JOURNAL OF SCANDINAVIAN STUDIES IN CRIMINOLOGY AND CRIME PREVENTION, 2016
VOL. 17, NO. 1, 3–18
http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14043858.2016.1157940

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Stirring up virtual punishment: a case of citizen journalism, authenticity and shaming

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ABSTRACT

Film clips and still pictures captured by civilians are increasingly used as evidence to prove specific accounts of events. This kind of visual data are not without problems, however. The aim of this paper was to analyse how viewers perceived a citizen journalistic mobile phone film clip as naturalistic data, enabling processes of shaming and eventually a 'justice' process on the Internet, including virtual punishment of the person filmed by the citizen journalist. In the clip, a taxi driver records video of an agitated female customer whom he hinders from leaving the taxi. The film is then distributed on YouTube, where it attracts remarkable negative attention. However, the citizen journalist's film clip is only one of several possible accounts of the filmed incident, as demonstrated by the police crime report about the incident as an alternative account showing that viewers cannot rely on the citizen journalistic film clip as objective, naturalistic data.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 17 March 2015
Accepted 2 December 2015

KEYWORDS
Citizen journalism; virtual punishment; shaming; trial by media; authenticity

Introduction

Today, film clips and still pictures captured by civilians using mobile phones or windscreen cameras are increasingly used as evidence by police and judges to prove that an incident has taken place in a certain way (see Andersson, 2015; Bungerfeldt, 2014; Jones & Raymond, 2012; Mallén, 2008, 2012; Rabe, 2014). Using this kind of visual data is not without problems, however, and this article highlights one of the difficulties with film material captured by a non-professional civilian using a mobile phone, or so-called citizen journalism. By analysing a case in which a taxi driver, in his capacity of citizen journalist, films an elderly female customer, this article discusses whether the citizen journalistic film can be perceived as authentic by its viewers, or only gives a biased and abbreviated version of the actual events.

During the last decade, the mobile phone and emergence of Web 2.0 technologies, especially YouTube, have enabled a veritable explosion of pictures and film clips posted on the Internet by 'citizen journalists'. The term 'citizen journalism' has a variety of meanings but today always includes individuals whom Gillmor (2004) has termed 'the former audience': listeners, viewers and readers who now act as citizen journalists by blogging, creating websites and compiling email lists (Gillmor, 2004; Mallén, 2012). According to Gillmor,

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they provide an important source of news for others, including professional journalists and traditional mass media, who publish the citizen journalistic material. In this paper, the term 'citizen journalism' is used in a yet broader sense, presented by, for example, Goode (2009), including practices such as current affairs-based blogging, photo and video sharing and posting eyewitness commentary on current events, as well as re-posting, linking, tagging and modifying or commenting on news material posted by other users or by professional news outlets (Goode, 2009; Lasica, 2003).

Citizen journalism as an unmediated form of bottom-up surveillance or 'sousveillance', where members of the grassroots monitor those in power, has been applauded as an inverse Panopticon, where anyone can take photos or videos of any person or event and then disseminate the information freely around the world, and where panoptic technology helps individuals monitor those in authority (Ganascia, 2010; Mann, Nolan, & Wellman, 2003). The case analysed in this paper, however, complicates this traditional image of citizen journalism because the monitored person is not a person of authority.

The analysis in this paper is based on a citizen journalistic film clip on YouTube where a taxi driver hinders a female customer from leaving the premises. The customer in the film clip is referred to as 'Crazy Granny' in two introductory texts to the film clip on the Internet. The video attracted considerable attention on both YouTube and Internet discussion sites from 2006 to 2013, and several versions have existed on YouTube. Because the original version of the film clip has been removed, the analysis in this paper is based on a version with English subtitles (the conversation in the video is in Finnish), posted on YouTube in August 2008. This version exists at two different URLs on YouTube and is also available on a British discussion site and was downloaded over 129,000 times, receiving almost 600 viewer comments.[1] By March 2014, there were 14 different remix versions of the clip also available on YouTube that were downloaded over 300,000 times in all.[2]

The aim of this paper was to analyse how viewers perceive a citizen journalistic film clip as an authentic representation of reality, enabling processes of shaming and eventually a virtual 'justice' process including virtual punishment of the person filmed. In the analysis of the citizen journalistic film clip, the viewers' comments, and the police report about the incident, I refer to processes of shaming (compare Braithwaite, 1989), cutting-out processes and contrast structures (Smith, 1978). The analysis also refers to discussion on authenticity (Kukkonen, 2014) and virtual punishment (Dennis, 2008).

