

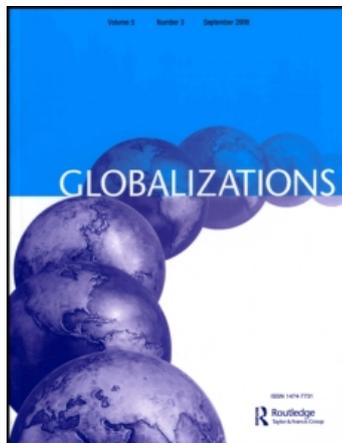
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### Mobile Witnessing: Ethics and the Camera Phone in the 'War on Terror'

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## Mobile Witnessing: Ethics and the Camera Phone in the ‘War on Terror’

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**ABSTRACT** *Some of the first images rapidly circulated globally in news media of the London Bombings on 7 July 2005 were taken by non-journalists using mobile camera phones. This paper explores some of the ethical issues raised by mobile phone witnessing in the ‘war on terror’. The article uses a performative approach to witnessing in which mobile testimony is seen in terms of performances and speech acts between different parties, including mute witnesses, the survivor witness and the witness(es) to the survivor (s). The approach enables us to see the significance of global mobilities and mobilizations in relation to ethics and mobile witnessing, rather than focusing only the ethics associated with the discrete mobile witness image itself. The article examines some of the global virtual traces and data trajectories on the World Wide Web associated with a mobile camera phone image taken by a witness survivor, Adam Stacey in the 7 July 2005 London Bombings. This suggests that mobile witnessing involves a fluid and travelling involvement in data capture, data sharing, and receipt, through global networks mobilized through multiple mobilities. Mobile witnessing has trajectories across and moments of emplacement between the self and the other, the individual and the group, the private and the public, the citizen and the professional journalist, the living body and the machine. In traversing the ordinary and the extraordinary, speech and speechlessness, mobile witnessing can involve engagement beyond mere spectatorship, establishing new ways of recording events in the ‘war on terror’.*

*Algunas de las primeras imágenes que circularon globalmente en las noticias sobre las bombas que estallaron en Londres el 7 de Julio de 2005, fueron tomadas por gente que no trabajaba en los medios, usando la cámara de sus celulares. Este documento explora algunos de los incidentes éticos suscitados a raíz del testimonio obtenido mediante celulares en la ‘guerra contra el terror’. El artículo usa un enfoque performativo para evaluar el testimonio de los testigos móviles, el cual es visto en términos de actuaciones y acciones de palabra entre las*

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*diferentes partes, que incluyen testigos mudos, el testigo sobreviviente y el(los) testigo(s) del(los) sobreviviente(s). El enfoque nos permite ver la trascendencia de la movilidad global y las movilizaciones en relación a la ética y al testimonio móvil, en vez de concentrarnos solamente en la ética asociada por sí misma con una imagen testimonial móvil discreta. El artículo examina algunos trazos virtuales globales y trayectorias de datos en Internet asociados con una imagen de una cámara de celular tomada por un testigo sobreviviente, Adam Stacey durante las bombas que estallaron en Londres, el 7 de julio de 2005. Esto sugiere que el testimonio móvil conlleva una participación dinámica y ambulante en la captura, intercambio y recibo de datos, a través de redes globales movilizadas a través de múltiples movi­lidades. El testimonio móvil tiene trayectorias a todo lo ancho y momentos de emplazamiento entre el uno y el otro, el individuo y el grupo, lo privado y lo público, el ciudadano y el periodista profesional, el ser humano y la máquina. Recorriendo lo ordinario y lo extraordinario, la comunicación hablada y el mutismo, el testimonio móvil puede implicar un compromiso más allá de simple espectador, estableciendo nuevas formas de grabar eventos en la 'guerra contra el terror'.*

关于2005年7月7日伦敦地铁爆炸案最早的照片中，有一部分是由使用摄像手机的一些非新闻记者拍下来的，这些照片在全球新闻媒体中迅速流传开来。这篇论文分析了由摄像手机见证“反恐战争”所引起的伦理问题。本文运用述行法来考察这种见证，这些移动的证据是根据不同人们间的表现和言语行动来看待的，这些人们包括沉默的目击者、目击者中的幸存者，还有见到幸存者的人。这种方法使我们能够看到与伦理和移动目击有关的全球流动与动员的重要性，而不仅仅局限于同那些分散的移动目击者所拍下的照片有关的伦理问题。

2005年7月7日伦敦大爆炸案目击者中有一位叫亚当·史泰西（Adam Stacey）的幸存者，他当时用手机拍了张照片。这篇文章考察了在万维网（WWW）上有关这张照片的虚拟追踪以及数据库。这说明，移动目击涉及到了通过具有多元流动性的全球网络进行的数据获得、数据分享和数据接收中的流动性与流通性问题。在自身与他者、个人与群体、私人与公共领域、一般人员与专业记者、人与机器之间，移动目击有传输的轨道和设置的时间。通过普通的和专业的、有声的与无声的方式，移动目击的参与度不仅仅是旁观，而且还在于建立一些新的方式来记录“反恐战争”中的大事件。

Spectatorship is not enough: it is in active witnessing that the ethical demand occurs.

