Photographing as Creative and Communicative Action

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This book investigates how culture, communication, and creativity interplay with each other and which changes have been brought about by new information and communication technologies during the past decades. Photography is genuinely interconnected with all these topics. The aims of my paper are to analyze photographing as creative and communicative action from a phenomenological perspective and to reflect on whether and how practices have changed since switching from the analog to the digital mode.

Culture, communication, and creativity can be studied from a subjective and from an objective perspective, in Weber's and Schutz's terms. A sociology of knowledge approach should do both, as Berger and Luckmann (1966) have proposed. My preference here is to pursue my analysis from the subjective perspective of the actor, the photographer. My theoretical frame is phenomenological sociology (cf. Eberle, 2014a), and my empirical focus is creative action while making photos. I will analyze photographing first as action, second as creative action, and third as communicative action. A final concern is, fourth, how technological change has affected photographing and the communicative uses of photos.

Photographing as Action

The constitution of sense in Schutz's theory of action

Following a distinction made by Max Weber (1978 [1922]), Alfred Schutz (1967[1932]) emphasized the difference between the subjective and objective senses of action. Like Weber, Schutz was convinced that sociology must be conceived of as a theory of action and that it is cru-

cial to research the subjective sense of action. The objective sense of an action would be the sense (or meaning)[1] that an observer attributes to an observed behavior of an actor. The subjective sense is the meaning that an action has to the actor himself. Detecting a number of aporia in Weber's concepts, Schutz attempted to clarify the different aspects of meaning-constitution in the subjective consciousness of the actor, while analyzing the practices of sense-making and of "verstehen" among actors, interactants, and observers. The crucial key was phenomenology.

A phenomenological approach pursues analysis strictly in a subjective perspective. It always starts with the phenomena that are given in the subject's own consciousness. A phenomenologist—like any other human being—cannot analyze the lived experience of other people but only his or her own. The subjective consciousness is always consciousness-of-something: that means I see something, I hear something, I feel something, I think of something, etc. There is no empty consciousness. Edmund Husserl (2012 [1928]) called this the intentionality of consciousness, adopting this concept from Franz Brentano. Perceived phenomena are usually meaningful objects; that means we do not only perceive colors and forms but see "houses," "trees," "humans," "windows," "tables," and "chairs"—based on our socially acquired stock of knowledge at hand. We constitute sense, or meaning, in our subjective consciousness. This happens by passive synthesis on a pre-predicative level. This means that we do not perceive forms and colors and then attribute meaning to them, but instead see meaningful objects from the outset. In this process of meaning-constitution we usually "see" more than we actually see. With the concept of "appresentation," Husserl indicated that we perceive more than what is given to our "pure" perception: for instance, when we see two timbers on a roof crossing each other at a right angle, we appresent much more than two timbers; we see not only timbers but a cross, a sign with myriad meanings, a symbol of Christianity, a symbol of Jesus and his crucifixion, and so on; and of course we associate a different attitude and different

1 I use the terms "sense" and "meaning" interchangeably. In German, both Weber and the phenomenologists used "sense" (*Sinn*). Many translations into English used "sense," too, above all phenomenological philosophy; Weber's and Schutz's *Sinn*, however, was usually translated as "meaning."

feelings with that cross when we are Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, or atheists… The two timbers are much more than mere timbers: they stand for a religion, for God, for a transcendent world beyond our reach, and there is a long history involved with that, with peace and war, with nice and ugly events. Perceiving phenomena in our daily world is thus not just perception; much of it is about meaning.

