative identifications of matter."[39] Algorithms are a materialisation of power relations, negotiations, design; they are forged through human–technological relations and within dominant power structures. But they are also, to draw on Latour,[40] "durable" in so far as they are also *matter*: they are built infrastructure that also generates possibilities of interaction and mediation. They are embedded within, but also make durable, power relations. Snapchat is a good example of how durable concepts within social media—such as "immediacy," "connectivity," "sociability,"[41] which have particular affordances within social media because of their commercial and economic value—have become "stabilised" as underpinning socio-technical features of communication in a mobile App (as well as within wider social media). As José van Dijck reminds

us, "immediacy," "connectivity" and "sociability" emerge through techno-economic systems that are interested in "sharing" because of the financial benefit of the data such actions generate.[42] Or as Jenny Kennedy notes "sharing is never employed neutrally."[43] It is not (simply) that algorithms make certain relations durable (techno-economic, socio-technical, for example). Instead, as Van House argues (above) we need to recognise that the systems also configure action not in a straightforward or transparent way, but in terms of configuring the socio-technical conditions within which users are invited to participate.

To only understand the selfie only as self-representation, then, is to take an element of a moment of stabilisation (that may or may not become increasingly durable)—the visual image, for example—as singularly indicative of a wider socio-technical phenomenon in which relations and negotiations are flattened out and undermined—such as the socio-technical, the material, the context, issues of temporality, motivation, intention. It is to take the "matter" (the thing "itself") without necessarily considering materialisation, nuance, or contestation (to reiterate Suchman) that are all intrinsic to the practice. While we return to these issues below, our hope is that these alternative genealogies detail the breadth and depth of issues that are at stake here, not only in terms of what we are in danger of disappearing, but also in terms of what we actively reproduce by not critically considering.

Taken together, these genealogies locate the image as one mediated element within a range of practices that combine (visual and mediated) communication, mobility, real time, economies of language and social networks elements. In turn, these practices promote individuality, immediacy, reciprocity, sharing, exchanging, constant updating, work and effort/commitment, and banality. As Van House suggests, the structure and policies of certain platforms, along with user practices and norms, support and even encourage certain kinds of self-representation, relationships, and even subjects or selves, while discouraging or making difficult others.[44] It is not that the object—the selfie "itself"—*represents* these values and norms (by reading *into* the selfie, for example). It is that these values and norms *constitute* the related practices.

SELFIES BEYOND (SELF)-REPRESENTATION: ENGAGING WITH THE THEORY

Selfies as socio-technical

Our argument, then, is that we need to understand the phenomenon of the selfie as a performative and mediatory practice that cannot be reduced to, or solely taken from, the image "itself." Drawing also on a long history of feminist STS studies,[45] we argue that image-creation (along with distribution and its use in social media), does not only *represent* bodies, it also *generates* them.[46] In order to understand our approach, it is necessary to discuss the concept of performance that underpins claims that selfies are self-representations and that have traditionally been understood following the work of Erving Goffman. While we have limited scope to discuss this at length here, and indeed other authors have reflected on his conceptualisation of performance to think about digital photography,[47] and self-representation,[48] a brief overview is necessary. Indeed, drawing on Goffman serves two purposes: the first is to articulate some current debates that clearly resonate for the selfie, particularly around how we might frame the visual "object" of the selfie "itself" beyond what Papacharissi claims as "the self, performed" (2012:1990).[49] The second is to attempt to nuance them, by positioning the selfie as embedded in the concept of performativity rather than as *representative* of it.

