

## The Everyday Seen Through a Camera Phone

Karin Wagner

Department of applied IT, IT University of Göteborg

[karin.wagner@ituniv.se](mailto:karin.wagner@ituniv.se)

What does the everyday look like? Some answers to this question can be found when looking at moblogs on the Internet, where anyone with a mobile phone camera can post their freshly taken pictures. Here we find photographs of meals, road repairs, toddlers, visits to the laundry room, holiday outings and new hairstyles in a proper mishmash. It would even be hard to imagine a motif that would fall outside the boundaries of the everyday. Questions that come to mind when watching these image databases are: Is the everyday necessarily something harmless? Are recurring events more everyday than unique ones? Does the everyday have to be presented in an everyday manner, or are extravagant photographs of the everyday conceivable? These questions are addressed with examples taken from various moblogs.

## The Everyday Seen Through a Camera Phone

In 2006, the Göteborg Opera launched a campaign to sell season tickets. A leaflet was sent out to households in the area, urging people to leave the daily chores behind with this request: “Fight the everyday and go to the opera”.<sup>1</sup> The exuberant typography of this text recalls the style of the 70s, and the background image shows a kitchen sink, half full with dishes. The same text was printed on a Wettex cloth (a dishcloth commonly used in Sweden) that came with the leaflet. The range of colours of the photograph is limited to grey and white and there is no dirt to be seen on the dishes, the atmosphere of the picture is sterile and chilly. The association of washing up to dirt is played down and the emphasis is put on the boredom of everyday life, represented by the sink, in contrast to the voluptuous life of the opera, represented by the colourful typography of the text. The kitchen sink seems to be the ultimate metaphor for everyday life, both in verbal and visual language. The “kitchen sink drama” is the very opposite to the heightened dramatic world of the opera and a picture of a sink is an unambiguous way to hint at the everyday on the cover of an advertising leaflet.

A kitchen sink is one, but far from the only, answer to the question what the everyday looks like, which is the main question of this paper. Quite a few more answers can be found when looking at moblogs on the Internet. These are sites where anyone with a mobile phone camera can post their freshly taken pictures, often taken on the fly, when going about their daily business. The first moblogs saw the light of day in 2004, when the camera started to be a common feature of mobile phones. I have been studying this phenomenon since 2006, within a project called “From celluloid to pixels: Network and ritual around e-cinema and mobile phone camera”. The part of the project concerning e-cinema is conducted by ethnologist Magnus Mörck. The theoretical framework for the project is the actor-network theory of Bruno Latour. Visual analysis, participatory observation, surveys and interviews are among the methods used. I will explore different themes in the material, one such theme is the image of the everyday.

The moblog is not the first forum on the Internet for telling the world about one’s everyday life. Personal homepages and online diaries have been established on the Internet for a long time. The blog has gained increasing popularity in recent years, with its emphasis on chronological order and frequent updates. Most blogs contain only text, but many combine text with images. Publishing photographs on the Web requires transferring them from a digital camera to a computer before uploading them. This procedure is bypassed in moblogging, where pictures can be sent from a mobile phone as soon as they are taken. The main characteristics of a moblog are this immediacy and the juxtaposition on one page of images from many different people. Most moblogs display the latest pictures as thumbnails on the start page, and when a visitor clicks on a thumbnail he proceeds to a page with a larger version of the image and possible comments, and from there he can explore the rest of the member’s pictures.

The moblogs I have chosen to study are northern European sites like the Swedish mobilblogg.nu, the British moblog.co.uk, the Danish albinogorilla.dk and the Dutch moblog.nl. When you enter a site and consider becoming a member, there are often guidelines written by the moderators. This is an excerpt from the introduction of the Danish site:

It is called moblogs, weblogs that can be updated from your mobile phone. This is not your grandmother’s dusty photo album. It is engaging stories and fragments of people’s

---

<sup>1</sup> Månadens Print, bidrag #98  
[http://www.resume.se/manadens\\_kampanj/manadens\\_print/maj/index.xml?id=97&type=Print](http://www.resume.se/manadens_kampanj/manadens_print/maj/index.xml?id=97&type=Print) 070801.

lives, as it happens here and now – from the holidays, the concert, the wedding, the party, the office or simply from the pizzeria round the corner.<sup>2</sup>