Cubilie (2005, p. 252)

Mobile phone images are part of the global news reporting and public witnessing of events in the 'war on terror'.<sup>1</sup> Some of the first images circulated in the news media of the 7/7 London Bombings in 2005 were by non-journalists using mobile camera phones, which to some heralded the arrival of 'citizen journalism' (Allen, 2006). As well as generating discussion within the media itself concerning the ethics of 'citizen journalism', particularly in the US after the circulation of the video of the hanging of Saddam Hussein (Helmore, 2007), citizen journalism has led to a number of academic studies (Allen, 2006; Barlow, 2007; Gilmour, 2006). Some do address what the ethical and legal status is of non-journalists rather than professionals producing news images (Gant, 2007), as well as the question of alternative witnessing provided by the blogosphere, which has been described as uneven and contingent (Allen, 2006, p. 100). But there has, as yet, been little academic discussion of the ethics and meaning of witnessing in

the 'war on terror' using mobile technologies. This article attempts to address some of the ethical issues raised by the use of mobile camera phone images with a particular focus on the public witnessing of terrorist violence and atrocity.

The article contends that an understanding of the mobilities and mobilizations involved in mobile witnessing is important to ethical considerations of the media in the global 'war on terror'. Drawing on a range of studies on mobile phones, the paper begins by outlining the potential ways in which mobile camera phones may be developing new languages and practices within visual culture. Theoretically, these could be seen to constitute new forms of mobile witnessing, challenging established news making practices and languages of record. The article then examines approaches to witnessing, before drawing on a performative approach suggested by the work of Anne Cubilie (2005). Using a performative framework, the paper analyses the media and network trajectories of a camera phone image taken by 7/7 survivor Adam Stacey that became circulated via the World Wide Web and subsequently was used by a number of newspapers worldwide in the reporting of the atrocities.

The analysis suggests that the camera phone image unsettles established cultures of record in contradictory ways. In traversing binaries such as the private and the public, the body and the machine, the material and the virtual, the journalist and the citizen, the mobile camera phone is extending and modifying media languages, practices, and forms. This may seem to challenge established ethics in relation to the public witnessing of atrocities and terror, and yet the images are also emplaced within established codes of ethics and broader news practices and discourses. The article begins by mapping some of the global impact of mobile communications technologies.

### **The Global Mobile**

The mobile phone has unprecedented reach, impacting globally on media, communications, and information technology (Agar, 2003). Worldwide, more people now own a mobile phone than a television set (Katz and Aarkus, 2002, p. 5). Mobile phone penetration in the EU reached almost 93% in 2006 (Cook, 2006). In 30 countries worldwide mobile phone take up exceeds 100% penetration, with individuals subscribing to more than one phone network (Wallace, 2006). Studies have shown that the technology is changing global communications including those in low-income populations such as Jamaica (Horst and Miller, 2006). Economically, as Western markets are becoming saturated, mobile phone operators are 'in a land grab for new customers in developing areas of the world' (Judge, 2005). Despite the devastation caused to infrastructure by the wars in Afghanistan, a country with virtually no landline telephones, mobile phone companies have rapidly moved in (BBC News, 2002) with 12% of the population subscribing by August 2007 (Brummet, 2007). Likewise in Iraq, despite damage to infrastructure caused by the War, mobile communications have developed rapidly since 2003 when mobile licenses were awarded (BBC News, 2003).

According to Campbell and Park (2008), mobile communication practices and technologies can be seen as part of a broader evolution towards a personal communication society. While mobile technologies are evidently different, especially in terms of their diffusion from Internet network cultures, they are building on and modifying Castell's (2000) concept of the network society that emerged in the 1990s and that was used to explain the development of Internet network cultures and the global shift away from mass mediated messages. Mobile phones are also an increasing mobility of peoples, things, and cultures (Urry, 2007). The significance of the convergence of mobile technologies with personalized communication is now seen by a number of governments in programmes that are developing personal and mobile messages

to populations through m-government (Mobile Government Consortium International, 2006). In parallel with 'm-government', though, there is also what we could term 'm-terror': this is the growing use of mobile technologies as a propaganda medium by terrorist networks and organizations. Persuasive personalized messages can be circulated globally via mobile phone networks to mobile and globalized target populations. Hence, al-Qaeda's media wing, a-Sahab, announced early in 2008 that it was reissuing video recordings in mobile formats (Associated Press, 2008). At the same time, mobile phones can and are providing governments with individual tracking devices: mobile data that includes communications and movements in space-time may be archived and accessed as a form of recording and tracking populations with the development of a global panopticon (BBC News, 2007). Mobile technologies have impacted on news-gathering with news organizations now using camera phone images generated by the public. While Yahoo! launched *youwitnessnews* specifically to accommodate camera phone generated images with a section specifically on news from Iraq, mainstream broadcasters including the BBC and Sky have online services dedicated to user generated images, largely taken using camera phones.