We perceive the world as meaningful based on our stock of knowledge at hand and our situational relevance system. Both are socially derived, as we were socialized in our society and culture. Both are also in use when constituting experiences. In "lived experience" (*Erleben*) our consciousness is intentionally directed to the phenomena that are perceived. "Experience" (*Erfahrung*), however, is looking back, reflecting on past lived experiences. We typify them, compare them, and ponder the commonalities and differences among them. That means we use interpretive, typifying schemes to make sense of our past lived experience and thereby constitute "experiences." Any such interpretation always takes place in the Here-and-Now, on the basis of our biographical stock of knowledge at hand and our situational relevance system. This implies that the sense of experiences is continually subject to change by later re-interpretations. Even at the very moment of reflecting, we can choose different time-spans of such experiences—my school experience, my university experience, my experience of the party last night—and we can conceive of experiences in a monothetic mode, as a unity in a single grasp, or in a polythetic mode, as they have incrementally developed, step by step.

Fairly intricate is the question how the sense (or meaning) of an action is constituted in the subjective perspective. Schutz does not follow Weber's distinction that action is meaningful while behavior is meaningless. Behavior is meaningless to the actor at the moment when it happens (while it is meaningful to the observer), but in retrospect the actor can reflect on a behavior and thereby render it meaningful, too. The same applies to action: for the actor, it is not meaningful at the moment of being enacted. According to Schutz (1962, pp. 67-96), the difference between action and behavior is that action is based on a preconceived project while behavior is not. In contrast to Weber's terminology, "action" and "acting" as an ongoing process cannot be meaningful by themselves. Only "acts," i.e., the outcome of

this process, are meaningful. Action gets its meaning from the projected act. This again involves a time perspective: Meaning is generated by the projection of an accomplished act *modo futuri exacti*. Such a projection involves fantasy and imagination. And they can be projected in a monothetic mode, i.e., as a unity, for instance in the case of known, routine actions, or in a polythetic mode, i.e., sequentially and incrementally. But not every imagined, projected action is also purposive conduct. It remains "mere fancying" unless a voluntative fiat—as William James called it—transforms the project into a purpose. Choosing among projects of action presupposes a number of projected acts, and the choice implies an act of volition. When an action then is carried out, its sense (or meaning) necessarily changes during the course of action, as the actor has to come to terms with situational circumstances that were not foreseen in the projected act.

The photographic gaze as a special cognitive style

Reflecting on my "doing" of making photos in a subjective perspective presupposes an autobiographical context. I describe my personal experiences and practices of photographing by using phenomenological concepts. As I am a socialized human, my subjective perspective includes social and cultural influences of many sorts; in this respect my approach is also autoethnographic.

I have been a passionate amateur photographer all my life. I began to take pictures at about the age of nine or ten with a simple camera, since my sixteenth birthday with a fancy Japanese SLR (mirror-reflex)-camera, and I have regularly renewed my equipment with successor models. When holding a camera in my hands I immediately change my mode of perception: common-sensical everyday gazes are replaced by "photographic gazes." There is not just one or "the" photographic gaze but rather a great variety of such gazes, focusing on different motifs and themes in their specific arrangements and contexts and choosing diverse perspectives and frames. But these photographic gazes all share a special cognitive style (Eberle, 2014b). It feels like being on a hunt—not for animals but for photos. My "attention à la vie" (Schutz, 1967[1932]) is much more intense than in ordinary daily life, the tension of my consciousness is high, and I am often extremely focused. I am wide-awake but my senses are strongly reduced to the visual, and I am constantly scanning my surroundings for possible pictures. I am to a heightened degree in the "here and now," fully present. I am watching how an event or a bodily sequence of actions and behaviors is developing, I am tuning in with the natural and social rhythms of my contexts, and I am anticipating what is going to happen next in order to capture the scene at the right moment. At the same time I make myself invisible as much as I can, acting as an unobtrusive, nonparticipant observer; I reduce my interaction with the people in a "natural" scene to a minimum—in contrast to photographing models or to taking portraits—or even avoid it totally in order to keep my subjects' behaviors as "natural" as possible. My typical experience as a photographer is thus acting in solitude, as a kind of lonely wolf and distant observer.