Material and method

The material analysed in this article consists of:

(1) The 7-min film clip, filmed in a Finnish city by the taxi driver/citizen journalist and posted on YouTube; it includes utterances and/or movements by the taxi driver, the female customer and the eyewitness.
(2) 568 posted viewer comments on the film clip; 543 of these are posted on YouTube and 25 comments are on a discussion site. Because the individual 568 comments occasionally discuss several matters and combine diverse standpoints, they can be divided into 597 separate comments.
(3) The police report of the case, which is based on police phone interviews with the taxi driver and the female customer.[3]

The first category of data is film collected by a taxi driver, which I have analysed in its capacity as a *third-party video*: videos that people who are not social scientists have recorded and preserved (Jones & Raymond, 2012). Jones and Raymond (2012) distinguish three types of third-party videos, and the film clip analysed in this paper is an *opportunistic* video that captures an isolated incident. Opportunistic videos are often shot by citizen journalists as they are 'videos recorded by observers (…) increasingly used by news outlets to illustrate events that were not captured by professional journalists and may precipitate heated public debate' (Jones & Raymond, 2012, p. 112). The advantage with third-party videos is that they can capture the persons directly involved in interactions along with facial expressions, gestures and body movements. They are thus a uniquely informative source for empirical data that enable the researcher to study subtle micro-interaction (Jones & Raymond, 2012; Schlegoff, 2005). For the social scientist, citizen journalistic film clips and pictures provide an unprecedented opportunity to build a sociological record of cultures and micro-interactional practices (Heath, Hindmarsh, & Luff, 2010).

Citizen journalistic material is frequently re-posted (compare Goode, 2009), and the *uploading* of the clips may therefore have been done by a person other than the taxi driver. According to the comments on the film clip, the taxi driver uploaded the very first version of the clip, which is now, however, removed from YouTube and not analysed in this article. It can also be assumed that the customer was not able to check the film clip material before it was made public on YouTube. As Taylor (2010) argues, the explosion of social networking sites such as YouTube makes the individual's control over what is made public even more important. Individuals who are photographed or filmed by citizen journalists seldom have the opportunity to check the citizen journalist's material before it is broadcast and therefore feel that they have lost control over the media material in which they are involved.

The second category of empirical data to be analysed consists of the comments in the online discussions of the 'Crazy Granny' film clip on YouTube. By 4 March 2014, 543 of the comments were posted on YouTube, and 25 comments were posted on a discussion site. YouTube is the third most popular website globally today, an online social space that facilitates both passive consumption of content and more dynamic interaction (Thelwall, Sud, & Vis, 2012). Ethnographical studies concerning the Internet mostly use text as their empirical material (Scaramuzzino, 2014). This empirical material consists primarily and sometimes only of threads and comments posted by participants in network sites, online games, virtual pubs, blogs or personal homepages (Scaramuzzino, 2012).

Three types of participation online on YouTube have been identified in earlier research: passive, active and interactive (Shoham, Arora, & Al-Busaidi, 2013). There are more active comments than interactive comments on the YouTube clip analysed here because most viewers posted their messages in response to the video. Interactive commentators tend to perceive YouTube as an online community space, interacting with each other and commenting on each other's postings, not commenting on the film clip itself.

I analyse the online comments on the film clip studied in this paper narratively, using *analytic bracketing* (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997) as I alternate in studying *what* the commentators say and *how* they express themselves. In the analysis of *what* the commentators say, the first step was a thematic analysis that resembles that used by Shoham et al. (2013) in their study on ways of participating online on a YouTube site. First, I clustered data that were related to each other so that they seemed to belong to a category, e.g. 'Negative comments about female customer'. Then I read the comments several times until themes emerged, e.g.

'The customer is seen as mad/drunk/on drugs'. Thereafter, the data were coded into thematic categories. This approach mirrors the freedom of interpretation found in ethnographic fieldwork (Emerson, Frets, & Shaw, 2011; Morris & Anderson, 2015). Once I had an understanding of *what* the viewers were communicating in their comments, I turned to analysing *how* the comments were communicated: Were they communicated in a positive or negative way, was the commentator using smileys or other emoticons? Emoticons are used to establish a close relationship within the constraints of the Internet, to identify online users as trustworthy, and – of special interest in this article – to point out people who do not share others' realities or ways of being (Sukyadi, Setyarini, & Junida, 2011).

Because of the detailed information about the female customer's identity in the commentary fields and discussion threads, I was able to obtain a copy of the police report of the events depicted in the film clip. The police report is based on police interviews with the taxi driver and the female customer. The taxi driver reported the incident to the police. This third category of empirical data is used in its capacity as an *alternative account* because the taxi driver's account, the film clip, shows only parts of the whole incident between the taxi driver and the female customer. The idea of analysing the film clip and police report as accounts emanates from Smith's article (1978) where she focuses on verbal accounts that co-operate in the construction of deviancy. I have analysed the film clip as an account that enables construction of deviancy, while using the police report as a totally divergent account about the incident depicted in the video.