Moblog.nl urges their members to “walk in the street, see a funny moment and shoot a photo with your mobile phone.”<sup>3</sup>

The moderators on Swedish mobilblogg.nu explain that there are three main purposes of the blog: to publish pictures of everyday events in one’s life, to put the mobile phone camera to a meaningful use and to come together in a community and share one’s pictures with other people. They point out that taking photos with a mobile phone is different from taking photos with a normal camera. Due to the fact that you always carry your mobile with you, pictures can be taken in the spur of the moment, hence these pictures have a special character. They show all sorts of activities going on right now.<sup>4</sup>

The British site does not have any guidelines like these, but nevertheless contain many pictures from the everyday life of its members. Common to these four moblogs are photographs of meals, road repairs, toddlers, pets, household chores, recently read books, holiday outings, streetlamps at night and new hairstyles, to mention only a few of the many topics being dealt with. It would even be hard to imagine a motif that would fall outside the boundaries, a question I will return to later. The everyday is such a vast and at the same time vague concept, that it is hard to pinpoint. The everyday can be seen as drab and monotonous and at the same time as remarkable and delightful. It has an ambivalent character and is maybe best described as having no qualities. It goes by unnoticed, something taken for granted, like the air we breathe, according to Ben Highmore.<sup>5</sup> Another cultural studies scholar, Rita Felski, observes that the studying of the everyday entails a contradiction, in that the everyday ceases to be unobtrusive and unconscious the moment a spotlight is turned to it. Her notion of the everyday involves three aspects, time, space and modality, which she associates with repetition, home and habit. She concludes that the everyday is best described as a way of experiencing the world instead of an activity.<sup>6</sup>

Routine and repetition is commonly associated with the everyday, as is given in the word itself: the everyday is something that happens every day. The actual act that is repeated can differ greatly from individual to individual; dog owners walk their dogs, celebrities sign autographs, cashiers count money and so forth. Some routines are experienced by many people, such as coming to work, having a cup of coffee and saying good morning to the fellow workers. This routine is performed daily on the Dutch moblog, where members take a snapshot of their coffee mugs and post it to the blog. The accompanying text often reads just “Good morning” in slightly varying colloquial expressions (Goede morgen becomes meuning, mogguh, mogge etc.). The pictures show similar variations: the cup may be shown standing beside the coffee machine or on the desk in front of the computer, but the set-up remains about the same from one day to another. In this way a morning get-together routine is created that involves people working in different locations. One day, 18 April 2007, I noticed that someone had started the day with a picture of himself raising the cup to his mouth in a greeting gesture, and then the others followed suit. This shows that members manifest the team spirit of the group by echoing picture composition, and that communication through text is not the only way to keep an Internet community alive.

Before going to work people go through morning routines in their homes. In Sweden, it is customary to subscribe to a morning paper and have it delivered to one’s house. Having to

---

<sup>2</sup> <http://albinogorilla.dk> 070801.

<sup>3</sup> <http://moblog.nl> 070801.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.mobilblogg.nu/o.o.i.s/43> 070801.

<sup>5</sup> Ben Highmore, *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory. An Introduction* (London 2002), p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Rita Felski, “The Invention of Everyday Life”, *New Formations*, 39 (1999/2000), pp. 15-31.


start the day without reading the paper would annoy many people, which is evident from the following morning drama. One spring morning at 6.09 *filipwiberg*<sup>7</sup> posted a picture of his breakfast table, which shows a glass of coffee (or chocolate), a glass of water and a bowl of porridge, but no newspaper. The caption reads “Breakfast without YA... Pull yourselves together, paper distributors!”<sup>8</sup> Four minutes later the follow-up picture is posted. “Now it has arrived! The morning is saved! Phew...”<sup>9</sup> is the caption of this picture, and we see the paper on the table beside the coffee and the porridge. Order has been restored. In this mini picture story we have been able to get a glimpse of this member’s morning routines and the upsetting of this routine.

**Figure 1.**

**Någon har haft bråttom till bussen?**

31 Maj 07.21 2007

Själv fick jag kuta sista biten denna morgon. Idag ska jag, hör och häpna, inte börja förrän 7.30 :-D Å andra sidan har jag vaknat en hel massa ggr och varit övertygad om att jag försovit mig... GODMORGON vettja!