Schutz (1962, pp. 207-259) used the concept of "cognitive style" to characterize the properties of multiple realities. We experience different realities as finite provinces of meaning. The world of everyday life is our paramount reality; it is the intersubjectively shared reality of pragmatic action, where we are awake and working in standard time. We experience a different reality when dreaming; or when reading works of fiction; or when watching a film; or when beholding a picture; or when listening to music; or when playing a game; or when having a religious experience, and so on: "All these worlds—the world of dreams, of imageries and phantasms, especially the world of art, the world of religious experience, the world of scientific contemplation, the play world of the child, and the world of the insane—are finite provinces of meaning" (1962, p. 232). Our experiences are consistent and compatible only within a particular province of meaning, and each transition from one province to another is experienced as a "shock" or a "leap." According to Schutz, there are "as many innumerable kinds of shock experiences as there are different finite provinces of meaning upon which I may bestow the accent of reality" (1962, p. 231). The everyday world of working is the archetype of our experience of reality; all the other realities may be regarded as its modifications. And except for dreams and insanity, most of these other provinces of meaning imply pragmatic actions in the "real world."

Does the special cognitive style of photographing constitute a special reality, a province of meaning of its own? Scrutinizing Schutz's writings on (classic) literature, Dreher and Barber (2013) argue that an aesthetic attitude transcends the everyday style of cognition: literary art forms produce a symbolized reality sui generis that requires the observer to let his pragmatic motives go and to adopt an aesthetic attitude. A reader still needs to hold a book in his hands and turn pages by pragmatic moves but can thereby enter the fictitious world of a novel and "live" in it as a kind of invisible observer. In a similar way, a photographer handles the camera but adopts an aesthetic attitude in search of "good" photos. However, the aesthetic attitude of the photographer does not refer to a non-mundane reality that is represented by symbols; the photographic gaze is directed to the aesthetics of the everyday world. This everyday world is experienced as meaningful, as pre-interpreted, and as intersubjectively shared with others. In contrast to literature as an art form, the photographic gaze does not transcend the world of everyday life and create another, narrated, reality. The photographic gaze captures the aesthetics inherent in mundane reality. I do not think that the aesthetics of the everyday world constitutes a separate, finite province of meaning; contending this would imply a very narrow conception of the mundane world that excludes aesthetics by definition. I assume that the aesthetic gaze has an anthropological component. But of course, in its concretization it is always shaped by the historically and culturally specific, social discourses.

Calling the photographic gaze a special cognitive style hence suggests not tying the concept of cognitive style to the concept of finite provinces of meaning only; it rather expresses a special relevance system that displays a special concern for visual aesthetics (of different sorts) but also includes other factors, like the choice of motifs, capturing a unique moment in time (the groom kissing the bride, an explosion, a man shot dead, an accident happening) and multiple other concerns. My experience is—and this has been confirmed by many other amateur photographers—that once you are in this cognitive style it gets difficult to let it go, to stop scanning the surroundings with a photographic gaze and taking pictures, and to return to the role of a communicative participant who enjoys a happening like all the others, with all the senses, not just the visual one.

The constitution of sense in photographing

According to Schutz, the sense of photographing is constituted by the projected photographic act *modo future exacti*. While Schutz and Luckmann (1989, pp. 49-57) argue that it is easy to determine when an action begins, while it is often not clear when it ends, it seems to be just the other way around with photographing. Here it is much easier to recognize when the action ends than when it begins. It probably can be agreed that the act of taking a picture ends when pressing the shutter-release button of the camera. If the picture is not taken, for whatever reason, it remains an uncompleted act; its non-completion is "seen" against the background of the projected act. If the projected act consists not just in taking "a" picture but in making a "good" picture, it may well be that several photos are taken in a series until one is satisfied with the result. The act is completed when one stops photographing the same subject. With digital photography, the act of photographing often includes looking at the picture after it has been taken.