The film clip

The film clip analysed in this paper starts abruptly, showing a woman who is gesticulating and trying to get past the person behind the camera. She is an elderly, elegant woman with immaculate hair, expensive clothes and big jewellery. Although she is well-dressed, her fur cape is hanging askew, and she is moving unsteadily and pronouncing some of the words she utters with difficulty. During the 7 min, she alternately mumbles, talks, shouts, howls, screams and yells. Five times on the clip, the female customer quite unexpectedly turns away from the taxi driver she is speaking to, turns towards the street behind her and starts howling. Once she even holds her hand beside her mouth to magnify the sound. The woman is filmed from a distance of a maximum of 1–2 m. In the clip, the taxi driver is clearly showing her face, which facilitates identification.

Behind the woman, on the street, stands a taxi cab with the motor running. Although the footage shows the colour of the taxi cab, its licence plate is not visible. Further behind the taxi cab, the film shows an affluent housing area with detached houses from the early twentieth century. First, the only person the film clip shows is the female taxi customer who is communicating with the male driver, whom we can only hear. The taxi driver is not shown because he stands behind the camera. The viewer cannot see his moves but only whether he approaches the customer or stands still. Then, 4:45 min into the clip, a passer-by first becomes audible and then also visible in the film clip.

What the taxi driver shoots

I will now turn to the film clip in detail. Watching the film clip, the spectator sees the same view as the taxi driver. The video is filmed through the eyes of the taxi driver and therefore

mediates his account of the incident because he is the teller of the tale (Smith, 1978). As Smith writes:

> It is the teller of the tale's privilege both to define the rule or situation and to describe the behavior. A rule or a definition of the situation yields a set of instructions for selecting those categories of action which are appropriate as 'responses'. We (the reader/the hearer) must take on trust that the coding procedures for going from the original and actual behavior to such descriptive categories have been properly done. (Smith, 1978, p. 38)

As Smith says, the readers and hearers – or viewers – can only take on trust that the coding procedures are properly done by the teller of the tale. Smith discusses verbal communication, but in visual communication, the accuracy of the coding is of similar importance. Contemporary research on visual communication emphasizes that visual communication is communication by proxy (Kukkonen, 2014). Because the sender (in this case, the citizen journalist) and the receiver (the viewer) do not have a direct, reciprocal relationship, images are the proxies through which communication takes place in media discourse: 'They [images] are the point of contact between sender and receiver, and they are usually the only element in which the sender's intention is manifested for the recipients' (Kukkonen, 2014, p. 57). Therefore, if the coding is not carried out in a proper way, the receiver may interpret the images in a way that differs from the sender's intentions.

According to the film clip shot by the taxi driver, the argument between the customer and the taxi driver seems to have started because the customer has declined to pay the fare. The shaky and grainy film clip starts with showing how the taxi driver with his body tries to hinder the customer from walking forward as he films the argument on his camera phone.

The quality of the film clip is relevant for this article because the weak film quality and shaky picture enable viewers to see the film as an authentic, naturalistic representation of the incident. According to Kukkonen (2014), some images appear more convincing than others to the recipients of visual communication. The power of the image is connected to whether it succeeds in persuading the viewer that it is an imitation of reality (persuasion of mimesis) – 'the clues, paratextual markers and pragmatic contexts of the image claim that it is truthful' (Kukkonen, 2014, p. 58). Newscasts are prime examples of persuasion of mimesis. In visual communication, senders use strategies of persuasion consciously or unconsciously in creating images and mediating them in a particular context. Receivers of the image reconstruct the elements of persuasion while reading the image, a process that is largely unconscious. According to Kukkonen (2014), images are designated e.g. as mirrors or maps. The image as a mirror supposes an unbiased reflection of reality and is often used in documentaries and newscasts, where the image persuades through its mimesis. The shaky, blurry images convince the viewers that the image actually imitates reality. The image is perceived as truthful; the viewers see that it is the real representation of an incident. If the image is perceived as a mirror, then grainy images, small mistakes and rough editing become signs that the filming was not planned but is ad hoc (Kukkonen, 2014).

The first comment heard on the film clip is the driver's, 'Yes, don't go there at all', followed by:

> Customer: Don't … You just touched … (Shouting) Don't touch me, don't touch me! Don't you get it?
>
> Taxi driver: No, I'm only in front of you. I'm stopping you from running away.