What is significant about the mobile phone, unlike the landline phone, is that with the rapid convergence of digital media technologies, the mobile has developed into a handy multimedia computer that is effectively a personal and global prosthetic to human memory. Mobile phones include diaries, organizers, note pages, records of contacts, and a personal archive or log of texts and calls. Most incorporate cameras, video cameras, and audio recording devices, allowing for the capture, processing, and playback of visual and audio material. Bluetooth and wireless networking enable the uploading, downloading, sharing, and digital archiving of multimedia material between individuals and between individuals and organizations worldwide. Unlike other digital devices, the mobile phone is virtually unique in being a *wearable* rather than portable device (Campbell and Park, 2008). My own small study involving qualitative interviews in 2006 with 20 young people in London showed how, unlike the laptop or camera, the mobile phone lives with us and on us, in hand bags, in pockets, and on the bedside table at night. This combination of ubiquity and wearable multimedia functionality has important global and ethical implications in 'the war on terror'.

### Mobile Communication Studies

Although mobile phones have begun to impact on the witnessing of public events, mobile or cell phone studies have done little as yet to address this aspect of their impact on culture. There are a couple of studies that make links between mobile phones and civic engagement (Perterra, 2003; Rheingold, 2002). But, although these segue into witnessing in terms of looking at how individuals are using mobiles for representative purposes in the public sphere, they are not tackling the same issues relating to ethics that arise from representing atrocities. There is, however, a worldwide body of academic literature on mobile phone use that crosses a variety of disciplines and fields including anthropology, cultural and communication studies, computer studies, psychology, and sociology. Some research addresses changes to overall communicative practices (Ling, 2004; Rheingold, 2002); other studies explore the significance of mobile phones in terms of time and space (Caron and Caronia, 2007; Garcia-Montes et al., 2006; Hanson, 2007). Studies analyse the different ways that mobile phones are impacting on everyday communicative practices and people's lives and relationships in different global contexts (Goggin, 2006; Horst and Miller, 2006; Ito et al., 2008; Katz, 2006; Katz and Aakhus, 2002). Some give a particular emphasis to uses by different socio-economic groups and youth in particular

(Green, 2003; Lobet-Maris, 2003; Oksman and Rautiainen, 2003). Recent work addresses the particular pervasiveness of the mobile phone in London (Ito et al., 2008).

Although there is little research on camera phone witnessing, there is work that is focusing on the specific use and meaning of camera phone images. Images are used for both sharing and personal use, and for both affective and functional purposes (Kindeberg et al., 2004). Research is addressing how camera phones are elevating the mundane and ordinary 'to the level of an event' thereby shifting established patterns of everyday memory (Rubinstein, 2005, p. 117) and changing the practice of photography (Rubinstein and Sluis, 2008). This resonates with Kato, Okabe, Ito, and Uemoto's study (2005), which argues that while the conventional camera is used for special occasions such as weddings, birthdays, and holidays, the camera phone, since it is always carried with us, is used for 'recording and commemorating' aspects of everyday life (2005, p. 305).

My own research has addressed the gendered domestic memory uses of the camera phone (Reading, 2008), as well as the ways in which the camera phone is resulting in a new digital memory form, *memobilia*, that is 'me', self-centred, 'mob', mobile, and meme-like, with units of data that are rapidly transferable with virus-like qualities (Reading, forthcoming).

There is also research that is attempting to attend to the circulation of images across different media (Van House and Davis, 2005; Van House, 2007). Lisa Gye (2007) has examined how Australian newspapers use images sent in by readers. Van House's work suggests that the relationship between mobile phones and photo sharing sites on the Internet is changing the photograph in time and space, with image sharing across media leading to a 'distant closeness' (2007) and a kind of social life across different media (Van House and Davis, 2005).

### Framing Witnessing

Discussion of the ethical dimension of mobile technologies is still, however, lacking despite the fact that mobile technologies 'raise new ethical and moral dilemmas because they transgress established boundaries' (Ibrahim, 2007). The camera phone's greatest potential in global news terms is in the immediate recording of public events and in its ability for data to be shared and viewed via Bluetooth, Multimedia Messaging Service (MMS), and the World Wide Web. For Yasmin Ibrahim this constitutes part of the construction of a 'post-surveillance society' with the potential 'to challenge and provide a counter-gaze against powerful and entrenched institutions' (2007). The implication here is that the camera phone, as a wearable digital mobile prosthetic, enables a new kind of public record or a globally shareable and immediate form of mobile witnessing.

This mobile witnessing, though, is not to be conflated with simply recording, remembering, or reporting. As John Peters argues, 'witnessing is an intricately tangled practice'. Discussing the term from the perspective of communication studies, he argues that the term witness involves '(1) the agent who bears witness (2) the utterance or text itself, (3) the audience who witnesses.' He also points out that 'it is thus a strange but intelligible sentence to say: the witness (speech-act) of the witness (person) was witnessed (by an audience). A witness can also be the performance itself.' (Peters, 2001, p. 709) There are, then, two 'faces' to witnessing, 'the passive one of seeing and the active one of saying'. With the former, people may accidentally view or observe something; with the latter, the person is the producer of a particular kind of knowledge arising out of the passive experience that is policed for veracity and authority (Peters, 2001, p. 709).