For Goffman's "theatrical approach," interaction is the front-stage performance of a backstage self, where the self is a "performed character" to an imagined audience.[50] It is not a coincidence that Goffman is often cited in texts regarding online self-presentation, especially in the first era of internet studies[51] where Goffman was deployed within an increasingly problematised dichotomy of the so-called "real" and "virtual." Our reading of existing literature on selfies is that many analyses are tacitly based on this assumption of a real and absent self that is depicted, but not necessarily lived, in the artefact of the selfie "itself" (through, for example, process of performance or self-representation, staging or playing that are read through and *into* the image). What Goffman elucidates, of course, is the power of the performance "itself"—which, in the case of

the selfies, is a bound up in visual signifiers, visual discourses, technologies, and "imaginative participation."[52] But as Suchman has argued, "objects achieve recognition within a matrix of historically and culturally constituted familiar, intelligible possibilities. Technologies are both produced and destabilized in the course of these reiterations."[53] In the case of the selfie, it seems increasingly that intentionality has become a transparent and straightforward claim made through an aesthetic reading of online content, rather than inherently problematised through socio-technical practices that are, at every stage, negotiated.

In thinking about the phenomenon of the selfie, it seems to us that the dominant discourses underpinning claims around self-representation as performance, are increasingly becoming entrenched in practices located in and with technical devices and algorithms even as these technical devices and algorithms are downplayed in the overarching narrative of the selfie. Those technical devices and algorithms are similarly, like the subjects who mediate them, produced with/in and generative of, power relations, but like the subjects who use them, they also promote some mediations over others through their own socio-technological history of design and code (that operate within and beyond wider dominant power structures). What is notable from our alternative genealogies above, then, is an increasing emphasis on the visual, on immediacy, on connectivity. In other words, some elements of communication and mediation have become more powerful than others and this is revealed through alternative genealogies of the selfie.

Indeed, one constant finding, across all of our fieldwork on selfies[54] is that selfies are understood, claimed and lived by participants (most of our fieldwork has been with women), as a source of "empowerment feelings." These feelings, based on the selfies as a practice, are claimed to help them to accept their physical appearance, to increase their self-confidence or to engage in new social or sentimental relationships. In a surface level, these claims seem to directly feed into an understanding of the selfie as intentional authorship and self-representation. Certainly, it seemed at the outset of many of our studies, that selfies were being claimed in this way. Our fieldwork is always ethnographic in nature, and spending time with the participants in our studies necessarily

reveals initial claims as inherently nuanced, if not contradictory. While we do not have the scope here to represent our fieldwork in its entirely, there are two issues we want to pull out at this point from our fieldwork that substantiate our argument. The first is to locate claims of empowerment, not with a subjective or intimate relationship with the image, but with/in a wider discourse of new media and consumerism where individualism, intentionality and rational causality are default modes of expression.[55] This means that we need to do the inverse of many studies of selfies that we have critiqued in this article: rather than read into the selfie something about the author and intentionality, we need to locate the selfie within a wider practice of identity performativity[56] through recourse to a more Butlerian approach to the selfie,[57] which would position it as *embedded* in the concept of performativity rather than as *representative* of it.

The second issue to highlight is that selfie generation is self-perpetuating: it is a "stylised repetition of acts"[58] that is a "re-enactment and re-experiencing of a set of meanings already socially established" that are legitimated through their mundaneness and ritualisation.[59] Selfies are part of what "disciplines its subjects even as it produces them,"[60] or more simplistically, "people act in the way that they have learned to act, in accord with the dominant discourse."[61] What we mean by this is that the practices of taking and uploading selfies (and this the same for Snapchat in our most recent work with teenagers in Leeds, UK) also "disciplines" (to draw on Foucault's ideas about the technologies of the self[62]) both the content of the image and practice itself. This argument is inclusive of the algorithms that underpin contemporary sharing cultures—that are designed and produced within power structures, but that also work in particular ways that value particular practices (such as image sharing) because of their particular (say, economic) value. This, in turn, makes some practices online not only more "durable" (to draw on Latour[63]), but it also enmeshes the algorithms that have other "ideological" frameworks (such as an economic one rather than a sharing one) within the phenomenon of the selfie—as well as wider digital culture. Selfies are part of a wider flow of communication that is both a technics and constituted through internet protocol: selfies are *controlled* (because of the socio-technical construction) and *controlling* because of

their "technical reproducibility."[64] At the same time, and as we argued earlier, there is also a moment of stabilisation here, whereby the notion of sociality serves both the visual culture of the selfie and the technological algorithms, so that we also need to recognise that the social–technical relations are fluid as well as mutually shaping in such moments of stabilisation[65] If we only understand selfies as self-representation or the output of intentional authoring, we not only flatten out these relations, we also somewhat negate them by offering a causal trajectory between user and image.[66]