But when does the act of photographing begin? Schutz and Luckmann (1989, pp. 49-57) suggest that the action begins when the decision to act is taken, in other words, when the act of volition takes place. This probably applies best to snapshot photography: I look at something and feel the impulse to take a picture; I hesitate, but then decide that I am going to do it, grab the camera, hold it in front of my eyes, and press the release button. This is usually quite a brief act, happening within a few seconds. One could interpret the perception of a suitable subject as the because-motive, the idea to take a picture as the projected act, the decision to do it as the act of volition, and grabbing the camera and shooting the picture as the action of photographing. Things are, however, often more complicated than that. I would, rather, suggest that the photographic gaze is a constitutive, integral part of photographing. This special cognitive style consists in specific acts of perception; it is not just looking at the aesthetics of my surroundings but beholding it in the form of framed pictures and in search of great photos. In daily life, I often switch from a pragmatic, "normal" perception into the mode of a photographic gaze—and see wonderful pictures. Grabbing the camera and taking the photos is then the technical, "material" part of the action, but the most essential aspect of photographing is "seeing" the pictures before they have been taken.

This explains why the sense of photographing is often not really derived from the projected act *modo futuri exacti*. No doubt, photographing is an act and it can be projected, and before it has become a routine that can be viewed monothetically, one has to learn the single steps incrementally as a polythetic sequence. One can also decide in a volitional act to adopt a photographic gaze. But often it just happens. When I am in the mode of this special cognitive style and on the hunt for photos, I am constantly aware of what I am doing. I am wide-awake, scanning my surroundings with great intensity—the most important thing for me is not the resulting photos but this intense, focused and creative perception. This is, for my part, the best of all. Photographing is an activity in its own right (Eberle, 2014b), an embodied activity with a strong focus on the visual sense; the meaning of what I am doing is not derived from the projected act but is constantly present, it is "felt" while in action. Photographing is a bodily experience that involves great perceptions and is often driven by real passion. I am engaged in action with my body, heart, soul, and mind, and my acting is full of sense and meaningfulness.

Photographing as Creative Action

Not every photo is a creation in the sense of having an identifiable subject as creator. Webcams and surveillance video cameras produce nowadays billions of pictures as automatized systems. Nobody, however, would call these pictures "creative." Creative photographing is always related to a creative actor. Knoblauch (in this volume) is right to emphasize that a theory of creativity cannot do without a subject; creativity addresses the subjective potential to transcend the social and to produce something new.

In photography there is a vast array of possibilities to act creatively: First, there is the choice of motifs and their arrangements. Persons and requisites are often stage-managed, not only when taking pictures of photo models, friends, relatives, and groups of persons but also in the so-called "documentary photography" where scenes are often carefully arranged (cf. Eberle, 2014b). Such scenes can then be photographed from diverse perspectives and in different framings. Second,

using the features of the technical equipment allows for a great variety of creative modifications: choice of lenses, filters, and special optical effects, of fast or low shutter speed, large or small aperture, over- and under-exposure, picture size and quality, photosensitivity, automatic noise reduction and picture optimization, active D-Lighting, multiple or interval exposure, etc. While many people operate their camera in the automatic mode, an amateur or professional will usually make careful use of his or her camera's technical potential. Third, creative modifications can be made after the photo has been taken, by reworking it in the lab or on the computer. The first and second steps are much more important than the third: it is vital to make a photo as perfect as you can from the outset; you can improve a picture by reworking it but you cannot make a good photo out of a bad photo.

Creative photographing requires new ways of seeing, of arranging, and of framing. And it requires technical expertise in order to take photos as well as possible and to perfect them in the aftermath. This is why ultimately only a few photographers get acknowledged as artists. As we are all socialized in a specific culture and society and shaped by cultural ways of seeing, by institutionalized social practices of photographing, by established aesthetic values and norms, creativity requires transcending some of these in order to create something new. This cannot be achieved by way of a logical operation, as Charles S. Peirce suggested in his early work, but rather by an "abductive attitude" that is curious, attentive, contemplative, and open to surprise (as Peirce later proposed; Reichertz, 2003, p. 66). Such an attitude allows for "abductive flashes"—suddenly things are seen in a different, novel way. As I have argued elsewhere (Eberle, 2011), the epistemological framework of phenomenology is much better suited to explain abductive flashes than Peirce's ontological levels of different priority (firstness, secondness, and thirdness). In a phenomenological perspective, abductive flashes happen much the same way as pre-predicative appresentations, namely in passive syntheses of the subjective consciousness. An abductive attitude implies bracketing predicative judgments and convictions and interpreting pre-predicative perceptions in alternative ways.