This also suggests that witnessing, whether digital or not, then requires that we consider its moral and ethical basis. Luc Boltanski argues that once witnessing becomes disassociated

from a sense of morality and responsibility for those involved in the events, it ceases to be witnessing and, instead, becomes spectatorship (1999). Roger Silverstone (2004), extending Boltanski's exploration of media distance and the morality of mass mediated suffering, reminds us that what is needed in media reporting of suffering and atrocity is 'proper distance'. This 'involves a search for enough knowledge and understanding of the other person or culture to enable responsibility and care, as well as to enable the kind of action that, informed by that understanding, is in turn enabling. We need to be close but not too close, distant, but not too distant.' (Silverstone, 2004, 480)

However, some theorists argue that it is possible to be a witness without actually being ethical. Hence Anne Cubilie, whose work combines an analysis of women witnessing in different circumstances, including the Nazi Holocaust, South American disappearances, and Taliban atrocities committed in Afghanistan, contends:

Spectatorship is not enough; it is in active witnessing that the ethical demand occurs. The survivor who is marked as a survivor does not by her or his very existence compel an ethical engagement with atrocity . . . an ethical relationship that engages the survivor through all the facets of her humanness so that witnessing can take place within a mutually constructed frame. (Cubilie, 2005, p. 252)

This seems to suggest that there may be different categories through which we should frame witnessing: spectatorship, witnessing, and active witnessing. While I am not suggesting that the boundaries between these are distinctly fixed, the latter would seem to include some ethical engagement and mutuality with the people involved in the events.

Further, within much academic literature, the witnessing of terror and atrocity tends to be conceptualized with the precept that the testimony of the witness will necessarily involve some kind of crisis of representation or speechlessness. Judith Herman argues that bearing witness under acute circumstances is often characterized by a dialectical struggle between articulation and silence as the witness seeks to find a language to express that which seems outside of language, that which is unspeakable (Herman, 2001, p. 1; see also Hayner, 2002). Wyschogrod extends the argument regarding the difficulties of representation in language, implied as oral or textual by Herman (2001) and Hayner (2002), to propound that ethical remembering requires an expression of the impossibility of articulating the event or representing it through other forms and languages such as the visual. Research on witnessing and the Holocaust in particular has explored this dimension (Felman and Laub, 1992; Hartman, 2000). Witnessing atrocity, then, seems to be characterized by a paradox: in order to be ethical it requires the responsibility of representation and yet there is a dimension to atrocity that cannot be represented because it is outside of language (Agamben, 2005).

At the same time, in attempting to frame mobile witnessing, we need to be aware of different historic contexts and practices with different media. John Ellis (2000) in *Seeing Things*, while acknowledging that witnessing certainly involves some responsibility to the event, emphasizes that with the development of each new medium the extent of sensory evidence has been extended, with television in particular turning witnessing into a domestic act. Ellis's work helps highlight how that which is viscerally sensed is no longer turned only into the spoken or written word. Witnessing in the twenty-first century and in the 'war on terror' involves turning the sensory experience into audio, photographs, documentary films, news reports, web pages, and mobile camera phone images that circulate the globe via the World Wide Web.

Further, all witnessing has a particular political and historic context. With mobile witnessing in the 'war on terror' this includes the political and cultural discourses of the war itself in which the enemy is perceived of as a global and local threat both within and without, traversing national

boundaries in new ways. Giorgio Agamben (1995, 2005) suggests that in response to this, the dominant paradigm since 9/11 is the normalization of the State of Exception with a concomitant erosion of the legal status of the individual underpinned by an emptiness of law. Agamben does not explore the place or role of the media within this, but the emptiness of law, I would suggest, also includes a void in terms of the possibility for public witnessing and public mediation. If one concurs with and extends Agamben's thesis to include what happens with the media within an increasing normalization of the State of Exception, then there is the possibility for the increasing normalization of an absence of record in time, or the possibility for the 'non-memory' of events related to the erosion of the legal status of the individual.

However, recent work that uses a performative approach to understanding witnessing—which perhaps might offer insights into the mobile witnessing of atrocity—suggests that the conceptual paradox of atrocity of dis-articulated responsibility is only the case if we focus on one element in the process of witnessing, rather than understanding in terms of performances between people. According to Anne Cubilie, what theorists such as Agamben and Wyschogrod ignore is that the testimony of the witness of atrocity is 'a performative act between the mute witnesses . . . the dead, the survivor witness, and the witness to the survivor' (2005, p. 3).

The ethical issues suggested by these differing approaches concern whether the images captured during a terrorist attack using a mobile phone constitute a new kind of mobile witnessing or veer into mere spectatorship or voyeurism. In the following section I explore the use of a performative approach to 'citizen journalism' to see to what extent Cubilie's concept of ethical witnessing maps onto mobile witnessing. Mobile witnessing may unsettle the paradox usually identified at the centre of the witnessing atrocity to enable a form of ethical witnessing, appearing to provide a counter gaze, through both travelling while also being emplaced within different resources, such as the values of mainstream news organizations, the 'war on terror' itself, and the developing mobile global panopticon.

