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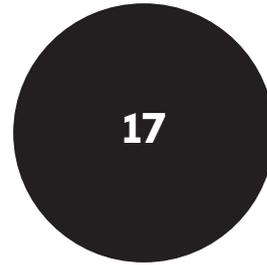
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YouTube and the Syrian Revolution. On the Impact of Video Recording on Social Protests

translated by Łukasz Mojsak

Since March 2011, the revolt that transformed into a conflict in Syria has yielded a considerable and varied collection of videos recorded and posted online by protesters, activists, and militants.¹ At the stage of pacifistic mobilization between 2011 and 2013, not only did they play the main role in the narrativization of the revolt, but they also stimulated the emergence of new forms of protest based on the impact of the image. In this essay, I pose questions about the influence of vernacular videos on protests staged in extremely repressive circumstances. To this end I propose to trace the course of the revolt from the perspective of the evolution of video recording practices and the audiovisual grammars that they generate. Initially the manifestations were filmed spontaneously, but their later proliferation entailed the professionalization of video recording. A diachronic reconnaissance of footage from the beginning of the revolt offers the possibility of retracing the links between the act of filming and the act of protesting, intertwined by means of the body, words, and emotions. Created on the margins of the world of institutionalized media production, these images and sounds depict an array of new forms of speaking out and engaging in a struggle. Yet the point is not to overestimate the power of such footage – akin to social networks, they do not raise rebellion in and of themselves;² they also report on a mere fraction of the revolt. Still, video recordings remain valuable because they not only provide a trace of events, but also – and above all – document new ways of participating in them.

The practices of video self-documentation during protests are nothing new. They emerged at the beginning of the millennium owing to the democratization and mass popularization of digital technologies for recording audiovisual materials and making them publicly available.³ They played a particularly important role during the brutal clashes that accompanied the G8 summit held in Genoa in 2001. The establishment of YouTube, the most commonly used social platform, popularized those practices and made it possible to share footage online almost instantly and

multiply documentation of a single event. In the Middle East, the process gathered momentum in 2009, when a revolt broke out against the re-election of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. The government banned the foreign press from reporting on events. Hundreds of films recorded by protesters were subsequently posted online in order to demonstrate the scale of the revolt and repressions. Since 2010, the revolutionary movements that shook the Arab world have left a trail of a considerable number of recordings, most of them anonymous.⁴ The protests in the aftermath of the presidential elections in Iran and the revolts in Arab countries stimulated the emergence of numerous studies devoted to cyber-activism.⁵ Not only do they often overestimate the role of the Internet and social networks, but also betray a tendency to treat digital space as tangible and present it as a separate world governed by its own logic. It can be viewed in a more prosaic manner, however, in its interactions with the "real world,"⁶ by observing how the new forms of communication are shaping practices, discourses, and the imagination.

Recordings immersed in the event: distortion, corporeality, emotion

Since the first manifestations in March 2011, protesters in Syria have been spontaneously documenting events in order to bypass the media embargo imposed by the regime of Bashar al-Assad, who negates the very existence of the social rebellion, deeming it a conspiracy and labelling the protesters as Islamist terrorists. The authorities also try to conceal the repressions that intensify as the months go by. In such a context, filming is primarily a matter of the pursuit of establishing the truth anew and regaining control of the interpretation of events. In his definition of vernacular video as a tool of decentralized communication,⁷ Tom Sherman indicates the significance of the effect of the sheer presence of people who make video recordings, and of the pursuit of effectiveness. In extreme situations, however, these two characteristics may prove to be paradoxical. In the case discussed here, some of the footage created at the very heart of manifestations is essentially distorted: it does not offer the possibility of immediately observing and understanding what is actually happening. At the same time, the distortion that characterizes these types of video recordings results from their proliferation – since they are posted online in such great numbers, they make each other invisible. Scattered around the enormous, intricate space of YouTube, the vast majority of these images remain latent, if not simply disappearing at a certain point.⁸

Furthermore, despite their availability, the images and sounds are insignificant, poor, weak, and insufficient. Most of them are also ineffective in the sense that they usually provide little information about the context. This type of footage definitely has little importance to the relations of the forces that operate in the area.

When the first manifestations in Syria took place, the majority of protesters brandished cameras, i.e. their cell phones. The footage recorded during those demonstrations is spontaneous in the sense that it is shot in the heat of action and does not follow any communication strategies whatsoever. Immersed in the event, it shuns the standards of framing used in the media world. The shots are shaky, the images are blurred, and there are only scarce hints to help understand the spatial conditions of events and the way they unfold over the course of time. Posted online without prior editing, the raw footage prolongs the duration of the manifestation. Therefore, every viewer gets a powerful impression of authenticity as they are thrown into the very center of the action, but at the same time the images seem distorted as a result of breaking the field of vision, chaotic camera movement, and poor resolution.⁹ Simultaneously, this video genre paradoxically unveils the tension between the intensity and authenticity of lived experience on the one hand, and the abstract form of its audiovisual interpretation on the other.¹⁰ Ultimately the recordings provide little information about events themselves.¹¹ Yet, insofar as they carry scant information data, they document in a perceptible way the experience of protest pursued in the specific context of repression. The words, movements, and emotions of the people recording the images deliver sufficiently numerous and valuable elements to allow us to better understand the significance and stake of the act of participating in a demonstration. What we therefore see is the sheer physical and emotional engagement of individuals who film and take part in an event, rather than the event itself.

