

Web videos play a crucial role in the political protests that mobilize today's civil society. Spread and shared across social media, they draw attention to a variety of issues, serve as evidence and, ultimately, as a call to action.

In the attempt to win viewers' hearts and minds, various new film forms and practices are emerging in the networked spaces of the Web 2.0. These new types of videos actively engage their audience by inviting participation, and thus contribute to the formation of counter-publics and social movements.

However, the power of web videos remains a contentious issue, as it is often associated with problems such as misuse, deception, 'clicktivism' or surveillance.

The conference will bring together international researchers and activists to discuss the political aesthetics, strategies, and impact of these new film forms – in short, the power of contemporary activist videos.



THE POWER OF ACTIVIST VIDEOS

videoactivism.net

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BERLIN

**KULTURLABOR
INSTITUTE FOR CULTURAL INQUIRY**

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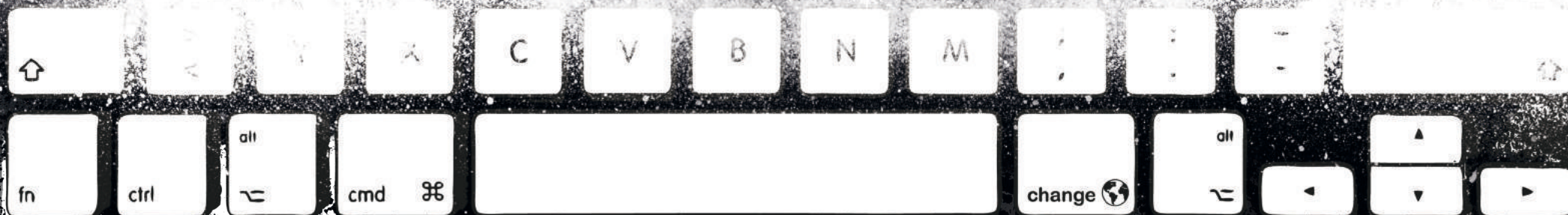
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VolkswagenStiftung

Conference at the ICI Berlin, 12–13 May 2017

Organized by Jens Eder, Britta Hartmann, Julian Radlmaier, and Chris Tedjasukmana,
funded by the Volkswagen Foundation
(Project: Video Activism 2.0 between Social Media and Social Movements)



FRIDAY, 12 MAY 2017

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

10 AM - 11 AM

Jens Eder (Film University Babelsberg) / **Britta Hartmann** (University of Bonn) / **Chris Tedjasukmana** (Freie Universität Berlin / University of Art and Design Linz):

EXPLORING THE FIELD OF WEB VIDEO ACTIVISM – SOME QUESTIONS.

JENS EDER is Professor for Media Aesthetics and Dramaturgy at Filmuniversität Babelsberg Konrad Wolf, Germany, and writes on narrative, politics, emotion, characters, discourses, and representations of humanity in audiovisual and other media as well as on cross-media strategies. His recent book is *Image Operations* (with Charlotte Klonk), forthcoming is another one on film characters.

BRITTA HARTMANN is Professor for Film Studies and Audiovisual Media Culture at the University of Bonn. She's one of the editors of the scholarly journal *Montage AV*, which focuses on film and television studies. Her research and teaching interests concern film and television documentary, film narratology, textual pragmatics of film and spectatorship.

CHRIS TEDJASUKMANA is Visiting Professor of Media Theories at the University of Art and Design in Linz, principal investigator of the research project on Video Activism 2.0. at the Freie Universität Berlin, and fellow at the International Research Centre of Cultural Studies in Vienna (2017/18). His research focuses on theories of the public, political aesthetics, film and media theory.

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11 AM – 11.30 AM
COFFEE BREAK



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1. VIDEO PRACTICES AND ACTS OF DISOBEDIENCE

11.30 AM – 12.15 PM

Robin Celikates (University of Amsterdam):

VIDEO DISOBEDIENCE: FROM RESISTANCE TO RESIGNATION?

In this talk I will address the dual relationship between acts of disobedience and activist videos. On the one hand, such videos have become important tools to produce publicity and mobilize for acts of disobedience. On the other hand, they, too, can themselves become acts of disobedience, but as such they might be difficult to sustain if they are not embedded in broader media and movement infrastructures. I will discuss this duality, its potential and its limitations with regard to the Gezi Park Protests from 2013, and focus on examples from platforms such as 'videoccupy' and 'bak.ma'.