### **The Mobile Witness**

A performative approach to mobile witnessing, I would suggest, means that rather than focusing on the particular meanings of the decontextualized mobile image or on the uses of the technology, the analysis examines the performances and speech acts associated with it. One way of doing this is to examine the globalized traces and mediated trajectories of the image through the Internet.

In the 7 July 2005 London Bombings some of the first images circulated of the attacks were taken using camera phones by non-journalists, who were both witnesses and survivors of the event: video camera phone images were on air within 20 minutes (Day, 2005). The personal images taken by survivors later became part of the public archive of events via various news organizations, with the BBC receiving around 30 video clips and around 1,000 images on the day of the attacks taken using mobile camera phones.

In the next section, I use a performative approach to explore the ethical implications of mobile witnessing, looking at its globalized and mediated trajectories. The analysis is of the Internet data traces left with various major news organizations over a number of hours and days, and the global posting strings on Alfie Dennen's moblog site to which the image was first uploaded. An analysis of these moblog discussions, which are effectively mobile, global and virtual ethnographies, may enable us to explore how mobile witnessing could be understood as a performative act between the unseen dead, the survivor with the camera, the other survivors captured in the image, and the public witnesses to the survivor in the form of blog friends, co-bloggers, and news

editors. The approach seeks to understand the ethics of mobile witnessing through the significance of the mobilities and mobilizations in which the mobile camera phone image travels.

The mobilities and trajectories that I analyse relate to the mobile witness image of a survivor of the 7 July 2005 London Bombings, Adam Stacey. He was a 24-year-old civil servant travelling on the Piccadilly Line on the day of the attacks. Trapped for 40 minutes in a smoke-filled carriage after the blast between Kings Cross and Russell Square, he used a gym sock from his workbag to cover his mouth to help prevent smoke inhalation. Unaware at the time of the magnitude of what had happened, he asked a friend he was travelling with, Elliot, to use his camera phone to take a photo to show to colleagues later at work (Dear, 2006). The image captured was of Adam with his hand over his mouth escaping a smoke-filled tunnel, with the shadowy images of other survivors behind him (Dennen, 2005). After this image of Adam Stacey was captured on his mobile camera phone, he surfaced to safety and mobile network coverage and quickly sent the image to Alfie Dennen, another friend. Dennen, who describes himself as a 'mobile and web-busybody, blogger and mobile convergence commentator' had set up his own moblog, having joined the MOBLOG website in 2003 (Dennen, 2008). The image was then published on Alfie's Moblog as 'London Underground Bombing, Trapped' (Dennen, 2008).

This particular image was chosen for this study because of the extent and reach: it was one of two images that became most circulated via different news media and is subsequently widely known and remembered. (The other was the iconic image of the London bus.) After being uploaded to Alfie's Moblog, the witness image was rapidly taken up by national and international news and broadcast organizations, as well as the front pages of a number of newspapers worldwide. Posted soon after the attacks on the morning of 7 July, the image had clocked 21,121 views by 16.43 (Dennen, 2005). Within two years, on Alfie Dennen's site, the image had been viewed 154,010 times (Dennen, 2005). *Time* magazine awarded the picture Best Photo of the Year, 2005 (*Time*, 2005). By the evening of 8 July, the image, according to one blogger, had become iconic:

This photo & Moblog was just mentioned on MSNBC. The person being interviewed was asked what photo from people on the street in London struck a chord the most.<sup>2</sup> (Autumncat 8.8 05:1951 in Dennen, 2005)

Publicly accessible data in the archives of the moblog record how over the first day and in the days that immediately followed, the camera phone image provoked powerful expressions of revenge and hatred towards the bombers, as well as sympathies to those concerned. One postee, Kyoob wrote at 16.46 on 7 July, 'this image definitely stirs something deep inside. Sympathies to all'. The image generated discussions about the UK and USA's complicity in creating terrorism, as well as critical discussions of race and racism, nation and nationalism, and Islamic fundamentalism. Alfie's Moblog evidences how the image instigated expressions of mutuality and complicity in people's connections to memories and experiences of other events, such as the Madrid Bombings and 9/11.

The image, as well as other camera phone images of the attacks, provoked considerable public discussion about the uses of the camera phone in the public recording of the events and the subsequent impact on news making practices in the development of what was dubbed 'citizen journalism'. The *Media Guardian* called it a 'momentous day for journalism', reporting that 'seasoned news executives talk of a "tipping point" a democratization of the news process, the true birth of the "citizen reporter". The public assuming control of the newsgathering process to a hitherto unimagined degree' (Day, 2005).

The development was discussed in terms of how camera phone reportage was challenging news conventions of mediation, documentation, and authenticity. The editor of the BBC's *Ten O'Clock News* argued that the fact that so many people were sending it camera phone images demonstrated 'a new closeness forming between BBC news and the public' (cited in Day, 2005).