The film shot in Hama just 10 days after the first demonstration in Dara shows particularly well what filming practices looked like in the first phase of the protests. What initially occurs is a deconcentration with regard to sound: the person shooting the video shouts alongside other protesters: "Freedom," "Peaceful,"¹³ "There is no god but God,"¹⁴ and "With our souls, with our blood, we will sacrifice ourselves for you, Dara." The



Manifestation in Hama on 25 March 2011 to support the inhabitants of Dara¹²

emotional states of the manifestation's participants are conveyed by the power of these words and the intensity of the chanting. After decades of silencing, a new foray into the reclaimed space of the street in order to shout out loud becomes a truly extraordinary event. The euphoric voices are also broken by fear at times, as the secret service agents are discreetly observing everything and checking the protesters' IDs, if not firing live ammunition at them. Hama is not a random Syrian town – it was there that Hafez al-Assad brutally quashed a protest movement in 1982 by bombarding the city for three days and killing between 20-30,000 people. The massacre, committed with complete impunity in the name of struggle against Islamism, took place far away from cameras. Only 10 photographs – poorly disseminated – document the death and destruction. Therefore, when the inhabitants of Hama took to the streets to protest in 2011, they already knew the extent of the barbarity that the authorities were capable of. They believed, however, that the sheer act of filming could stop the violence and repression by exposing them to an external gaze.

In the recording made during the first demonstration in Hama, the creator of the footage films and protests at the same time until he finally forgets about the former. The image eventually becomes subjected to the rhythm of an arm swinging while chanting. The camera becomes an extension of the body that is participating in the action. The shaken device, held in the hand, repeats its movements and conveys excitement through the manner of filming, which is subordinated to motion rather than to the view.¹⁵ The spontaneity of videos shot by ordinary protesters is characterized by exactly such corporeality of the audiovisual record, which also results from the fact that the action is far from staged; it is the intensity of the experienced events that actually imposes the character and dynamics of image framing. Insofar as the footage may have been used later by television broadcasters, such filming practices should not be reduced to "citizen journalism." After all, the people who recorded the images did not simply happen to be in the right place at the right time and then deliver the outcome of that coincidence to the mainstream media – it is rather that filming forms part of the challenge that consists of taking to the streets and demanding a change of authorities. Video recording also made it possible to reappropriate public space in visual terms, which reinforces and prolongs its physical takeover, otherwise limited to a single point. In such a context, filming is much more than a reflex or informational "duty" – it is an

exceptionally transgressive gesture. The act of shooting a video is also an event in itself – it is supposed to bear testimony to that breakthrough moment when something unthinkable just a moment earlier suddenly becomes possible.

The fragment of the recording that I am analyzing is devoid of any significant informational value; it reports on the event in a largely insufficient manner. We do not actually see much: a procession of people who are protesting rather clumsily on the street (car horns can be heard) – some of them turn around nervously. We can also see buildings and palm trees. If it were not for the title (in Arabic), it would be difficult to understand what the film is about. Yet the documentation value of the recording lies somewhere else – in its very illegibility. The chaos of images and sounds allows us to instantly and physically see and feel the emotions of the person shooting the video and of everyone else around them. The footage documents the extreme experience of protesting in repressive circumstances and generates a vision of the event – marked by movement, embodied – which is too drastic to be represented coherently. The fusion of the body, the camera, and the action shifts visual perception in the direction of perception via other senses.¹⁶ Shot illegally, the analyzed video documents the emotional and physical experience of the demonstration. Situated as close to the action as possible, we are squeezed into the intimacy of the experience. The intensity of the lived moment blurs the border between the intentionality of the gesture of filming – related primarily to the willingness to provide testimony – and the fortuitousness that stems from the character of the event in question. In this case, the individual with the camera documents the course of events and, at the same time, forms part of them to such an extent that he forgets about the very action of filming. The image – born at a moment of paroxysm both embodied and mechanical – is akin to a living imprint of the relation between the historical event and the experience of that event, between the communitarian and the personal dimensions.