Knoblauch (2011) has pondered how Schutz's action theory contributes to a theory of creative action. He spots an aporia in Schutz's life-world analysis and attempts to elaborate the theory in a way that

would avoid it. The aporia consists in the fact that Schutz ties action to fantasy, on the one hand, but strictly separates fantasy and imagination from the pragmatic world of action when discerning multiple realities. Knoblauch suggests clearly tying fantasy to action and viewing fantasy and imagination as sources of the "new." While an abductive attitude is characterized by openness to the new, fantasizing and imagining are acts of consciousness that can reach beyond passive synthesis. Both are undoubtedly extremely relevant to creative photographing. But what is the essence of creative action? That the action is pursued in a novel way or that the action produces something new? In photography the case is fairly clear: photographing is a creative action if it produces new kinds of photos. This can be reached by new procedures but it often happens that creative photos are produced by routine actions. Fantasizing and imagining are primarily directed to creating a new result, not a new way of doing things.

Creative photographing is not only based on abductive flashes, fantasy and imagination; in its pursuit it is also a situated action. Referring to Suchman (1987) and Joas (1996), Knoblauch (2011) proposes situated action and situated creativity as a further source of the "new." Each action has to be situated, it does not just follow rules, as Suchman and ethnomethodology pointed out, and the specific situational circumstances are usually not envisioned in the projected act *modo futuri exacti*. Analogously, Hans Joas (1996) speaks of situated creativity, which means that acts are not just projected but are also answers to concrete situations. Creativity means not only solving problems but also adapting to what arises in the situation. Photographing is probably a paradigmatic example illustrating this. As I have argued above, the sense of photographing is not just derived from a projected, completed act, as I am permanently aware of my activity while coming to terms with the concrete situations at hand. Creativity arises in concrete situations of doing photography, sometimes planned and often not. Looking through the viewer I detect alternative, noetic ways of seeing, and the emerging noematic structures of the perceived phenomena guide my gaze to new vistas.

What is "new," however, is relative and always has a subjective as well as an objective side. Something that is subjectively new to an actor (or photographer) is not necessarily new to the society as a whole. Many historical inventions were only locally new but already known in the regional, national, or global context. Many artists primarily focus on what is new to them subjectively, which triggers their personal creativity. And only later on they may care about the question if their creation is also new to the art scene as a whole (which represents the "objective" side). In the same vein, John Dewey (1980 [1934], p. 19) emphasizes the subjective experience of art: "Experience, in the extent to which it is experience, is heightened vitality… [Experience] is art in germ. Even in its rudimentary forms, it retains the promise of that delightful perception which is esthetic experience."

Photographing as Communicative Action

Creativity, in order to be socially relevant, needs to be translated into communicative action (Knoblauch, in this volume). Subjective creativity goes unnoticed if it is not expressed and communicated. Only communicated creativity can be assessed and judged by others, and only communicated creativity can have an impact on other members of society. Communication can be considered from a subjective and an objective perspective, too. Phenomenological sociologists usually emphasize that a "communicative action" requires an actor's intention to communicate. Only on these grounds does it make sense to distinguish what an actor intended to communicate and what a recipient understood—or in Schutz's words, to distinguish between the subjective meaning and the objective meaning and, respectively, between meaning-establishment and meaning-interpretation (1967[1932]).