ROBIN CELIKATES is Associate Professor of Political and Social Philosophy at the University of Amsterdam. He is also an associated member of the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt a.M. and a Program Leader at the Amsterdam Center for Globalization Studies. Currently he directs the NWO-funded research project „Transformations of Civil Disobedience“. His main areas of specialization are theories of civil disobedience, democracy, collective action, migration and citizenship, and critical theory. In the spring term of 2017 he is a visiting professor in the Philosophy Department at Université Paris Nanterre. His publications include *Kritik als soziale Praxis* and the two edited volumes *Transformations of Democracy* and *The Irregularization of Migration in Contemporary Europe*.

12.15 PM – 1 PM

Tina Askanus (University of Lund):

ACTIVIST VIDEO AS TEXT, TESTIMONY, TECHNOLOGY, PRACTICES

In this paper, I draw on the concept of 'activist media practices' (Mattoni 2012) as a theoretical orientation for further developing a holistic understanding of activist video practices as the things activists do with moving images for social and political change. Empirically, I focus the argument around climate change activism. This growing field of activism is used as a prism through which to consider video activism as practices that are intertwined in and across the entire media ecology in ways that transgress online and offline sites of analysis.

TINA ASKANUS is Assistant Professor in the department of Media and Communication at Lund University, Sweden. Her research primarily concerns social movements media practices and she has published extensively on these matters in the context of both radical left and extreme right activism.

1 PM – 2.45 PM

LUNCH BREAK



2. CURRENT VIDEO ACTIVISM IN TURKEY AND SYRIA

2.45 PM – 3.30 PM

Şirin Erensoy (Kültür University, Istanbul):

THE EVOLUTION OF VIDEO ACTIVISM IN TURKEY: FROM ACTIVIST TO EYLEMCI

From the Young Filmmakers movement of the 60s to Karahaber, Balıkbilir and Seyri Sokak, not to mention all the individual efforts in this respect, video activism in Turkey has been a key strategic tool to document social struggles ignored by mainstream culture. These images collected by activists and regular citizens alike serve both as proof of the abuse of power by agents of the state, and as a means to forming a visual memory of the reality of groups deemed 'other' by national discourse. This presentation will evaluate how video activists in Turkey have adapted their strategies to fight against state oppression and violence as well as censorship. The way they use media technologies as well as the platforms available to them in order to make these images visible to the public will be examined. Furthermore, the distinction between "activist" and "eylemci" (meaning both activist and demonstrator) will be discussed to understand the perspective of the act of recording, which moves beyond the profession of the activist and becomes the very eye of the demonstrator.

ŞİRİN ERENŞOY is a Lecturer in Film and Television at Istanbul Kültür University. She has worked in television, as a reporter and editor, and a producer for independent documentary productions. She has also directed documentary films of her own work.

3.30 PM – 4.15 PM

Nather Henafe Alali (Journalist and activist, Frankfurt and Deir ez-Zor, Syria):
VIDEO ACTIVISM AND SYRIAN PUBLICS IN EXILE

An overview of the situation in Syria before and after 2011. How new phenomena have emerged in the social field, in politics and in the media: activism, alternative media and citizen journalism. A look at the increased use of social networking sites following the events of 2011 as well as possible explanations for this development. A study of the persistent and growing importance of social media in Syria to this day and, finally, the significance of Syrians in exile turned activists by utilising these transnational, cross-border media.

NATHER HENAFE ALALI (born 1989 in Deir ez-Zor, Syria) is a human rights activist. In 2012, he was imprisoned by the Assad regime and forced to give up his studies of dentistry. Drawing on several years of hands-on experience as a field reporter, he has since 2013 contributed to various Arab newspapers and online news sites. From 2013 to 2014, he worked for Syrian relief organisations as well as international NGOs in Syria and Turkey, where he also completed an internship in conflict management and organisational governance. After moving to Germany in 2014, he now aims to further pursue his studies. Henafe Alali also appears as a regular columnist in the German news magazine DER SPIEGEL.