117 visningar  
[ Till Bluemoods mobillogg ]

**Kommentarer**

Skriv kommentar:

Skriv bokstäverna **FOEE** här:

Namn:

E-post:

**SKICKA**

When the coffee is finished it is time to go to work. Public transportation offers plenty of opportunity to scrutinize fellow-passengers, but taking a photograph of somebody on a bus is not so easy with respect to personal integrity.<sup>10</sup> One morning on his way to work, *Bluemood* took this photo of a man’s leg and foot, showing signs of hurry.<sup>11</sup> The hem of the trousers has been tucked into the shaft of the sock and the shoelaces haven’t been tied, but are hanging loose on the floor. The caption of the picture is “Somebody had to hurry to the bus?” The rest of the text tells us that Bluemood himself had to run to catch the bus this morning, although he starts later than usual. He finishes the message with a “GOOD MORNING, for

<sup>7</sup> The members’ own usernames are used in this paper.

<sup>8</sup> *filipwiberg*, Frukost utan YA... Skärpning tidnings utdelare  
[http://www.mobillogg.nu/filipwiberg/2007/05/28/06:09:25/frukost\\_utan\\_ya\\_skarpning\\_t.html](http://www.mobillogg.nu/filipwiberg/2007/05/28/06:09:25/frukost_utan_ya_skarpning_t.html)  
070801 (YA stands for Ystads Allehanda, a local newspaper from the South of Sweden.).

<sup>9</sup> *filipwiberg*, Nu kom den! Morgonen räddad! Puh...  
[http://www.mobillogg.nu/filipwiberg/2007/05/28/06:13:56/nu\\_kom\\_den\\_morgonen\\_raddad\\_p.html](http://www.mobillogg.nu/filipwiberg/2007/05/28/06:13:56/nu_kom_den_morgonen_raddad_p.html)  
070801.

<sup>10</sup> According to Swedish law, Personuppgiftslag (1998:204), it is forbidden to publish personal information, photographs included, about a person without his or hers consent.

<sup>11</sup> Bluemood, Någon har haft bråttom till bussen?  
[http://www.mobillogg.nu/Bluemood/2007/05/31/07:21:41/nagon\\_har\\_haft\\_brattom\\_till\\_bu.html](http://www.mobillogg.nu/Bluemood/2007/05/31/07:21:41/nagon_har_haft_brattom_till_bu.html) 070801.


sure”. An early morning bus ride to work may seem monotonous but for someone with a keen power of observation a low key event like this can be turned into a greeting message to the moblog community and the blog’s wide audience. The photo is presumably of a complete stranger, but the text is written in first person and is about Bluemood’s own morning. The narrative works through this tension of an individual point a view of the text and the anonymity of the image.

Figure 2.

### Skitmorgon

10 Maj 08.25 2007

Fast jag vet med säkerhet att jag kom ihåg att ta fram jobbnyckeln när jag bytte väska i morse och blev sjukt stolt över mig själv just för att jag kom ihåg så finns det ingen nyckel varken i byxorna, jackan eller väskan. Så nu sitter jag här och trycker under en jätteräka och väntar på att någon annan ska komma i hyfsad tid till jobbet så jag slipper vänta allt för länge. Lycka till med det.



601 visningar  
[ Till barfotas mobilblogg ]

**Autumn is a Breeze - H&M**  
Låt dig inspireras av höstens nya trender. Bli höstvacker!

**Coola kläder på nätet.**  
Hejdlöst stort urval och t-shirts, toppar och coola tröjor.

Google-annonser

#### Kommentarer

Sol (ej inloggad) 10 Maj 09.20 2007  
Åh så VÄRDO. Och vad är dealen med räkan?

barfota 10 Maj 12.36 2007  
Den hängde lite med mig medan jag satt av tiden bara. Schysst gjort av den fast jag tycker att räkor är synnerligen skabbiga insekter.