CONCLUSIONS: TOWARD AN AGENDA OF POWER IN DIGITAL VISUAL CULTURE

Our starting point for this article was that selfies are wider socio-cultural, political practices that need critically accounting for. At the same time, much literature on selfies has elucidated and underpinned the visual nature of contemporary culture that seems, at every turn, enhanced and exacerbated by digital technology and digital culture. Selfie as self-representation bleeds into traditional epistemic understanding of images as depictions of truth and reality. Selfie as self-representation also underpins notions of performance, self-branding, and the concept of the individual user that is embedded on the widespread use of social media. Combined, those two elements do reveal a number of issues and tensions around the constitution of social norms, interactions and practices, all of them within increasing power relations.

Our argument, then, is that we need to approach the selfie as an embodied and re-articulated socio-technical act, that shapes, constitutes and imagines the self(ie). In other words, an investigation of the selfie re-turns us to imagined and live(d) self that blurs image and imagining processes and tells us not about intentional authoring, but a deeper desire and ambiguity for and of identity performance in a social media era.[67] It is precisely through the staging, shooting, choosing, sharing, posting, commenting, liking through digital mediations that the performance of the image-self becomes meaningful not as a single image but as a complex process of practices that performatively construct the self through their normativity. By relating photography with mediated communication,

for example—by thinking selfies as visual chats—the close relationship between digital technologies, increasing visuality and algorithmic culture is elucidated and this, in turn constructs individuals and users in specific (and problematic) ways (e.g. as consumers of subjectivities). The power of the algorithm[68] and the use of images as communicative interfaces generate a destabilisation of both photography and representation. Neither become plausible as stand-alone signifiers; both *constitute,* and perhaps increasingly are a condition of, the dominant ideologies of a shifting digital culture—such as sharing, connectivity, and sociability. This opens an array of further questions that ask about selfies as reflections or practices of/on visual regimes,[69] the relationship between the material and the visual,[70] or digital mediations.[71]

Finally, then, what is at stake here is how the combination of visual, material and digital elements create new forms of surveillance and sousveillance, can reshape what privacy, public and intimacy are and, finally, generate softer and more effective forms of power. More important than understanding the semiotics of the visual is understanding how the visual is becoming an essential element of a wider "semiotic algorithm." We need to move from focusing on the narratives *about* the visual or the narratives *of* the users to focus on the socio-technical practices that constitute—if not condition—those narratives. These practices perpetuate power relations in ways that are sometimes celebrated and very often accepted rather than critiqued.[72] We need a critical stance more than ever if we are to grasp the complexity of how technologies, bodies, the visual and the narratives about them, operate in digital culture. Selfies as self-representation, very bluntly, does not offer the scope for this.