4.15 PM – 4.45 PM
COFFEE BREAK



3. VIDEO FORMS AND RHETORICS

4.45 PM – 5.30 PM

Concha Mateos (Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, Madrid):
VIDEO ACTIVISM:
DISCOURSE TYPES AND NARRATIVE HEROINES AND HEROES

The use of video to engender social change deploys an array of discursive models according to specific aims pursued in each case. A descriptive typology of video activism will be entered here to provide a conceptual device to envision the common basis and the great diversity of discourse patterns currently adopted by video acti-

vism. We will pay special attention to the narrative construction of the video activist subject, i.e. the hero/heroine characterization required by video activist narration.

CONCHA MATEOS received a PhD in Media Studies from the University of La Laguna (Tenerife, Canary) with a thesis on reporting capabilities compared between television news and newspapers. She has worked ten years as a journalist in radio, television and press offices before devoting herself entirely to academic activity. She served as a communication adviser to political organizations and government entities in the Canary Islands, Mexico and Venezuela and since 2006 also works as an Associate Professor at Rey Juan Carlos University at the Department of Communication Sciences and Sociology. Since 2012, her research focuses on video activism.

5.30 PM – 6.15 PM

Kathrin Fahlenbrach (University of Hamburg): Embodied Rhetorics:
AUDIOVISUAL EVIDENCE AND METAPHORS IN VIDEOACTIVISM

Activist videos often address their spectators by framing their message with a compelling story or narrative. This results e.g. in the presentation of an antagonistic and dramatic presentation of actors involved in political, social, economic, or cultural conflicts. Given the rising distribution of videos on the Internet, the attention of on-line spectators has to be grasped more and more quickly and effectively. In order to make their messages and stories evident at first glance, many video activists create an embodied rhetoric, based on metaphorical imagery. As the paper will show, audiovisual evidence and public appeal is performed in such videos by drawing on metaphors as an embodied principle of our thinking and feeling.

KATHRIN FAHLENBRACH is a Professor for Film and Media Studies at the Department for Media and Communication at the University of Hamburg. Her research focus lies on embodiment and moving images and cognitive metaphors in audiovisual media; furthermore she works on visual performances and the role of images and media in protest movements. In her book *Audiovisual Metaphors. Embodied and Affective Aesthetic in Film and Television* she introduced a theoretical framework on embodied metaphors in audiovisual mass media, including film and television. She has co-edited several volumes, such as most recently *Protest Cultures; Embodied Metaphors in Film, Television, and Video Games*; and *Media and Revolt*. She is co-editor of the book series *Protest, Culture, and Society*.

6.15 PM – 7 PM
COFFEE BREAK



4. BUILDING IMPACT

7 PM – 8 PM

Kate Nash (University of Leeds):

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVISM? EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF IMPACT

Activist media is often defined, at least in part, by its 'alternative' status with respect to the mainstream media and by the voluntary, sometime amateur nature of production. This is certainly true of much early video activist work. In the last few years, however, it is possible to point to the emergence of a form of activist documentary that marries the principles of strategic communication and documentary production to create complex media products that have the potential to link issue communities to 'mainstream' media discourse. This presentation will describe impact production arguing that it is important for understanding contemporary video activism both as a practice (where it encourages ways of thinking about video differently) and scholarship (where it suggests a need to look more closely at the connection between the media and political movements and particularly at the ways that media production can be deployed as a political action).

KATE NASH is an Associate Professor in Media and Communication and Director of Student Education in the School of Media and Communication at the University of Leeds. Her research focuses on the relationship between the cultures and practices of documentary and those of digital media. Her work has appeared in a number of leading journals including *Media Culture* and *Society*, *European Journal of Communication* and *Studies in Documentary Film*. Kate is co-editor of *New Documentary Ecologies: Emerging Platforms, Practices and Discourses* and she is currently working on a monograph on interactive documentary.

John Corner (University of Leeds): ACTIVISM, MEDIA FORMS AND POLITICAL SPACES: SOME COMMENTS OF RESPONSE

This concluding short comment will take its initial marker from the previous paper and then make some connections across the day's contributions, especially with regard to the interconnections between matters of form and theme on the one hand and the varying political settings into which materials are sent as agents of 'change'.

JOHN CORNER is Visiting Professor in Media and Communication at the University of Leeds and Professor Emeritus of the University of Liverpool. He has published widely since the 1970s in books and journals, including the monographs *Television Form and Public Address* (1995), *The Art of Record* (1996), *Critical Ideas in Television Studies* (1999) *Public Interest Television* (co-authored 2005), *Theorising Media* (2011) and *Media Genre and Political Culture* (co-authored 2012). Film and television documentary and political communication have been two of his principal research interests.