Saphira 10 Maj 15.01 2007  
Riktigt nice jätteräka! ;-)

Sol (ej inloggad) 10 Maj 15.19 2007  
Luktade den inte illa?

h2 10 Maj 20.26 2007  
Räkor ÄR inte snygga. De är säkert inte trevliga heller. Hade den varit riktig hade den säkert knaprat på din hjässa, barfota.

barfota 11 Maj 09.46 2007  
Räkor äter väl bajs? Är min hjärna bajs alltså? Trevligt. Det kan juh förklara vad som hände i går egentligen för i morse när jag tog på mig jeansen så låg juh nyckeljäveln så klart i fickan. Samma ficka som jag letade i minst fem gånger igår. Gaaaah!

pest 14 Maj 15.59 2007  
Jag håller med Sol, men inte i helhet... Värdo var ordet... men snarare så att du, barfota, är värdo på att leta i fickor!

Och var när och hur började räkor äta bajs?

florist i all ära, men hur gör djur, det är inte du det...

Skriv kommentar:

“Crap morning” is a story of a morning routine gone wrong.<sup>12</sup> The blogger *barfota* has forgotten her work keys at home, although she was absolutely sure she had put them in the right bag. Now she is sitting outside her job waiting for a colleague to arrive. The photograph is hard to grasp, it depicts a shrimp, and one needs to contemplate it for a while before one realizes that the shrimp is probably a sticker glued on to a shop window. In this story the text and the image do not have an evident connection, except for her friends who recognize the place where she works. For strangers, the picture of the shrimp can work as a teaser, tempting the visitor to click on the thumbnail picture on the first page and see the larger version of the picture and read the text.


<sup>12</sup> Barfota, Skitmorgon <http://www.mobilblogg.nu/barfota/2007/05/10/08:25:26/skitmorgon.html> 070801

Figure 3.

Oj!

30 Jan 09.49 2007

Om man bara är tre år så är det inte alla gånger så lätt att låta tallriken stå kvar på bordet. Men, har man inget och göra så lär de små liven hela tiden skapa nya arbetsuppgifter till dig. Nu var jag ju direkt inte sysslolös innan denna lilla tragedi drabbade mig. Detta med tanke på att jag var i fullfärd med att bädda hushållets sängar när olyckan drabbade mig med full kraft. Nåväl, filmjölken är upptorkad och nu skriker en överfull diskbänk efter min uppmärksamhet.



102 visningar  
[ Till paddes mobilblogg ]

Kommentarer

YoNaZ 30 Jan 09.56 2007  
Hoppsan!

Skriv kommentar:

Skriv bokstäverna **GTNF** här:

Namn:

E-post:

SKICKA

There are other every day events that find their way to the moblog that are not necessarily part of a routine, but could rather be characterized as mishaps. Photographs from the kitchen region mostly show cooking and finished dishes to admire, and sometimes a washing up scene. A mishap happens quickly when children are having their meals and one such incident was documented by *padde*, in a picture labeled “Oh!”.<sup>13</sup> It depicts a bowl lying upside down on the floor with sour milk spilled all over. The legs of chairs are visible, black legs for normal chairs and a white one belonging to a high chair, which we can assume was the place of the culprit. The text tells us about how small children seem to create an endless stream of tasks for their parents. This morning *padde* was not exactly idle, as he was busy making the beds and soon has to attend to a kitchen sink overfull with dishes.


<sup>13</sup> Padde, Oj! <http://www.mobilblogg.nu/padde/2007/01/30/09:49:04/oj.html> 070801.

Figure 4.

**Hata!**

26 Mar 12.15 2007

idag e en sån dag man bara skrattar när man möts av en sån här syn. i vanliga fall hade jag dött! men idag i solskenet gör det inte så mkt. de går ändå, för världen är ju ganska underbar!



388 visningar  
[ Till vickys mobillogg ]

**Svensk nätbutik med skor**  
Brett sortiment av märkesskor. Fri frakt/retur. 1 månad öppet köp.

**Hitta Skoaffärer**  
Hitta rätt till företag, personer, telefonnummer och branscher.

Google-annonser

**Kommentarer**

Prinsessan 26 Mar 12.15 2007  
:O)

magnusb 26 Mar 18.21 2007  
imponerande attityd! min syster har jobbat på wedins och jag kan tänka mig att hon inte skulle reagera på samma glada sätt :-)

Afaf 26 Mar 20.41 2007  
Ja men Vicky visst är det så att allt blir så mycket bättre med lite solsken. Folk blir gladare och därmed trevligare,. nu menar jag INTE att du inte är trevlig för du är bloggans egna lilla solsken

Bluemood 26 Mar 21.15 2007  
Redaktörens val 2007-03-26:  
Visst gör solsken, såväl ute som i sinne, att allt känns så mycket lättare, även när allt rasar :-D

Saphira 26 Mar 21.25 2007  
ja här har allt verkligen rasat även bildigen! :)

tjuren 27 Mar 11.04 2007  
Är det hemma i din garderob Vicky?