In her lines on the film clip, the customer repeatedly emphasizes that she has a right to go home. This phrase is repeated in various ways nine times during the seven-min clip. Also, the female customer states once in the film clip that she *wants* to go home and twice states that she *will* go home. The customer's emphasis on the fact that she has the right to/wants to/will go home may also have arisen because the taxi driver remains sceptical about the customer actually living in the neighbourhood. The taxi driver's sceptical tone of voice is also heard in the following excerpt:

Customer: I will sue you. My daughter is a lawyer.

Taxi driver: Well, yes …

Customer: (In an energetic tone of voice) My daughter is a lawyer, and she will take this to court.

Taxi driver: (In an incredulous tone of voice) Oh, yes.

Customer: She graduated last fall as a, ah, lawyer and she will take this to court! (Makes a hand gesture with verve, showing the efficacy of the action.)

Taxi driver: (With incredulity) Sure.

Here, what usually would be considered as quite normal information – a report that one lives in a certain neighbourhood and has a daughter who is a lawyer – is interpreted and transmitted by the taxi driver as something highly irrational. The taxi driver's incredulous tone indicates that he questions the female customer's statement. How can she, who acts in such an irrational way, live in the neighbourhood and have a daughter who is a lawyer?

In her article, Smith (1978) discusses contrast structures in verbal accounts. In the film clip analysed, there are also several contrast structures: the customer's contrasting elegant appearance and unexpected, irrational behaviour can, for example, be analysed by using Smith's concept. According to Smith, the concept is used in accounts when we want to point out something irrational or deviant. Contrast structures are those where a description of behaviour is preceded by a statement that explains how to see that behaviour as anomalous. In the film clip, the contrast structures are visualized, for example, by the image of the female customer who is very well dressed in a fur cape that, contrastingly, hangs askew. Another contrast structure is visualized by the fact that the female customer has a daughter who is a lawyer but 2:50 min into the film clip in a hissing voice calls the taxi driver a sick murderer. These contrast structures construct the female customer's deviancy in the film.

Because of the focus of the film, there seems to be a lack of context for the female customer's utterances in the clip. Because the viewers do not have information about what has happened prior to the events filmed, the taxi driver and customer's discussion about paying for the ride seems out of context. The lack of context in the film clip makes the viewers interpret the clip in a certain way. This interpretive lens is common for citizen journalistic film clips because those who document experiences in this way are under no obligation to contextualize the depicted events (Reilly, 2015). As Reilly argues, the lack of context may allow for multiple interpretations of the content (Reilly, 2015, p. 759). Christie also emphasizes the importance of context (Christie, 2004), discussing the significance of context when we are supposed to define an act as criminal or not. According to Christie, many acts that earlier were defined as rule-breaking but not criminal in a legal sense are today defined as legally criminal. Transposing Christie's discussion onto the film clip, if the taxi driver's film clip had shown the whole incident from start to end, many of the female customer's actions could

have made more sense to the commentators. Some of her actions would have had a context or been seen in a different context.

Why, then, did the taxi driver film the incident? The first possible explanation is that he shot the footage in his capacity as a citizen journalist and therefore filmed the material to show 'the world' the wrongs taxi drivers can experience in their work.[4] While the taxi driver once was part of the audience, who only received information, he can now act as a citizen journalist, not only receiving but also transmitting information (Mortensen, 2011). By acting as a citizen journalist and filming the incident, the taxi driver has transformed a back region into a front, or public, region (Goffman, 1959/2004). The incident that was filmed had only a small audience in real life but is now being viewed on YouTube by potentially thousands of people.

The transformation seems to be quite intentional, implying that it is actually the taxi driver acting on the front stage. He is aware of the filming and therefore acts as being on the front stage, which makes the filming of the incident even more intriguing.

The customer's initial line, 'You just touched (me)', also reveals another purposeful nature of the filming of the events: the taxi driver has filmed the incident to be used as *evidence material*. Both taxi driver and camera can be seen as witnessing the event filmed: in his role of citizen journalist, the taxi driver can be regarded as a kind of eyewitness, who not only – like eyewitnesses in traditional media – makes an appearance in the media as a source of information but also is producing and distributing the media content himself (Mortensen, 2011, p. 8). Also, in third-party videos, the camera is often considered to take on the role of a witness (Jones & Raymond, 2012). The camera can record encounters and any trouble that emerges for viewing by a future audience. The film clip can be used as evidence to show what has happened if the customer argues that the cab driver used violence towards her while hindering her with his body. The taxi driver may also want to use the film as evidence that he thoroughly informed the customer about the fact that she has not paid for the ride.[5] Also, the taxi driver could use the film clip as evidence for acting correctly and to prove self-defence if the customer becomes aggressive and violent towards him.

