

Heli RANTAVUO

Transitory Tools: Cameraphone Photos and the Internet

Mobile multimedia messaging services have not isolated cameraphone photography into the sphere of mobile networks. On the contrary, boundaries between cell phones and the internet continue to blur as snapshots are circulated in the internet. Cameraphone users face various concerns when using of mobile photo messaging services. However, my paper suggests that users integrate cameraphone snapshots into their internet communication mainly in order to form casual, transitory visual communication. This mode of using snapshots complements conventional home photography that is focused on the preservation of snapshots. The paper is based on my doctoral study where I examined the use of cameraphone snapshots with ICT's among sixteen Finnish cameraphone photographers, aged 17 to 53, in 2006. The participants' snapshots and their use were discussed in semi-structured interviews. The results showed that the users favoured pictorial communication with their peers that was free of cost, that performed securely, and that could reach a number of users at once. Instant messaging services, specific social networking websites, and e-mail were more popular for sharing cameraphone photos than mobile messaging services, although downloading cameraphone photos on the computer was not unproblematic for the users. The results reflect the simultaneous increase in recent years in cameraphone uptake and photo sharing possibilities over the internet. In the internet, snapshot circulation is characterized by the pictorial genre of the everyday, often captured with the cameraphone. The snapshot becomes a disposable tool, an instrument, or an adornment that momentarily supports communication related to everyday affairs. In the circulation of everyday snapshots, aesthetics is less important than the instant capacity to inform or attract, and preservation is less important than quick distribution to the audience of choice.

Heli RANTAVUO is currently a Doctor of Arts student and works as assistant at the Media Lab of the University of Art and Design Helsinki. In her doctoral work, she studies how camera-phone photos and other digital snapshots are used with information and communication technologies. As part of her doctoral studies, she has carried out research at Waseda University, Tokyo, and at the London School of Economics and Political Science. Her background is in Film and Television studies at the University of Amsterdam and Social Sciences at the University of Tampere. E-mail: heli.rantavuo@uiah.fi.