Cyblood 27 Mar 16.48 2007  
hehe ser inte så roligt ut jue :P

vicky 27 Mar 18.09 2007  
tjuren: skulle kunnat vara, dock seer man skillnad eftersom jag har mest vagabondkartonger hemma hos mig o på bilden är det gabor, rieber o dorndorf kartonger! :D

Bluemood 27 Mar 18.19 2007  
Aha!

sima 28 Mar 15.30 2007  
Men det ser ju nästan lite coolt ut! Tänk att allt inte har rasat i en enda jättehög =)

vicky 28 Mar 21.10 2007  
sima: haha jättecoolt! eller inte, sånt händer nästan varje dag så här års!

pest 29 Mar 17.14 2007  
skön inställning - nog är det även skönt att kunna vara på ett svalt lager när världen utanför smälter oxå va?

vicky 29 Mar 23.01 2007  
svalt lager?!?! välkommen till oss vi har 30 grader på lagret redan!

Mishap can also happen at work, as the picture "Hate!" by vicky is an example of.<sup>14</sup> She works in a shoe shop, and one day when she entered the stockroom she was met with the sight of a pile of shoeboxes that had tipped over and were leaning towards a wall. In contrast to the title (Hate!), the text is about her being in such a good mood because of the sunshine that not even an incident like this can disconcert her. Other members give her supportive comments and admire her for her brave attitude. One member writes that he has experienced something similar when he worked in a shop.

In all these examples there is a high recognition factor. Most of us have been waiting for the newspaper in the morning, been in a hurry on our way to work, have forgotten our keys, have cleaned up after children or stepped into a storeroom with falling boxes, but without thinking about documenting it, let alone publishing it. This is the kind of stories that fit into a moblog but have previously lacked a forum.

<sup>14</sup> Vicky, [Hata!](http://www.mobillogg.nu/vicky/2007/03/26/12:15:09/hata.html) <http://www.mobillogg.nu/vicky/2007/03/26/12:15:09/hata.html> 070801.

Many bloggers update their albums frequently, every day or a couple of times a week. The act of photographing becomes part of the daily routine as does the procedure of uploading it. Using computers entails many routines; starting up the computer, logging on to services and doing backup, all these are routines familiar to computer users. But taking photographs regularly is not as easy and requires some effort.<sup>15</sup> When I started moblogging I set up as a goal for myself to post one picture a day, something I have not been able to achieve. At night, when I realize I have failed to perform “the moblogging routine”, I feel a little guilty as if I were going to bed without having brushed my teeth. From studying frequent bloggers I have concluded that making moblogging a routine in itself makes it easier to keep it up. *sibner*, another member of the *mobilblogg.nu*, usually says good morning to the community and often takes photographs of his lunches and other meals.<sup>16</sup> The time stamp of the posting informs the visitor that the picture was taken at that very moment, so a lunch photograph is not just a document of a lunch but a photograph actually shown at lunchtime. I have already mentioned the morning greetings on the *moblog.nl* and they also have a tradition of taking photographs at lunch and label them LF, short for “lunch fotografie”. Moblogging does not only involve representing the everyday but becomes integrated in everyday life as a routine in its own right.