The passer-by

The first audible line of the passer-by (he is not yet in the picture) is, 'Everyone has to pay for service'. The passer-by has witnessed the dialogue – or at least a part of the dialogue – between the taxi driver and the female customer and draws the conclusion that the female customer has not paid for the taxi ride. After entering the scene, the passer-by repeats six times in various ways that the female customer may leave only after she has paid the taxi fare or after the police have confirmed the case. This involvement can be seen as an invitation to take the role of the other, i.e. the passer-by invites the female customer to take his view on the incident – she has not paid and can therefore not leave (Charon, 2010; Mead, 1934/1969). In a further attempt to get the female customer to share the view of the passer-by, he concludes: 'This is as clear as daylight. You can't leave the shops without paying, either. A security guard will catch you right away'.

The viewer comments

I have examined the film clip in detail and will now continue by discussing the comments on it, which can be found on at least three Internet sites – two YouTube sites and a discussion

site. The people who have uploaded the film clips on the Internet have laid down the broad outlines for how the commentators *should* view them. The outlines are drawn with the help of texts that introduce the videos: this is what we as commentators should see in the film clips.

Of the three similar versions of the film clip analysed in this paper, two have introductory texts and the third, the YouTube version from 2010, is uploaded without it. On the British discussion forum, the customer is introduced as follows:

> Crazy granny (…) trying to slip out without paying the taxi driver for her ride.

The female customer is in the introductory text defined as crazy and seen as trying to get away without paying for her taxi ride. The film clip from 2008 on YouTube presents the woman in a similar way:

> There's this crazy granny (gipsy?) who's trying to slip out without paying the taxi driver for the ride. The driver is filming the whole thing.

Here, the definition of the customer is described as deviating in three ways. First, she is crazy; second, her ethnicity is defined as 'gypsy' – in this case probably referring to a negative stereotyped term representing 'the others' (c.f. Mallén, 2005, p. 115); and third, she is trying to leave the premises without paying for the ride. The taxi driver is described only as someone trying to film the events.

Next, I turn to discussing the comments on the film clips on YouTube and discussion sites. Reading the comments on the film clip, it becomes clear that the female customer is commented upon negatively more often than she is commented upon positively. The customer also gets more negative comments than the taxi driver, about 240 negative comments compared to 10 negative comments about the taxi driver. Out of the 597 comments on the film clip analysed in this paper, 43% or 248 comments are negative comments about the customer. Only 3 comments, 0.5% out of 597, are positive about her. This homogeneity in the comments on the footage would seem to oppose earlier work by Antony and Thomas (2010) and Reilly (2015), who present findings of a 'multiple public', giving *competing* narratives in their comments on citizen journalistic film clips on YouTube.

Of the three positive comments on the film clip, two commentators support the customer in being right and being treated badly, and the third one is actually expressing feeling sorry for the customer:

> Poor granny! ☹ I hope she's got some help. Fortunately, the taxi driver behaved calmly. (YouTube 2008, comment number 371)

In the last comment, the commentator hopes that the customer will get some help. Although seemingly kind at first glance, the commentator also labels the female customer: the female customer is deviant – be it mentally ill or intoxicated – and in need of some kind of help to become normal again.

The three positive comments on the film clip are, however, a weak counterpoint to the 248 negative comments discussing the female customer in terms of, for example, negative metaphors, negative age stereotypes and shaming. The negative metaphors stem from the folklore (the customer cries like 'a Banshee'), from the animal kingdom (the woman looks like a 'chicken', 'deer') or from history or culture (she moves like 'Hitler' or 'Tarzan'). These negative metaphors can here be seen as symbols, used to communicate the customer's deviancy (Charon, 2010): using the metaphors as symbols, the commentators share a common understanding that the customer's actions are violating the boundaries of normative behaviour.

The female customer's age and looks are also recurrently used negatively in several of the comments. She is referred to as 'granny' and 'old bag'. It is, however, difficult to define whether this is a result of the young age of the commentators on this YouTube clip. On Facebook, ageism has been explained with social identity theory according to which negative stereotypes about the out-group (the older individuals) generate a positive social identity for the in-group, the younger Facebook users (Levy, Chung, Bedford, & Navrazhina, 2013). Whether this construct is accurate considering commenting on YouTube is not that evident: commentators may belong to all age groups because young and old persons have been found to be equally active in posting comments onto Internet sites such as YouTube (Findahl, 2014).