Let me focus on two different aspects here: photographing as communicative action and communicating with photos. In both respects it can prove problematic to tie the meaning of communicative action to an actor's intentionality. When a photographer talks to his photo model or to a group of persons in order to arrange a photographic scene and ensure adequate staging and posing, it fits Schutz's distinction well: the photographer communicates by words and gestures what he intends and hopes he is understood correctly and that his interactants respond and behave adequately. If the photographer, however, tries to take pictures as a kind of distant, "invisible," and "unob-

trusive" observer, as I have described above, his intention consists not only in taking pictures but also in photographing in an unnoticed way. However, by his bodily actions he makes his photographing visible. Even if he has no intention to communicate his photographing, he actually does communicate it. The observable behavior of a person who has a camera in her hands, holds it in front of her eyes, and focuses on something is easily recognizable as photographing. Often it is even identifiable what the photographer intends to photograph, where her camera is pointing, and what her gaze is directed at. To photograph invisibly requires sophisticated hiding techniques; in everyday life even hip shots or taking pictures in a different direction than the photographer is gazing are often easily detected. People who know me well usually recognize fairly soon when I am enacting my photographic gaze—before I even grab my camera; when scanning the scene for possible pictures I obviously appear somehow lost in reverie and I regularly drop out of the conversation. Even when I try hard to remain unnoticed and hide my camera, I am obviously still making my photographing accountable in an ethnomethodological sense.

The second aspect to consider is communicating with photos. Once photos are taken they acquire a life of their own. Basically, the sense of a photo reveals a triad of image, its creator (the photographer and his or her intentions), and its recipient (the beholder). A photo reveals something, mostly a scene of the "real" world that can be interpreted as an object in its own right. But it is always interpreted by a beholder on the basis of a specific cultural and social stock of knowledge and relevance system at hand. When beholding a photo the recipient does not need to care about the photographer and his or her intentions, but he cannot see anything that the photographer did not include in the picture. By the choice of topic, subject, perspective, frame, timing, colors, or shades of black and white the photographer produced the image in a certain way and excluded many other things that were part of the "real" scene. By distinguishing the establishment of meaning by the creator and the interpretation of meaning by the recipient, *Schutz* reconciled the aesthetics of production with the aesthetics of reception (Dreher & Barber, 2013). How much can be said about the specific style and practices of a creator can be seen in laudations and honorific speeches about art photographers at photo museums and art galleries

and in books. But photos are objectivations and can become independent of their creator, outlive him, and be viewed, interpreted, and used by all kinds of other people unforeseen and unplanned by the photographer. Communicating with photos can thus only partly be traced back to the intentions of the photographer who created them; as objectivations and media they can acquire a life of their own that is quite independent of their originator once they are circulating in society.[2]

Photographing in the Digital Mode

Modern information and communication technologies have induced enormous changes in photography. While I was the only one owning a camera and taking pictures in my class at high school in the 1960s, photographing has become a widely disseminated and ubiquitous activity of nearly everyone. Since the invention of digital photography, technically sophisticated cameras that make fairly good pictures in automatic mode have become available at low prices, and taking pictures and storing them on the computer has become extremely cheap. Ten years ago I switched to a digital SLR camera. In addition I bought an ultra-compact camera that I always carry with me, in order to be ready at any moment to shoot a picture if a great opportunity arises suddenly. Nowadays, we all have smart phones that fulfill the same function, among many others. Wherever we go and wherever we are, we always encounter people who are photographing something and then look at their pictures.

Undoubtedly, not only the activity of photographing but also communicating with photos has dramatically increased. Photos (as well as videos) are posted on websites and in social media and they are sent by email, dropbox, or mms. The Internet provides pictures of anything and everything, and they can be searched by Google. Daily conversations and narrations are often enriched with photos on the mobile

2 It is interesting that texts explaining photos of architecture often mention only the name of the architect of the photographed building but not the name of the photographer (which is obviously considered irrelevant in this context…) (cf. Janser et al., 2013).

phone, the ipad, or a computer screen. Photos have become a pervasive constituent of modern communicative culture.