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SATURDAY, 13 MAY 2017

5. VIDEOS IN CLOSE-UP

10 AM – 11 AM

In this section, we will screen and discuss significant activist videos that the conference participants had suggested in advance. The conference organizers will briefly contextualize every clip and invite the auditorium to participate in a collaborative process of observing and analyzing.

11 AM – 11.30 AM
COFFEE BREAK



6. CREDIBILITY IN CRISIS

11.30 AM – 12.15 PM

Sascha Simons (University of Bonn):

A WITNESS FOR THE WITNESS:

ON THE UNRELIABILITY OF AUDIOVISUAL TESTIMONIES

With activist web videos, we are not only „witnesses without a tribunal“ (Peters 2001), but become witnesses through the eye of victims who might (as well) be offenders. Facing a situation where neutrality and objectivity give way to subjective involvement and affective contagion, we're in need of witnesses of the witness. This socio-technical redistribution of the sensible therefore calls for a restored „social epistemology of witnessing“ (Krämer 2008) and hence raises the question what an (applied) ethics of web video testimonies might look like.

SASCHA SIMONS is a Research Associate at the University of Bonn. He has been a member of Leuphana University's Digital Cultures Research Lab and takes part in the editorial collective of spheres. He is currently writing his doctoral thesis on the aesthetics of authenticity and the social testimony of web videos. He is interested in the aesthetics, theory and history of social media and the interplay of media and social morphology. He recently published "The Ornament of Mass Customization. On the Collective Consciousness of Dispersed Examiners" in *Social Media – New Masses*; and "Mobilizing Memes. The Contagious Socio-Aesthetics of Participation" in *ReClaiming Participation*.

12.15 PM – 1 PM

Leil-Zahra Mortada (Tactical Technology Collective, Berlin):

VIDEO ETHICS AND THE MANUFACTURING OF TRUTH

With fake news, limited attention spans and algorithmically-led filter bubbles, the current crisis of information dilutes the once-thought potential of activist videos. What was once true today is not true tomorrow with retractions being issued by media outlets and platforms as an afterthought to audiences that can no longer be reached. With examples from our work at "Exposing the Invisible", we will look at standards of verification, investigation and security while navigating through the smog of a polluted atmosphere.

LEIL-ZAHRA MORTADA works for the Berlin-based Tactical Technology Collective, an NGO of practitioners who work with data and technology and assess how it can be used by activists and human rights defenders safely and more effectively. Leil is also a transfeminist queer filmmaker, born in Beirut, and has formed part of several alternative media cooperatives and political collectives in Lebanon, Egypt and the Spanish State. Their work has a major focus on gender, sexualities, documentation, borders, protest movements, and post-colonialism.

1 PM – 2.30 PM
LUNCH BREAK



7. OPEN ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION: STORY WARS AND VIDEO TACTICS ACTIVIST PERSPECTIVES

2.30 PM – 4 PM

In our final round, we will gather grassroots video activists, union organizers, journalists, curators, and NGO storytelling consultants for a joint discussion on the divergent tactics of video activism and broader political campaigns. The participants of this roundtable will reflect on their specific approaches as activists, scholars, and video makers and also critically address the tactics and ethical pitfalls of video making, spreading and sharing in light of the recent increase in ‚fake news‘, trolling, manipulation, and propaganda. At the roundtable and in the following general discussion, we want to raise questions concerning the conflicting strategies between online and offline activities, advocacy and objectivity, professional and amateur production, conventional and unconventional forms, populism and enlightenment.

PARTICIPANTS IN THE ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

MINE GENCEL BEK is currently a Bollenbeck Fellow at the University of Siegen. She's also a coordinator and trainer at NGOtech (STKTEK.net). She was a Visiting Scholar at MIT Open Doc Lab in 2013 and 2014, and taught courses in *Emerging Participatory Media Forms*; *Media, Digital Media and Technology in Civic Advocacy* and *Media, Technology and Activism*, previously at Ankara University, Faculty of Communication.