Because the viewers see neither the total chain of events in the film clip nor the surrounding people except the witness, the events that are filmed lack an explanatory context (Christie, 2004; Reilly, 2015). The lack of context also makes the female customer's very unexpected, sudden howling seem even more surprising to the commentators. In the film clip, the customer's expression of emotion, the howl, appears not to be seen by the commentators as proportionate to the seriousness of the events. This is another contrast structure used when a person's behaviour is constructed as deviating (Smith, 1978). According to Smith, the rule that the degree of feeling should be proportionate to the seriousness of the events goes as follows: when something goes mildly wrong, a person should be mildly upset. When something goes seriously wrong, a person should, on the other hand, be seriously upset. The film clip monitors an incident that appears to have gone mildly wrong, but the female customer is seriously upset. The viewers comment on the unexpectedness of the customer's behaviour both with questions – what is wrong with the female customer? – and with plausible answers – she is insane, she is using drugs, she is drunk.

In some of the comments, the possibility of the customer's being a criminal, not insane, is discussed:

> She doesn't seem crazy to me. She tried to sneak away without paying for the taxi (…) and screams with the purpose to deceive passers-by and get sympathy from them (…). (British discussion forum, comment number 6)

Here, the customer is presented as a fraudster who is trying to trick passers-by and as someone who tries to deceive people. The comment above, however, is not as outspoken about the customer's deviancy as those below, where the customer is presented as a criminal, not a victim, only pretending to be insane:

> The granny is essentially a criminal in this case. She is not the victim. (YouTube 2008, comment number 460)

> This woman is not crazy or senile – she is a criminal pretending to be nuts so she can get away with theft (…). (YouTube 2008, comment number 479)

Some comments targeting the female customer are simply vile. One possible explanation for this low level of discourse is that the absence of face-to-face communication in social media may produce a sense of anonymity, which removes the fear of consequences and may result in more extreme thinking, manifested in comments such as these (Levy et al., 2013). The vile comments represent what Jane (2014) defines as *e-bile* – a hostile misogynist rhetoric on the Internet that is laced with expletives and explicit imagery of sexual violence. Of the 597 comments, 34 comments are openly sexist or violent. Many of the comments about the customer's howl or scream are sexist. Several commentators also use the term 'bitch' about the female customer whereas others mention sexually violent acts as the commentators wish that someone would rape the female customer or kill her.

> Burn the bitch! (YouTube 2008, comment number 44)
>
> Fuck that bitch, you should show her some justice (…) Should take her home and cut her into one kilo pieces. (YouTube 2008, comment number 503)

The two last comments can be interpreted as a way for the spectators to correct the customer's behaviour – they think that she has violated the norms and therefore must be corrected.

The incident eventually, using Dennis' terminology (2008), expands into a case of 'virtual-vigilantism' on the Internet. The comments show that the commentators examine the film for clues to the customer's identity. It does not take long for the elderly woman to be identified and her personal information, such as name, profession and place of work to be exposed. The revelation of her identity can be seen as an attempt to punish the customer for her 'offence' in the form of community humiliation that is similar to how earlier close community neighbourhoods operated (compare Dennis, 2008).

A divergent account

Although in citizen journalism, body-to-body interaction is missing between the person who is filming and the audience for the film clip, it seems that the persons commenting on the film clip interpret it as though they are witnessing the incident on the spot and therefore have access to close-up naturalistic data. As Smith (1978) points out, there is always more than one version of an event that can be treated as what actually has happened. The interesting thing is why a given version is socially authorized as the one version that others can treat as what actually has happened. The film clip analysed here is treated by viewers as what actually has happened, although it shows only the taxi driver's version or account. The taxi driver's account is authorized as the proper interpretation of the events by the majority of commentators and not questioned.

The police report provides for a divergent account. According to the police report, the customer had paid her taxi bill without any purpose of deceiving the taxi driver for economic profit or to harm the taxi driver. The argument between the taxi driver and customer started because the parties could not agree on who would pay for the cleaning of the car because the customer's food had been leaking in the cab. This incident was not shown in the video clip. The taxi driver also wanted compensation for the working time spent on straightening out the matter with the customer. According to the police report, the leakage of food was not intentional on the customer's part, which means that the female customer's actions were not criminal but considered to be an accident. The events are not to be treated as a criminal act, states the police report, and the police thus closed the preliminary investigation.

Discussion

Citizen journalism has been applauded for exposing the elite or those in power and for making visible the abuse that can target the weakest in our society (Ganascia, 2010; Mann et al., 2003). This article, however, discusses a case that enlightens two weaknesses of citizen journalism: the first weakness is how the film clip is perceived as showing the 'truth' by its viewers, an authentic representation of reality, although it shows only one version of an incident. The second is how the citizen journalistic film clip enables stigmatization, labelling, shaming and eventually virtual punishment of a person who is perceived to be crazy or deviant (compare Chagnon & Chesney-Lind, 2015). In the case analysed here, the

object under control is someone not belonging to the power structure but a rather common 'Granny', a taxi customer.