Despite this public interest there was very little critical public discussion regarding the ethics of people photographing and videoing in a situation of atrocity. Yet, many of the images that conventional news organizations such as the BBC and ITV news received were, in fact, deemed too graphic by editors to be ethically useable and were thus not widely circulated at the time (Day, 2005). It is not without significance, then, that the image of Adam Stacey, selected by various mainstream news editors and chosen to go on the front page of the BBC's website, despite the need to convey that the London Underground had been bombed during commuter rush hour, depicted no blood or gore, showed no dead bodies, and no actual destruction. Rather, the image selected was a grainy, blurry portrait using Adam's own camera phone, cast through greenish emergency lighting, with shadowy survivors in the background, taken during the escape from an underground tunnel.

In terms of Anne Cubilie's performative framework for ethical witnessing, I explore some of the ways in which this particular mobile witness image can be seen to traverse and unsettle the conventional binaries and paradoxes associated with witnessing atrocity. First of all I show how this is evident within the content of the image itself, which is made possible through the mobile performance involved in using a mobile phone. Secondly, I look at how the mobilities and mobilizations of the image by the public and institutions provide legitimacy in ways that are particular to its origins from a mobile phone.

### The Mobilities of the Image

Adam Stacey, a 24-year-old civil servant was travelling on an underground train on the Piccadilly Line from his home in North London to his office near Holborn, Central London (Dear, 2006). Like many other commuters on that day, he started a habitual journey carrying the everyday technological device of the mobile phone: it was this, not a camera, that enabled him to take this particular image in that moment and upload it to a public space. The picture was rapidly transformed from a personal memory act into a public act of reportage (close but not too close) circulating rapidly via the technology of the Internet. This, combined with Alfie Dennen's decision to publish the image under a Creative Commons license on his mob log, meant that it traversed the established ethical and legal restrictions associated with copyright and news agencies. As part of the copy left movement it was not subject to commodification in the usual way and could be easily picked up and used by broadcasters and newspapers.

Further, the image traverses the ethical boundaries and challenges linked in news reporting with the binaries of self *and* other(s). It is significant that the image is a (self-)portrait. In the moments following the bombing, Adam Stacey turned the camera phone not onto others in distress but onto himself. The image does not then show an unknown corpse or injured bodies, as with images that were not widely circulated and that would make us in effect spectators, without any responsibility for others' (distant) suffering. The image, although of Adam, is also something that everyone can identify with: one post on 13 July at 13.57 on the Moblog from 'Ewen, Lithuania' stated: 'This picture sums up the terror I've always felt on the tube' (Dennen, 2005). The common mobile performance of turning the camera phone on the self is embedded in the image of Adam Stacey: he is everyman or rather every man or woman who

has ever travelled on the Tube or indeed any underground city transportation system and fears being trapped underground.

Elaine Scarry (1985) has argued that torture turns everyday objects—the ordinary and domestic such as the kitchen table, the chair, the bath tub—into instruments of torture. Likewise, with an atrocity such as the terrorist bombing of the London Underground in 2005, the normal, the routine, the everyday become imprinted with the shock of destruction and violence. It is this shattering of normality that can be so difficult to represent or articulate. With Adam Stacey's camera phone image, it is of both the witness to an atrocity (Adam/us) and the survivor of the atrocity (Adam/others); it is of a named individual amidst an unknown mass of people. It is poor quality and blurred and yet purports to truth and authenticity. The language and form are familiar and domestic, the London Tube, the city commuter, and yet the image resonates with shock and trauma. It is a still image taken of ordinary people in an extraordinary situation of movement and flight. It is someone alive and yet who appears to be choking. It is of both the abnormal and exceptional (the smoke, the escape) amidst the everyday (the tube tunnel, rush hour).

This particular mobile witness image is also both a speech act and yet incorporates speechlessness. Drawing on Jacqui Alexander's (2005) work on memory in *Pedagogies of Crossing*, Courtney Rivard has suggested that memory on 9/11 memorial websites can be understood as constituted through virtual 'speech acts' (2007). Likewise, I would contend that as a captured image communicated via phone the image of Adam Stacey is a speech act of a moment of atrocity, while capturing a moment of speechlessness in relation to the atrocity through the self-image of a man gagging with a hand over his mouth.

### Mobilizing Authority

Further, one of the ethical paradoxes that literature on atrocity has explored is that it can be difficult to give authority and legitimacy to private individual memories of events that seem unbelievable even to the individual themselves (Herman, 1999). The alternative is that images become highly graphic but then remain uncirculated or restricted in the mainstream media because they overstep ethical codes of taste and decency. Or, if highly graphic images are disseminated they then can end up dehumanizing the victims further. This was the case in relation to both the Holocaust and 9/11, especially as images became decontextualized and unanchored from their original source (Zelizer, 2002). With the image of Adam Stacey, a performative analysis of its virtual trajectories, mobilities, and mobilizations suggests how mobile witnessing can disrupt this ethical paradox.

Within minutes, the mobile witness image travelled from the realm of private experience captured in the domain of Adam Stacey's mobile phone into public virtual space. There it became part of the authoritative and legitimate performance and speech acts of news organizations, such as Sky and the BBC, managed and emplaced within their framework of news production values and institutional ethical codes. The speed with which the mobile image can travel and transform is significant here, enabling the rapid translation of a private sensory experience into a public mediated record. At the same time, the image was also gaining 'alternative' cyber citizen legitimacy and authority through being mobilized through the speech acts of email, blogs, and word of web between individuals.