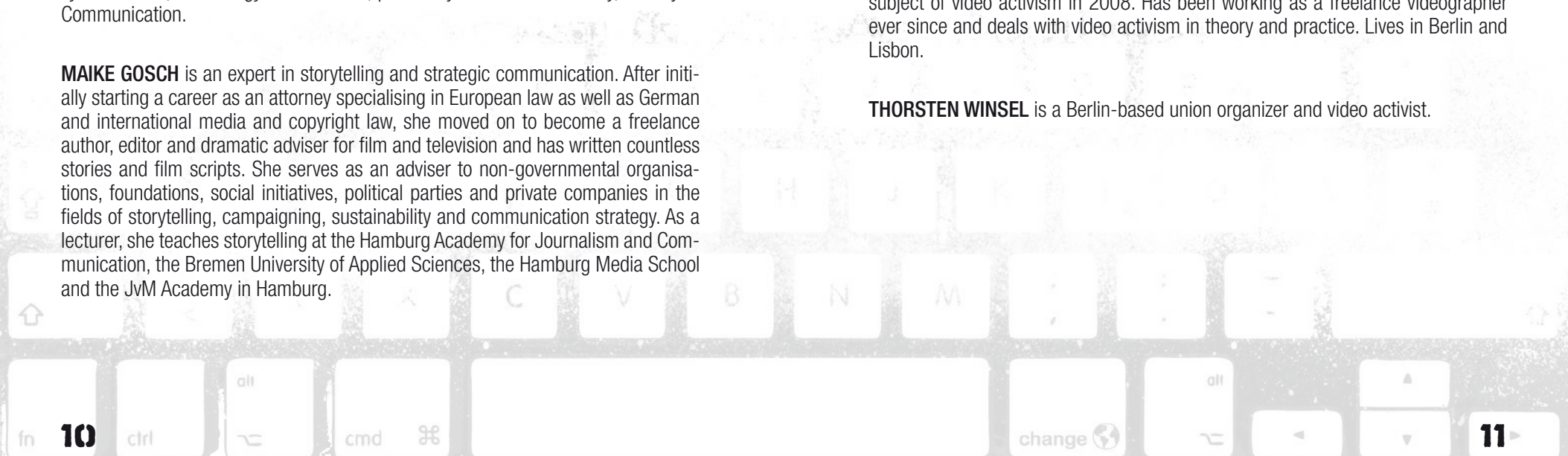
MAIKE GOSCH is an expert in storytelling and strategic communication. After initially starting a career as an attorney specialising in European law as well as German and international media and copyright law, she moved on to become a freelance author, editor and dramatic adviser for film and television and has written countless stories and film scripts. She serves as an adviser to non-governmental organisations, foundations, social initiatives, political parties and private companies in the fields of storytelling, campaigning, sustainability and communication strategy. As a lecturer, she teaches storytelling at the Hamburg Academy for Journalism and Communication, the Bremen University of Applied Sciences, the Hamburg Media School and the JvM Academy in Hamburg.

NANNA HEIDENREICH is Professor for Digital Narratives – Theory at the ifs, international film school, Cologne. Since 2009 she is also co-curator of Forum Expanded at the Berlinale. She currently also works as an advisor and curator at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin for three projects dealing with the nation state, migration and education. She has published widely on migration, visual culture, postcolonial media theory, art and activism, has edited several DVDs (political, experimental and feminist filmmaking practices) and is part of the preparation network for the tribunal „Unravelling the NSU-Complex“ (May 2017).

MARGARITA TSOMOU is a Greek author, publisher, dramaturg and curator based in Berlin. She is the publisher of the pop-feminist Missy Magazine and writes for German newspapers and radio (Die Zeit, taz, BZ, WDR, SWR). Her artistic collaborations and curatorial projects have been shown at venues such as Volksbühne Berlin, Hebbel am Ufer Berlin, Kampnagel Hamburg, Onassis Cultural Center Athens, Goethe-Institut Athens, Documenta 14 etc. Currently she is finishing her book on „Representation of the Many“ in the context of the Greek Indignados movement at Syntagma Square Occupation in 2011 in Athens. She is part of the publishing collective bbooks in Berlin and of the activist/artistic group Schwabinggrad Ballett in Hamburg. Her work focuses on queer-feminism and sexuality, political implications of art as well as theory of democracy and the transformation of the Greek society during the debt crisis.

MALTE C. VOSS, born 1980 in Göttingen, studied journalism, media and communication in Wilhelmshaven and Edinburgh and published his diploma thesis on the subject of video activism in 2008. Has been working as a freelance videographer ever since and deals with video activism in theory and practice. Lives in Berlin and Lisbon.

THORSTEN WINSEL is a Berlin-based union organizer and video activist.



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