Like other uses of a mobile phone, moblogging fits into the intervals that occur between everyday activities.<sup>17</sup> One can take a photograph while waiting for a bus, sitting in the dentist’s waiting room, etc. It can also be a way to postpone a household chore one is reluctant to do – instead of getting started with vacuum cleaning right away, one can take a photo of a gamepad, post it to the moblog and suggest that one would rather play video games than clean up the house.<sup>18</sup>

Are recurring events more everyday than unique ones? It depends more on the character of the event than its frequency. If I lose one shoe once in my life, that would be a singular incident, but it would still be everyday, in contrast to losing a relative in an accident, which would be non-everyday even if it happens more than once. The examples above show us unique events, but they take place within the scope of some daily routine. Maybe the best way to represent routines and repetition is to show the disruptions of them. Another way would be to gather a large number of pictures of the same routine, e.g. of people going to work in the morning, and then the sheer amount of similar pictures would convey the meaning of the word. One can imagine a long wall covered with pictures of streets taken by drivers on their way to work. It would be possible to retrieve quite a few photographs like this from the moblog archives. The archives are organized in strict chronological order, as essential to the medium of the blog, textual, photographic or otherwise. One can browse the collective archive or one member’s archive at a time. Some moblogs offer search facilities, but to look for a special type of image or a special theme is mostly like searching for a needle in a haystack.

The volume of the databases increases every day, and there are some similarities between the moblog archives and the archives of Mass Observation, a project launched in Great Britain in 1937. The project was initiated by a group of writers who wanted to investigate everyday life in Britain.<sup>19</sup> They wanted to apply anthropological methods in their own country, not only in exotic countries, as was customary. A number of observers were recruited, both unpaid volunteers, who gave accounts of their own lives, and some semi-professional observers,

---

<sup>15</sup> Poth99, *Mobilbloggning - den första tiden* (2006) p. 25.

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.mobilblogg.nu/sibner> 070801.

<sup>17</sup> Mizuko Ito, Daisuke Okabe, and Misa Matsuda (eds.), *Personal, Portable, Pedestrian: Mobile Phones in Japanese Life* (Cambridge, Mass 2005) pp. 263-264.

<sup>18</sup> Bluemood, Hmm här ligger den å skräpar...

[http://www.mobilblogg.nu/Bluemood/2007/04/22/14:03:02/hmm\\_har\\_ligger\\_den\\_a\\_skrapar\\_.html](http://www.mobilblogg.nu/Bluemood/2007/04/22/14:03:02/hmm_har_ligger_den_a_skrapar_.html) 070801.

<sup>19</sup> Mass Observation. Recording Everyday Life in Britain <http://www.massobs.org.uk/index.htm> 070801.



intent on observing other people. The first phase of the project lasted to 1949, and the result was a huge archive that was difficult to present and disseminate to the participants and the general public. One attempt was to use the principle of montage, where different fragments are brought together and create an unexpected reaction. The montage form had been developed by the surrealist movement and by Soviet film-makers, especially Sergei Eisenstein.<sup>20</sup> The huge book, edited by Charles Madge and Humphrey Jennings, about how people experienced the coronation day of George VI in 1937, *May 12<sup>th</sup> – Mass Observation day-surveys* makes use of the montage form in order to leave the work open to interpretation, but the critics turned it down. It was found difficult to comprehend and lacking in homogeneity.<sup>21</sup> The artist William Shaw writes in his blog:

Jennings imagined he was kick-starting a new literary form; in fact *May the Twelfth* led nowhere, baffling and irritating critics. I'd like to believe that Jennings was just ahead of his time. Maybe he'd have thrived more in the age of the blog, a genre which is creating a new style of short-form, observational literature, (albeit – so far – a generally narcissistic one).<sup>22</sup>

The start page of moblogs have some of the characteristics of a montage, with the stream of recent pictures coming in, shown side by side with chronology as the only ordering principle. Most of the time pictures do not make any special sense together, but on 9 August 2007, I posted a picture of bins with computer junk, mostly old pc's, and the next picture that arrived showed a brand new Apple laptop. The two pictures together symbolized to me the frantic pace of obsolescence in the world of IT.

Many pictures show social events where people are happy together. Is the everyday necessarily something harmless? It is probably not, but most people prefer to let serious problems out of the moblogs. Sometimes a member attests to being low-spirited, and sometimes the perils of alcohol is a subject touched upon.<sup>23</sup> Forming a picture of what the everyday looks like is difficult, but it is even more difficult to imagine what representations of the everyday are missing. In finding an answer to this question, participatory observation has been valuable. Once I felt tempted to take a photograph of the messy room of one my teenage children who had been ignoring my request for tidying up, and then I realized that that would be exactly the kind of photograph that one would not publish on a moblog. Domestic quarrels is a subject usually avoided in this context. Loyalty to ones family goes before the need to cover all aspects of everyday life.