Thus, in the blog conversation that immediately follows the posting of the image, early questions that are posted relate to, essentially, the legitimacy of the image; queries regarding what device has been used to take the image, who has taken the picture, and where the person is. On 7 July at 11.40, Alfie Dennen replied:

This image taken by Adam Stacey. He was on the northern line just past Kings Cross. Train suddenly stopped and filled with smoke. People in carriage smashed tube windows to get out and then were evacuated along the train tunnel. He's suffering from smoke inhalation but fine otherwise. (Dennen, 2005)

The time codes then show that within half an hour at 12.18 a contributor called 'Hotdog' wrote: 'I hope you dont mind but I sent it into Sky news. (with photo credit to Keith Tagg)' (Dennen, 2005).

Associated Press and an Israeli news organization then contact blogger, Alfie. As well as the image being posted on Flickr, the picture was on Sky News by 12.22 and on the Sky News website by 13.22 (Sky News, 2005), initially tagged anonymously as 'Passenger Camera Phone Photo'. The traceable data in the Alfie Dennen moblog shows how the mobilities of the image came from other bloggers who acted to mobilize the local mobile witness image into wider global networks. The image was then picked up by sites such as LiveJournal.co.uk and by 13.36 the image was taken up by the BBC, with the caption, 'This photo by Adam Stacey is available on the internet and claims to show people trapped on the underground system' (BBC News, 2005).

A blogger then sent it to MSNBC Citizen Journalist. At 14.10 on 7 July a blogger on the Alfie Dennen Moblog calling herself Sharon wrote, 'hope you're ok. Saw this pic on livejournal.com/~livejournal\_uk It's travelling via email as well' (Dennen, 2005).

The records then show that Alfie Dennen was asked by Tim McCormack from Wikinews to stop by and check on the facts relating to the image. A blogger wrote in at 14.58 stating that the mobile witness image was on the front page of the BBC News website. The next few posting strings in the afternoon of 7 July evidence the rapid worldwide circulation of the image with people posting from the US, Canada, Madrid, Netherlands, accessing the picture via Flickr, the BBC, and *The Guardian*. As the image was circulated to an Australian news site, by 8 July it generated further associated acts of engagement from bloggers posting from Australia, Tahiti, and Honolulu. At 09.31 Jayno wrote:

Just saw your pic on an Aussie news website and followed the link here.  
My thoughts and best wishes are with all those effected.  
Sending loads of Aussie love xxxx. 9.31. (Dennen, 2005)

Later that day, there were postings from those in Argentina, Mexico and Brazil.

Data records of the blog postings then evidence how some bloggers started a string of engagements suggesting that the whole terrorist attack on London was a fake, a media manufactured set up or act of propoganda by the US and UK governments. Some bloggers then sought to mobilize others to various conspiracy theory sites such as 'whatreallyhappened.com'. These blogs, speech acts, and performative engagements associated with the mobile image could be interpreted as being in keeping with what Judith Herman (1999) would describe as one of the usual reactions to atrocity, the response of denial. However, what is also significant here is that after the series of denial postings, the blog then records a post that expressed concern for a neighbour who the writer thought resembled the image. The blogger stated that they feared their neighbour had had been killed in the attacks since they had not returned home. The person posting stated that because their neighbour had moved in recently to their street they did not know his full name, but that his first name was Adam. Via the blog, Alfie Dennen, who received the original mobile witness image was then able to confirm that the image was of Adam Stacey, who was indeed the blogger's neighbour, and that Adam was alive and well.

What is significant here is that the blog suggests some of the engagements of people with the witness image, what Cubilie sees as part of the performance of witnessing that involves people who are not directly involved but who witness the testimony of the witness. The blog suggests how in this instance of mobile witnessing, the mobile image that had been virtually globalized through various acts of mobilization in cyberspace is relocalized and emplaced back through the resources of Alfie's Moblog to the living body of Adam himself and the legitimacy of materiality that this provides. Hence, this emergent concern for a neighbour generated by the atrocity and articulated in relation to a speech act related to the mobile witness image then leads back to the living person of the survivor/witness. This is evidence, perhaps of some of the ways in which the mobile witness image can provoke a sense of engagement with atrocity suggestive of Cubilie's (2005) conception of ethical witnessing.