The truth, and nothing but the truth

As shown in this article, the citizen journalist's film clip gives only one version of an incident. Still, the viewers tend to perceive it as the truth. Or, as Bleiker (2014, p. 27) puts it:

> Images tend to give us a glimpse of the real. They provide us with the seductive belief that what we see in a photograph or film is an authentic representation of the world: a slice of life that reveals exactly what is happening at a particular moment.

Barthes would call this analogical perfection, an authentic mimetic reproduction of reality (1977).

Why, then, is the film clip treated as naturalistic data by its viewers? One reason would be that the viewers perceive the taxi driver as the teller of the tale (Smith, 1978). Because he is the teller of the tale, the taxi driver's account is authorized and not questioned by the majority of the commentators. Another reason would be that the viewers see the shaky and blurry film clip as a mirror, a real representation of the incident (compare Kukkonen, 2014). A third reason would be the texts that introduce the videos on YouTube: in these texts, the female customer is presented as a crazy granny, as someone representing 'the others' and as someone who is trying to trying to get away without paying for her taxi ride. A fourth reason are the paratextual markers in the film clip, which are perceived as the sender's (citizen journalist's) clues in a message (Kukkonen, 2014). These show the viewers how they *should* interpret it.

In the film clip analysed, there are several clues that show how the viewers should interpret it: the taxi driver mediates a picture of a woman whose statements and actions are incomprehensible: first, in the film clip, the taxi driver constantly meets the female customer with incredulity – can it really be true that she lives in this posh neighbourhood, can it be true that she has a daughter who is a lawyer? Second, the film clip also has somewhat constructed a particular context for the 'Crazy Granny's' behaviour. Because the film does not show the events from the beginning to the end, the female customer seems to act extremely irrationally. Third, using contrast structures and cutting-out processes in their discussion with the female customer, both the taxi driver in his capacity of citizen journalist and the witness/passer-by suggest the irrationality of the customer (Smith, 1978). In other words, the actions of the passer-by in the film clip can also be interpreted as clues to the viewers about how to interpret the female customer's behaviour (compare Kukkonen, 2014). By way of example, the witness points out several times in the film clip that the customer has not paid the taxi fare. In the witness' line, 'It's as clear as daylight', a cutting-out process shows that what is obvious to others is not obvious to the female customer: if you ride in a taxi, you have to pay. The customer has not paid, and her action is therefore an anomaly to the rule. As Smith views it, behaviour that is properly responsive to a rule shows that the actor recognizes the rule the same way as it is defined by the teller of the tale (Smith, 1978, pp. 38–41). A cutting-out process involves showing how the deviant's behaviour is not properly instructed by the definitions of the rules or situations that are provided.

The taxi driver's account is authorized and not questioned by the majority of the commentators. The presence of an alternative account in the form of a police report suggests that the citizen journalist's film is only one of several possible accounts about the incident.

Still, it is treated by the commentators as the proper collection of events. As Smith points out, if something is to be constructed as a fact, it must appear the same way to everyone, and everyone's recognition of it as a fact must be based on direct observation (Smith, 1978, p. 35). The material analysed in this paper would, however, show that to be constructed as a fact, the observation of something can also be made through film, not only through direct observation; the viewers treat the film as direct observation, as if they were getting close-up, naturalistic data about the taxi customer. They provide accounts for the 'crazy granny', typify her, laugh at her and express sympathy for her, as if sharing an experience directly from the place of the event. The commentators who comment on the fact that this is a film and a film constructed from a particular viewpoint, are in the small minority – only 9 comments out of 597.

Stigma, labelling, shaming and virtual punishment

The advantages with discussions in communities online are that they can help in problem solving, information sharing and provision of mutual support and empathy (Savolainen, 2011). As seen in this paper, online comments can, however, also provide a scene for harassment and bullying and stigmatization and labelling (Sengupta & Chudhuri, 2011; Svensson & Dahlstrand, 2014).[6]

The stigmatization process is vivid in the case analysed. The female customer's actions are an act that, undisclosed, would have had few, if any, repercussions. However, the fact that the taxi driver films the incident and discloses it, making it available to a much wider audience, facilitates the labelling of the customer's act as deviant (Becker, 1963). The taxi driver as a citizen journalist enables people who have not partaken in the incident to view the dialogue between the taxi driver and female customer. Traditionally, a stigma arises in body-to-body interaction (Pelkonen, 2011), in which individuals have some control over the information spread about their stigma. In mediated interaction that is not of a body-to-body kind, such as that between citizen journalists and the objects of their surveillance, individuals are unable to control stigmatizing information in a similar way (Mallén, 2012).