Have the new technologies also boosted creativity? Let us return to the distinction between the subjective and the objective perspectives. The subjective creativity of many people has certainly increased. Many take pictures nowadays who have never done so before, and many try out different perspectives, different framings, different timings, and so on. Many deal with visuality in ways they have not done so far, and by trial and error they gain experiences and at least some expertise. Surprisingly many succeed in making great shots at times. But many never learn the basic "principles" of photographing or how to use the technical features of their camera beyond the automatic mode; they do not know about exposure modes, aperture, shutter speed, ISO settings, focusing techniques, white balance, and so on. Others experiment with new apps that allow for creating many kinds of special effects, or they learn how to use photoshop or similar computer programs to rework their pictures on the computer. The ubiquity of photographing and the multiplicity of practices make the situation fairly intransparent; much more ethnographic research is required in this respect.

From an amateur's view, things look a bit different. Returning to my subjective, autoethnographic perspective, I see it as quite evident that my subjective creativity was not boosted by the new technologies. Let me review the three steps I distinguished when reflecting on creativity: First, concerning the choice of subjects, perspectives, framing, timing, etc., everything has remained the same. Second, the handling of the technical features of the camera also has not changed. I learned the ropes of photography before the age of automatic modes, of sophisticated measuring techniques, and of auto-focusing lenses with image stabilization and vibration reduction. I am still drawing on that basic knowledge and expertise when photographing. It provides me with resources to understand the automatic modes and to think beyond them. I immediately recognize if I have to over- or under-expose a picture, if I want to use a large or small aperture, a high or low shutter speed, or which options I have when dealing with sharp contrasts of light and shade or of light and dark colors, and so on. I also use this knowledge when photographing in the digital mode; it helps me to reach what I am intending, by correcting or overruling the automated

functions. Third, I have always reworked my photos in the darkroom, changed frames, rectified angles and straightened out lines, modified contrasts, and created special effects by using different kinds of paper that I exposed to the projector light for different time-spans. Actually, reworking the photos has changed significantly, as it is done now in a different world: at the desk on the computer by means of software you have to learn; and the more expertise you get with that software (like photoshop) the more savvy you are about reworking, modifying, and changing your photos. Gone is the time when I converted my bathroom into a darkroom where I developed films and photos, gone is that special feeling of working in solitude, in low light and quietness, the air filled with the smells of chemicals, and my mind, soul, and heart thrilled with attention, expectation, and surprise as the contours of a picture slowly emerged on the paper in the basin.

The huge change that photographing in the digital mode has brought about is that processing has been enormously accelerated. Photos are taken and can be immediately looked at, which permits the photographer to shoot another one or to do a series with different modifications. Modern devices enable the photographer immediately to send a picture away by email or mms or upload it to the Internet. And reworking a photo has become a clean and comparatively easy-to-do procedure on the computer, which allows modifications to be made really quickly. It has all become fast and easy. But for my part, I cannot observe a significant boost in my subjective creativity since switching to the digital mode.

Let me close with a tentative statement on creativity in photography from an objective perspective. While a photographer may subjectively experience the creating of something "new," it may not be judged as "new" when compared with the state of the art in society. It is my impression that creativity in photography was not boosted by the digital revolution from an objective perspective either. It is quite revealing that many professional photographers still use films and produce their photos with chemicals and special papers in the darkroom. And it is not just elderly photographers who use obsolete techniques for biographical reasons but also young ones, millennials who grew up with computers and all kinds of digital devices. In the shade of the digital revolution and unnoticed by many, the quality of films and papers has been greatly increased during the last decade, too, and

many young professionals who ambitiously strive to produce art photography are obviously convinced that they obtain better results with films and paper and chemicals in the lab. Knowing whether this trend will continue, and for how long, requires more research, in any case.