Notes

1. See for example http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2013/jul/14/how-selfies-became-a-global-phenomenon.
2. Chris Jenks, *Visual Culture* (London: Routledge, 1995).
3. Lisa Silvestri, "Shiny Happy People Holding Guns: 21st Century Images of War," *Visual Communication Quarterly* 21 (2014): 114.
4. Nancy Thumim, *Self Representation and Digital Culture* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 137.
5. Edgar Gómez Cruz, *De la cultura Kodak a la imagen en red: una etnografía sobre fotografía digital* (Barcelona, Spain: UOC Publisher). UOC Editorial Vol. 23. 2012.
6. Magdalena Olszanowski, "Feminist Self-Imaging and Instagram: Tactics of Circumventing Sensorship," *Visual Communication Quarterly* 21, no. 2 (2014): 83–95.
7. See for example: José van Dijck, *The Culture of Connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 203; Soraya Mehdizadeh, "Self-Presentation 2.0: Narcissism and Self-Esteem on Facebook," *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking* 13, no. 4 (2010): 357–64; Angeliki Avgitidou, "Performances of the Self," *Digital Creativity* 14, no. 3 (2003): 131–8; and Alice E. Marwick, *Status Update: Celebrity, Publicity, and Branding in the Social Media Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).
8. http://selfiecity.net/
9. For example: Sonja Vivienne and Jean Burgess, "The Remediation of the Personal Photograph and the Politics of Self-Representation in Digital Storytelling," *Journal of Material Culture* 18, no. 3 (2013): 279–298; Zizi Papacharrisi, "Without You, I'm Nothing: Performances of the Self on Twitter," *International Journal of Communication* 6 (2012), http://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/1484/775; Max Schleser, "Connecting through Mobile Autobiographies: Self-Reflexive Mobile Filmmaking, Self-Representation, and Selfies," in *Media Making in an Age of Smartphones*, eds. Marsha Berry and Max Schleser (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 148–58; Jian R. Rui and Michael A. Stefanone, "Strategic Image Management Online: Self-presentation, Self-Esteem and Social Network Perspectives," *Information, Communication & Society* 16, no. 8 (2013): 1286–305; Julia Davies, "Display, Identity and the Everyday: Self-Presentation through Online Image Sharing," *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 28, no. 4 (2007): 549–64; Nicole C. Krämer and Stephan Winter, "Impression Management 2.0: The Relationship of Self- Esteem, Extraversion, Self-Efficacy, and Self-Presentation within Social Networking Sites," *Journal of Media Psychology: Theories, Methods, and Applications* 20 (2008): 106–16; and Katrin Tiidenberg, "Bringing Sexy Back: Reclaiming the Body Aesthetic Via Self-Shooting," *CyberPsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on CyberSpace* (2014), doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.5817/CP2014-1-3.
10. Helen Thornham and Angela MacFarlane, "Claiming Content and Constructing Users: User-Generated Content and BBC Blast," in *Youth Cultures in the Age of Global Media*, eds Sarah Bragg, Mary Jane Kehily, and David Buckingam (London: Palgrave MacMillian; 2014), 186–202; José van Dijck, "Users Like You? Theorizing Agency in User-Generated Content," *Media, Culture & Society* 31, no. 1 (2009): 41–58; José van Dijck, "Flickr and the Culture of Connectivity: Sharing Views, Experiences, Memories," *Memory Studies* 4, no. 4 (2011):

401–15; and Jodi Dean, "Communicative Capitalism: Circulation and the Foreclosure of Politics," in *Digital Media and Democracy: Tactics in Hard Times*, ed M. Boler (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), 101–23.

11. See also Dean, "Communicative Capitalism."

12. For example Mehdizadeh, "Self-Presentation 2.0"; and Marwick, *Status Update*.

13. See also Chris Rojek, *Celebrity* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001); and Graeme Turner, *Understanding Celebrity*, 2nd ed. (London: Sage, 2013).

14. Paul Frosh, "The Gestural Image: The Selfie, Photography Theory and Kinesthetic Sociability," *The International Journal of Communication* 9 (2015), http://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/viewFile/3146/1388.

15. For example, there are plenty of discussions about "the first selfie" (usually with examples of the beginning of the 20th century). This locates selfies as the contemporary version of a certain types of self-portraits, namely those where the photographer and the camera are visible at the moment of shooting, for example in a mirror.

16. For a comprehensive cultural history of the self-portraits see James Hall, *Self-Portrait: A Cultural History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2014).

17. Cruz, *De la cultura Kodak a la imagen en red*; and Edgar Gómez Cruz, "La fotografía digital como una estética sociotécnica: el caso de la Iphoneografía," *Aiesthesis* 52 (2012): 393–406, http://dx.doi.org/10.4067/S0718-71812012000200020.