Another question I have been thinking about is if the everyday has to be presented in an everyday manner, or if extravagant photographs of the everyday are conceivable? They are indeed, as *A view from an apartment* by Jeff Wall gives proof of.<sup>24</sup> It is a highly elaborate picture of an everyday situation, included in a book about remarkable photographs.<sup>25</sup> In my opinion, the moblog archives contain many good pictures, despite the fact that many bloggers

---

<sup>20</sup> Another prominent example is the German philosopher and literary critic Walter Benjamin's unfinished *The Arcades Project*, where he used the literary montage as a method. Wolin, Richard. *Walter Benjamin, an Aesthetic of Redemption* (Berkeley, 1994) p. xliii.

<sup>21</sup> Ben Highmore, *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory. An Introduction* (London, 2002) p. 93.

<sup>22</sup> William Shaw, *Unmadeup* <http://www.nsblog.co.uk/wshaw/914/>.

<sup>23</sup> Sotarn, Alkohol <http://www.mobilblogg.nu/Sotarn/2007/08/15/20:59:32/alkohol.html>, familjensnygg, I natt har jag tagit hand om en full flicka på 16 år. Hållt ut dåligt hembränt som hon druckit :- ([http://www.mobilblogg.nu/familjensnygg/2007/05/13/11:35:30/i\\_natt\\_har\\_jag\\_tagit\\_hand\\_om\\_e.html](http://www.mobilblogg.nu/familjensnygg/2007/05/13/11:35:30/i_natt_har_jag_tagit_hand_om_e.html) 070815.

<sup>24</sup> Sheena Wagstaff, "Beyond the Threshold", *Tate etc.* issue 4 summer 2005 <http://www.tate.org.uk/tateetc/issue4/inthestudio4.htm> 070801.

<sup>25</sup> Howarth, Sophie (ed), (2005) *Singular images. Essays on Remarkable Photographs*, pp. 119-123.

are reluctant to see moblogging as a creative activity, at least when it comes to themselves.<sup>26</sup> The surrealist approach to the everyday was to look for the uncanny, and we can see the legacy of this approach in the series “air superioritea” by *mat*, one of the moderators of moblog.co.uk.<sup>27</sup> A cup of tea is thrown into the air and its trajectory is documented in five pictures. Tea is spilled out and the splash is frozen in the photographs. The picture is similar in its conception to Philippe Halsman’s *Dali Atomicus*, where Salvador Dali is caught in the middle of a jump while painting, and a chair, water and cats seem to be hanging in the air.<sup>28</sup> In *air superioritea* the everyday phenomenon of drinking a cup of tea is made strange and unfamiliar through photography. Here we have come a long way from the mundane act of coffee drinking displayed on the Dutch moblog.

Rita Felski thinks modern literature show a paradoxical relation to everyday life, in both wanting to accept it as it is and to transform it.

...it also tries to redeem the everyday by rescuing it from its opacity, de-familiarising it and making us newly attentive to its mysteries. Yet this very act of magnifying and refracting taken for granted minutiae transcends the very dailiness it seeks to depict. Literature’s heightened sensitivity to the microscopic detail marks its difference from the casual inattentiveness marking the everyday experience of everyday life.<sup>29</sup>

What is left of the everyday once it has been highlighted through pictures on the Internet? I think that the everyday has fared rather well in the context of moblogs. First of all, moblogs have more modest pretensions than modern literature. The chat in the comment threads are generally held in a light, conversational tone, and most of the photographs are not taken with the intention to win the first price in a photo club annual competition.<sup>30</sup> The approach to taking photography is itself everyday, analogous to Felski’s conclusion that the everyday could be seen as a way of experiencing the world. Secondly, the presentation form is well suited to the everyday. Ben Highmore remarks that

If for example, the everyday is seen as a flow, then any attempt to arrest it, to apprehend it, to scrutinize it, will be problematic. Simply by extracting some elements from the continuum of the everyday, attention would have transformed the most characteristic aspect of everyday life: its ceaseless-ness.<sup>31</sup>

On the start page of a moblog, images arrive in a constant flow, sometimes slower, sometimes faster. It does not have the characteristics of a film, where the pace of 24 frames a

---

<sup>26</sup> In a survey conducted among members of mobilblogg.nu in May 2007, I asked “Have you developed your ability to create pictures”, and about 57% (of 120 respondents) answered no, 15 % yes, 22 % a little (3% did not answer the question, 4 % answered evasively.).

