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***Digital Images in Mobile Communication as Cool Media***

According to Marshall McLuhan, cultural development is primarily influenced by the media a society engages. This applies not only to media in a narrow sense like print, photography or television, but also and in particular to the technological underpinning of the media, i.e. to physical gadgets like radios, computers or mobiles. In his assessment of these various media, McLuhan has favoured the so called *cool media* of “low definition”, e.g. telephone or television. Whereas most researchers nowadays would not agree with his preference of television, there is some dispute about the question whether the internet might better epitomize the influential role McLuhan has reserved for television. And since mobiles have increasingly turned into sophisticated computers equipped with cameras and internet access, it is not an outlandish assumption that – under the premises of McLuhan’s media theory – mobiles are the actual agents within our accelerated cultural changes.

In my talk, I would firstly like to reassess McLuhan’s media theory and secondly apply it to mobile communication. Within this application it will be important to determine the genuine functions of visual representations – and thus their advantages and disadvantages – and then to clarify whether mobiles are able to adequately integrate these functions. Mobiles have certainly become hybrid media combining telephone with photography and even television in a near future, but since the quality and size of mobile displays is rather limited, visual mobile communication might be just an accidental by-product remaining less important compared to the verbal mode of information exchange. On the other hand it can be argued that digital images within mobile communication are able to create novel functions like a particular authentic mode of visually presenting a state of affairs in real-time. In my view, a media theoretical assessment of mobiles has to consider these different possibilities according to the standards that a modern image science can offer us.

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