### **Conclusion**

This article takes a performative approach to the ethics of mobile witnessing in which the mobile testimony of the witness is examined in terms of performances and speech acts mobilized through and around the mobile witness image rather than simply seeking to understand the ethics of the discrete mobile witness image itself. The approach examines some of the network performances and speech acts between different parties, including the survivor witness, the unseen dead and witnesses to the survivor in the form of bloggers and news organizations. The analysis involved examining some of the global Internet traces and trajectories of the performance and speech acts associated with the mobile camera phone image taken by Adam Stacey in the 7 July 2005 London Bombings as evidenced through the online moblog on the World Wide Web to which the image was originally sent. This suggested that mobile phone witnessing involves a fluid and travelling involvement in data capture, data sharing, and receipt through global networks mobilized through multiple mobilities. Mobile witnessing has trajectories across and between conventional binaries such as the self and the other, the individual and the group, the private and the public, the citizen and the professional journalist, the living body and the machine. Mobile witnessing also seems to have the possibility to traverse the ordinary and the extraordinary, speech and speechlessness, disrupting the paradox identified in much of the literature on atrocity of witnesses having the responsibility to bear witness and yet being caught within the difficulty of expressing the unspeakable. In these ways, mobile witnessing has the potential for what Cubilie suggests is an ethical witnessing that enables a sense of mutuality and engagement beyond spectatorship.

In taking this performative approach we also begin to see the significance of global mobilities and mobilizations in relation to understanding mobile witnessing. These are unsettling established or 'static' cultures of record and from this also destabilizing how we then need to conceptualize them. Global mobilities, I would suggest, are important to a consideration of witnessing and ethics within 'the war on terror'. The modern global world is on the move as it has never been before (Urry, 2007) and part of this movement involves mobile phones, wearable communication and multimedia devices used within the context of a local political economy of communicative practices, while being linked nationally, regionally, and globally through digital networks. Mobile phones allow us to capture, circulate, and engage with data on the move, leading to the development of what has been dubbed citizen journalism and what I call here mobile witnessing. This mobile witnessing can and has the potential for what Cubilie terms ethical witnessing. The mobilities and mobilizations that are part of mobile witnessing can engage citizens beyond mere spectatorship. In this way mobile camera phones have the capacity

to both extend and modify old forms and establish new ways of recording events in ‘the war on terror’.

However, there are a number of caveats to this claim. Firstly, in any understanding of the possible significance and impact of mobile witnessing, mobile technologies—as with digital technologies generally—do not signify a total break with the ethics of previous communication practices or newsgathering technologies. Digital technologies are to some extent autocatalytic in that they are adaptations and extensions of older technologies (De Landa, 2003). Thus Campbell and Park (2008) suggest that mobile technologies rather than representing a break with earlier technologies are in fact a personalized extension of the network society described by Manuel Castells in the 1990s.

Further, in ethical terms, the mobile phone image of Adam Stacey in many ways goes against no established media practices or codes of ethics in terms of intrusion into privacy or going against public broadcasters definitions of good taste and decency. The mobile witness image in this instance is ‘user generated’ but shows primarily only the user with no potentially distasteful blood, gore, or corpses. This is unlike, for example, the camera phone video taken by one of the guards of the hanging of Saddam Hussein, which was not broadcast or shown by the BBC but which was circulated widely in Iraq via Bluetooth and is available on the Web.

The mobile image of Adam Stacey is also in some ways very much within the conventions of mainstream cultural memories of war that articulate a particular aspect of British identity. An analysis of mainstream news coverage of the 7 July Bombings by Silke Arnold-de Simms (2007) suggests that it was the cultural memories of the Second World War London Blitz that were drawn on by news organizations rather than cultural memories of IRA bombings or memories of September 11. The image of survivor, Adam Stacey, could be said to fit within this broader discourse of the Blitz spirit, through rearticulating earlier cultural memories of the stoicism of ordinary Londoners taking shelter underground, while showing it as an attack on this place of safety.

This signals that some of the performances and speech acts of mobile witnessing are then also culturally emplaced within resources that include earlier technologies, as well as the particular news values and ethics of mainstream news organizations that are using citizen’s witness images to mobilize nationalism in ‘the war on terror’. In addition, mobile witnessing is also emplaced within the political and cultural discourses of ‘the war on terror’ itself in which a new globalized enemy is perceived to be a threat both within and without, traversing national boundaries in new ways. This has, according to the philosopher Giorgio Agamben (1995, 2005), led to the increasing erasure of the legal status of the individual, with the State of Exception increasingly normalized, underpinned by an emptiness of law. As suggested earlier, while Agamben does not explore the place of the media within this, if we were to extend his argument to include what happens to the media in these circumstances it may, theoretically, be understood as resulting in a void or absence of the possibility for public witnessing and public mediation of particular events. If we concur with Agamben’s thesis, then within the State of Exception there is also the normalization of an absence of record in time, for non-memory, or the erasure of the possibility of witnessing particular events. We would need then to be wary of a rhetoric, including that by the news media itself, that uncritically purports that all user-generated content, including images from mobile phones, will automatically make us all citizen journalists engaged in ethical witnessing. Cubilie (2005) emphasizes that ethical witnessing is an active process, involving a sense of mutuality and engagement. For mobile witnessing in the ‘war on terror’ to be ethical it requires an active engagement with a paradoxical global context: the normalization of non-memory, or the absence of a record in time, within a growing mobile global panopticon.

## Notes

- 1 For a discussion of the language and rhetoric related to the 'war on terror', see Jackson (2005).
- 2 Note that when a reference is given to a specific part of a posting string analysed from the website (Dennen, 2005), I have included the postee, the day and time code posted to ensure accuracy.

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