<sup>27</sup> *mat*, *air superioritea* <http://moblog.co.uk/view.php?id=234010> This image also appears in a collection/competition called Extreme cuppa, on the member ActionAid’s moblog, where he writes “We want people to send in photos of themselves having a cuppa in extreme and unlikely situations. **The best mug shot will win a top of the range digital camera!!!**” <http://moblog.co.uk/blogs.php?show=13075070801>.

<sup>28</sup> Philippe Halsman, *Dali Atomicus* [http://www.iphotocentral.com/Photos/csphoto\\_Images/Full/CS9598.jpg](http://www.iphotocentral.com/Photos/csphoto_Images/Full/CS9598.jpg)

<sup>29</sup> Felski, 1999/2000, p. 26.

<sup>30</sup> Ippo Koskinen uses the term “visual sociability” in his study of how people use the possibility of sending images to each other. He refers to Georg Simmel, for whom sociability meant mixing with people in an enjoyable and easy-going way. *Mobile image* (2002), pp. 36-27. Alternative spelling and other alternative language use in chat rooms is ascribed by Malin Sveningsson partly to the “informal and playful ambience generally prevailing in chat rooms.”. *Creating a Sense of Community* (2001), (p 168). The social interaction in virtual communities can also be compared to how relations are built up in physical neighbourhoods, see e.g. Marianne Gullestad, *The Art of Social Relations* (1992).

<sup>31</sup> Highmore, 2002, p. 21.

second gives the illusion of movement. There is no need to arrest the flow, because one can extract “one of the elements”, a single image, and still retain the ceaseless-ness.

Thirdly, and lastly, moblogging remains within the everyday by virtue of its incorporation in an everyday routine. Taking a snapshot of an everyday event, knowing that it will immediately find its place on a webpage and reach an audience, has become part of many people’s daily lives.

## References

- Felski, Rita, “The Invention of Everyday Life”, *New Formations*, 39 (1999/2000): p. 15-31
- Gullestad, Marianne (1992): *The Art of Social Relations*, Oslo: Scandinavian Univ. Press.
- Highmore, Ben, (2002): *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory. An Introduction*, London: Routledge.
- Howarth, Sophie (ed), (2005): *Singular images. Essays on Remarkable Photographs*, New York: Aperture
- Ito, Mizuko, Daisuke Okabe and Misa Matsuda, (2005): *Personal, Portable, Pedestrian. Mobile Phones in Japanese Life*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press
- Koskinen, Ilpo, Esko Kurvinen and Turo-Kimmo Lehtonen (2002): *Mobile Image*. Helsinki: IT Press.
- poth99 (2006): Mobilbloggning - den första tiden, n.p.
- Sveningsson, Malin, (2001): *Creating a Sense of Community*, Linköping studies in arts and science, 233, Linköping : Tema, Univ..
- Wagstaff, Sheena, “Beyond the Threshold”, *Tate etc.* issue 4 summer 2005, <http://www.tate.org.uk/tateetc/issue4/inthestudio4.htm>
- Wolin, Richard, (1994): *Walter Benjamin, an Aesthetic of Redemption*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

## **Image references**

- barfota, Skitmorgon <http://www.mobilblogg.nu/barfota/2007/05/10/08:25:26/skitmorgon.html> 070801.
- Bluemood, Någon har haft bråttom till bussen? [http://www.mobilblogg.nu/Bluemood/2007/05/31/07:21:41/nagon\\_har\\_haft\\_brattom\\_till\\_bu.html](http://www.mobilblogg.nu/Bluemood/2007/05/31/07:21:41/nagon_har_haft_brattom_till_bu.html) 070801.
- padde, Oj! <http://www.mobilblogg.nu/padde/2007/01/30/09:49:04/oj.html> 070801.
- vicky, Hata! <http://www.mobilblogg.nu/vicky/2007/03/26/12:15:09/hata.html> 070801.