18. See also Frosh, "The Gestural Image."

19. See for example: Edgar Gómez Cruz and Eric T. Meyer, "Creation and Control in the Photographic Process: iPhones and the Emerging Fifth Moment of Photography," *Photographies* 5, no. 2 (2012): 203–21; Larissa Hjorth, "Snapshots of Almost Contact: The Rise of Camera Phone Practices and a Case Study in Seoul, Korea," *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2 (2007): 227–38; and Marsha Berry and Max Schleser (eds), *Mobile Media Making in an Age of Smartphones* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

20. http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/aug/22/monkey-business-macaque-selfie-cant-be-copyrighted-say-us-and-uk.

21. http://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/msl/news/msl20121211b.html.

22. http://www.iocose.org/works/in_times_of_peace.html#Drone-Selfies.

23. Frosh, "The Gestural Image."

24. Which we understand, following STS approaches, as a consensus in the use, narratives about, and boundaries around the use and understanding of determined artefact or practice.

25. See for example Barry Wellman, "The Three Ages of Internet Studies: Ten, Five and Zero Years Ago," *New Media & Society* 6, no. 1 (2004): 123–9; and David Silver, "Internet/Cyberculture/Digital Culture/New Media/Fill-in-the-Blank Studies," *New Media & Society* 6, no. 1 (2004): 55–64.

26. See Barry Wellman and Caroline Haythornthwaite (eds), *The Internet in Everyday Life* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2008).

27. Although the development of the SMS is previous to the explosion of the WWW, they became a commonly used feature of mobile phones later.

28. Following this, we could also argue that emoticons address one of the earliest academic critiques of chat forums—that they are inherently different from the "real," precisely because of the lack of social cues online [see also Joseph B. Walther and Kyle P. D'Addario, "The Impacts of Emoticons on Message Interpretation in Computer-Mediated Communication," *Social Science Computer Review* 19, no. 3 (2001): 324–47].

29. See Nenagh Kemp, "Texting Versus Txtng: Reading and Writing Text Messages, and Links with Other Linguistic Skills," *Writing Systems Research* 2, no. 1 (2012): 53–71.

30. The first cameraphone, the J-SH04 with a camera of 110,000 pixels and a 256-color display, was introduced in Japan in 2000. But it was with the introduction of the iPhone (2007) that mobile photography had its boom.

31. See Cruz and Meyer, "Creation and Control in the Photographic Process."

32. Nancy A. Van House, "Personal Photography, Digital Technologies and the Uses of the Visual," *Visual Studies* 26, no. 2 (2011): 125–34; Nancy A. Van House, "Collocated Photo Sharing, Story-Telling, and the Performance of Self," *International Journal of Human–Computer Studies* 67, no. 12 (2009): 1073–86; Gillian Rose, "How Digital Technologies Do Family Snaps, Only Better," in *Digital Snaps: The New Face of Photography*, eds Mette Sandbye and Jonas Larsen (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2014), 67–86; and Daisuke Okabe and Mizuko Ito, "Camera Phones Changing the Definition of Picture-Worthy," *Japan Media Review*, 29 (2003), http://www.dourish.com/classes/ics234cw04/ito3.pdf.

33. From our own research on digital culture.

34. Nancy A. Van House, "Feminist HCI Meets Facebook: Performativity and Social Networking Sites," *Interacting with Computers* 23, no. 5 (2011): 424.

35. Bruno Latour, "Technology Is Society Made Durable," *The Sociological Review* 38, no. S1 (1990): 103–31.

36. Lev Manovich, *Software Takes Command Vol. 5* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

37. Lucy Suchman, "Agencies in Technology Design: Feminist Reconfigurations," *Unpublished Manuscript* (2007), http://goo.gl/tsTTyl.