The film clip and the comments on it contain an interesting multi-dimensionality about who is the perpetrator and who is the victim in the incident filmed. On the one hand, the commentators perceive the taxi driver as the victim of fraud, or as one commentator points out: 'The female customer is a criminal, not a victim' (YouTube 2008, comment number 460). On the other hand, the customer can be seen as the victim of Internet shaming (compare Braithwaite, 1989) and even as a victim of virtual punishment as her personal details have been made public (Cheung, 2014; Dennis, 2008). The shaming processes occur as the spectators are posting insulting comments towards the female customer whose actions do not represent the commentators' own reality but seem to transgress or violate the commentators' social norms (compare Cheung, 2014, p. 302; Smith, 1978). She is therefore tracked and ridiculed and has her personal information spread publicly on the Internet. This new kind of shaming is, however, only disintegrative, not reintegrative, because according to Cheung (2014), it is executed for the purpose of humiliation, social condemnation and punishment.

This shaming or humiliation process could be interpreted as a kind of status degradation ceremony (Garfinkel, 1956), a communication work directed towards transforming an individual's total identity into an identity lower in the relevant group's scheme of social types. In this process, the persons who are subject for the shaming or moral indignation are turned

into lower social objects by the persons who execute the shaming. Garfinkel (1956) argues that the structural conditions of moral indignation and shame – and hence the conditions of status degradation – are universal to all societies.

The shaming of an individual in a citizen journalistic film clip can eventually turn into a virtual punishment or *trial by media* (Chagnon & Chesney-Lind, 2015; Cheung, 2014; Dennis, 2008). The latter is defined as a form of multi-dimensional, interactive, populist justice in which individuals are exposed, tried, judged and sentenced in the 'court of public opinion' (Greer & McLaughlin, 2012). As Chagnon and Chesney-Lind argue, trial by media may function as a discursive flashpoint upon which moral boundaries may be formed and reformed (Chagnon & Chesney-Lind, 2015, p. 42). Trial by media involves not only traditional journalistic coverage of crime but also participation of bloggers and an audience on the Internet. As seen in this article and also found by Chagnon and Chesney-Lind (2015), the individual may not even have committed a crime while still being virtually punished for it.

Conclusively, citizen journalism as sousveillance or bottom-up surveillance is often seen as the third generation of panoptic control – a democratic form of surveillance where the everyday person can monitor and control those in power. In the case analysed, however, there also seem to be signs of both first- and second-generation panoptic control: the female customer who is controlled is not a person of power. While being filmed, she is also unaware of being subject to disciplinary control by the citizen journalist. This disciplinary control is then further executed by the commentators on the citizen journalist's film clip. It would therefore seem that the case analysed in this article *also* shows signs of 'traditional' panopticism discussed by Foucault (1977) and signs of neo-panoptic control, often connected to CCTV (see e.g. De Saulles & Horner, 2011; Koskela, 1999, 2003, 2009; Mann et al., 2003), because the film-maker arranges the event from a particular point of view and – by uploading it to the Internet – mobilizes a huge public response. The situation is not that far from the medieval control that Foucault argues has been replaced by the modern prison: a control event characterized by a spirit of festivity, transparency, shaming processes and some sympathy. The 'wrong-doer' is not placed in a silent, carefully controlled cell at the outskirts of society but right in the middle of everybody's attention: on the virtual market square, YouTube.

Notes

1. One of the comments on YouTube, 'The original film clip showed when the cops arrived' (YouTube 2008, comment number 27), would indicate that the version of the film clip used in the analysis is somehow edited.
2. Because the female customer's identity is revealed in the comments to the film clip, I have chosen not to publish the site addresses where the clips can be found.
3. The dialogue in the film clip, the police report and most of the comments are originally in Finnish and have therefore been translated by the author into English. Some comments on the film clip were written in English and are published in their original version.
4. The 29 positive comments on the actions of the taxi driver in the film clip also include reasoning on this topic. According to these commentators, it is only fair that the film clip shows everyone what kind of people taxi drivers must serve and tolerate.
5. In the film clip, the cab driver emphasizes four times that the female customer has not paid a fee. He also tells the customer four times that she can go home as soon she has paid.
6. New Internet-related crimes such as bullying and harassment call for a review of the laws related to these crimes. For example, in February 2016, the Swedish Government received a report with suggestions for how legislation can provide better protection for those who have been subjected to threats and other violations online (Government Offices of Sweden, 2016).

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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