Conclusion

The aims of my paper were to analyze photographing as creative and communicative action from a phenomenological perspective and to reflect on whether and how practices have changed since switching from the analog to the digital mode. I argued that Schutz and Luckmann's theory of action does not apply to all types of action and that phenomenological analysis therefore should investigate the constitution of sense in concrete forms of action, like photographing, and explore their creative and communicative aspects. As a phenomenologist always analyzes his or her own subjective experiences, this investigation was inevitably restricted to a specific historical, cultural, and biographical set of practices. I am nevertheless convinced that my analysis has revealed many facets of photographing that cannot be seen easily if you adopt only an observer's perspective. Hence it provides a fruitful basis for ethnographic research that explores further practices of photographing, of creativity, of communication, and of using different technologies.

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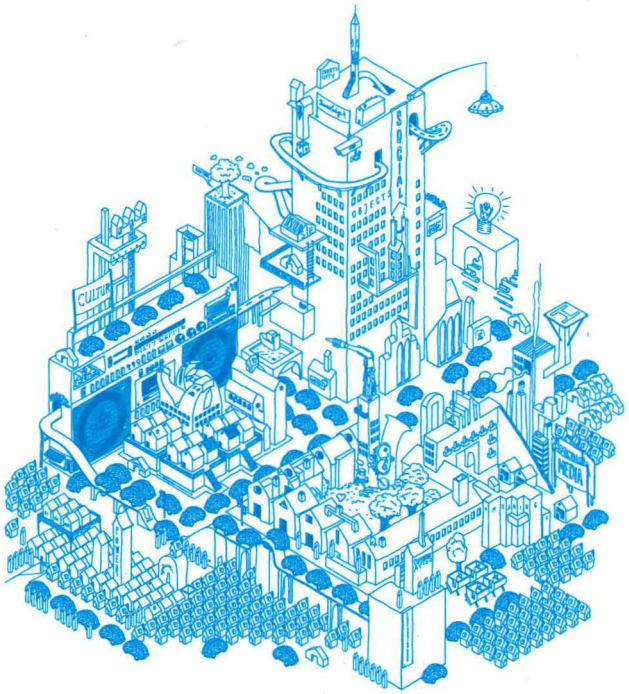

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Culture, Communication, and Creativity

Reframing the Relations of Media, Knowledge, and Innovation in Society

Definitions of "culture," a core term shared by the humanities and the social sciences, are contested and changeable. But there is general agreement that culture has to do with meaning and that culture serves to guide to social action. In recent years, culture is increasingly seen to be "productive"—by economists and political scientists, as well as sociologists and anthropologists. "Creativity"—until recently a marginal topic of academic interest—has attracted increasing attention as a cultural product. Creativity becomes a formula guiding action in many societal fields, such as business, city planning, and education. The demand for creativity ranges from the individual level of "creative subjects" to the intermediate level ("creative cities") up to national societies ("creative classes," creative nations) and even international governance organizations. Yet the concept lacks precision. The sociology of culture should be able to help remedy that; indeed, the increased attention to creativity indicates an increasing interest in culture. But with the notable exception of Sales and Fournier (2007), there has been little analysis of the relation of creativity to culture. Contributors to that volume not only demonstrate how communication and information technologies affect innovation—and in particularly creativity—stressing the increased importance of knowledge in contemporary society.

The present volume too emphasizes in its analysis the concept of "communication." It is the premise of this volume (and of the conference that inspired it) that the rising importance of creativity in modern culture is related to dramatic changes in communication. In the last decades we have witnessed a revolutionary change in the ways we communicate with one another. This change has been related to the

dissemination of a series of new technologies, infrastructures, and media that help shape communication—a process sometimes labeled "mediatization." Given the far reaching transformation of communication and culture by the new information technologies in the last decades, it is rather surprising that the transformation of the structure of communication has not been taken more into consideration as one of the most decisive aspects of the new "productivity" of culture. The full aim of this volume, then, is to explore the relations of culture, creativity, and communication.

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