38. Van House, "Feminist HCI meets Facebook," 422–9.

39. Suchman, "Agencies in Technology Design."

40. Latour, "Technology Is Society Made Durable."

41. See also van Dijck, *The Culture of Connectivity*; and Jenny Kennedy, "Rhetorics of Sharing: Data, Imagination and Desire," in *Unlike Us Reader: Social Media Monopolies and Their Alternatives*, eds Geertz Lovink and Miriam Rasch (Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, 2013), 127–37.
42. van Dijck, *The Culture of Connectivity*.
43. Kennedy, "Rhetorics of Sharing," 129.
44. Van House "Feminist HCI Meets Facebook," 426.
45. See for example, Karen Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward and Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28 (2003): 801–31; Suchman, "Agencies in Technology Design"; and N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Post Human: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literate, and Informatics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).
46. Katrin Tiidenberg and Edgar Gómez Cruz, *Selfies, Image and the Re-Making of the Body* (London: Sage, 2015), 1–26, doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/13570 34X15592465.
47. See for example Van House, "Collocated Photo Sharing, Story-Telling"; and Jonas Larsen, "Families Seen Sightseeing Performativity of Tourist Photography," *Space and Culture* 8, no. 4 (London: Sage, 2005), 416–34.
48. Papacharrisi, "Without You, I'm Nothing."
49. Papacharissi, "Without You, I'm Nothing."
50. Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (London: Random House, 1956), 252.
51. See for example Jennifer L. Gibbs, Nicole B. Ellison, and Rebecca D. Heino, "Self-Presentation in Online Personals the Role of Anticipated Future Interaction, Self-Disclosure, and Perceived Success in Internet Dating," *Communication Research*, 33, no. 2 (2006): 152–77; and Hugh Miller, "The Presentation of Self in Electronic Life: Goffman on the Internet," in *Embodied Knowledge and Virtual Space Conference* (Conference Paper June 1995, Vol. 9), http://www.douri.sh/classes/ics234cw04/miller2.pdf.
52. Patrick Maynard, "Talbot's Technologies: Photographic Depiction, Detection, and Reproduction," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 47, no. 3 (1989): 263–76.
53. Suchman, "Agencies in Technology Design."
54. For example, Cruz, *De la cultura Kodak a la imagen en red*; and Thornham and MacFarlane, "Claiming Content and Constructing Users."
55. See also Helen Thornham, *Ethnographies of the Videogame: Gender, Narrative & Praxis* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2011).
56. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1990).
57. See also Papacharrisi, "Without You, I'm Nothing."
58. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 179.
59. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 178.
60. Nicky Gregson and Gillian Rose, "Taking Butler Elsewhere: Performativities, Spatialities and Subjectivities," *Environment and Planning D*, 18, no. 4 (2000): 437.
61. Van House, "Collocated Photo Sharing, Story-Telling," 1084.
62. Michel Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," in *Technologies of the Self*, eds Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick H. Hutton (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 16–49.
63. Latour, "Technology Is Society Made Durable."
64. See also Bernard Stiegler, "Teleologics of the Snail: The Errant Self Wired to a WiMax Network," *Theory, Culture & Society* 26, nos. 2–3 (London: Sage, 2009), 40.
65. Van House, "Feminist HCI Meets Facebook," 422–9.
66. What is interesting of course about this argument is that big data claim the inverse of this: that it is possible to understand social behaviour and identity through something that is prefigured already in code.
67. Stiegler, "Teleologics of the Snail," 33–45.
68. Manovich, *Software Takes Command*.
69. Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking: And Introduction to Visual Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).
70. Gillian Rose and Divya P. Tolia-Kelly (eds), *Visuality/Materiality: Images, Objects and Practices* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2012)
71. Sarah Kember and Joanna Zylinska, *Life after New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012).
72. Edgar Gómez Cruz and Helen Thornham, "'Raw Talent in The Making' Imaginary Journeys, Authorship and the Discourses of Expertise," *Convergence: International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies Convergence* 21, no. 3 (2015): 314–27.