The dramaturgy of collective action

As the weeks go by, raw footage yields to more "professional" video recordings. A strategy of filming emerges that aims to generate information about events themselves. The pursuit of legibility contributes to an increasingly controlled mode of recording: the very act of filming is subject to reflection and becomes detached from the act of protesting, as it is supposed to capture the event in its spatial and

temporal entirety. The process of professionalization is motivated by a high demand for images on the part of the traditional media, deprived of access to the sites of events, but also by more effective self-organization of manifestations at the level of local management committees taking care of logistics and ensuring safety. The committees take on the task of recording images that present the protests and, at the same time, generate a space for various forms of collaboration between the protesters and those who film them. From that point onwards, the spontaneity of film gives way to recording techniques that aim to provide information and to raise sympathy. As a result, we observe the emergence of mechanisms of contextualizing and staging protests which are supposed to make the video footage more legible and attractive. The mechanisms of contextualization make themselves manifest through the distancing of oneself from an event, which offers the possibility of creating a coherent visual representation. That is why video recording gradually gains autonomy from the protests in order to eventually become a completely separate practice. At the same time, these mechanisms generate objects and performances: the recording individual may for instance present a written indication of the date and place of the event in front of the camera. Protesters are also encouraged to collaborate with those filming them, for instance by turning banners or portraits of martyrs in appropriate directions.

One can therefore observe forms of collaboration between the protesters and those creating the documentation, which have an impact on the protests as they gradually begin to organize themselves according to the way that they will be represented. The abundance of signals of contextualization reveals the special status of these documentary forms confronted with questions about authenticity – after all, it is the participants engaged in an action who generate knowledge about it, knowledge negated by the authorities. In such circumstances, the professionalization of staging a revolt bears relation to the willingness to prove its very existence, as well as its resilience and peaceful nature.

One of the video recordings,¹⁷ shot in the Idlib region of northern Syria, shows particularly clearly some of the elements of the professionalization of video documentation of the protests. It manifests a rupture between the visual record



Banners presented at the "Down with Annan" manifestation in the Idlib region¹⁷

and the event (which is as radical as it is clumsy), collaboration between the filming individual and the protesters, and the application of the previously mentioned signals of contextualization. The framing, angles of shots, and camera movements are all controlled. Image resolution indicates the use of specialist equipment: it seems that the cameraman is in possession of a Steadicam, which allows him to move while preserving the stability of the image and the continuity of movement. At the beginning of the recording he shows a cardboard panel to the camera – akin to a clapperboard – with information about the date and location; this practice became widespread during the first months of the revolt. The panel also reads: "Down with Annan and al-Assad's servants,"¹⁸ thereby accusing the UN observer mission – then headed by Kofi Annan – of ineffectiveness. The cameraman then moves between protesters standing in rows chanting slogans, repeating after the leader: "Arabs, you've betrayed us," "Arabs, fear God." He unhurriedly films the banners – all of them bear the date in order to add credibility to the events. The inscriptions are both in Arabic¹⁹ and English, which indicates that the footage is being created not only with an Arabic-speaking audience in mind.

Such camera movement towards standing people is not necessarily justified from the point of view of communication since it brings to mind stillness and therefore contradicts the idea of revolutionary upheaval. At the same time, the camera shows the protesters' faces, an action at odds with the ethics of media activism, according to which the identity of filmed individuals needs to be protected.²⁰ Due to such highly improbable staging, the man recording the footage detaches himself from the event in order to achieve greater legibility. He is in possession of specialist equipment, yet his activity lacks self-confidence. The professionalization of video recording, even if rapid in some cases, remains an uneven phenomenon that is conditioned by the place in which the camera operators happen to work at a given time, as this determines the possibility of obtaining advice and sharing experience.²¹ Nevertheless, producing and posting footage online contributes to the gradual evolution of the manner of organizing protests by creating their new dramaturgies. This pertains to performative elements (characteristic methods of taking up space; the ways in which individual people voice their opinions; singing, dancing, etc.) as well as props (standards, illustrated banners, emblems, and portraits of martyrs). Numerous videos originating from the end of that period show people with cameras on a platform filming the gatherings of protesters who perform choreographies

partly for the needs of the video documentation. Some types of group dramaturgy created a space for close-knit collaboration with the camera operators: that was the case, for instance, in Binnish, where numerous human frescoes were organized throughout 2012.²²

In that situation, the protest performance was entirely oriented to the needs of the video recording. A human fresco requires devising a complex choreography based on precise coordination between the camera operator and the protesters. It intertwines two very different cultures: festive popular culture borrowed from the football stadium, and the ceremonial political culture that characterizes processions in honor of a leader – much appreciated by Hafez al-Assad in the 1980s and 1990s.

As in North Korea, under his reign thousands of extras had to recreate human frescos with the utmost precision. The discussed recordings subvert that model of the compulsory formation of serried ranks around the leader: protesters hurl insults at Hafez and Bashar al-Assad and unite their bodies in a demonstration of opposition. The goal of the bodies that form words and images is also to reclaim and attest to the truth: "We are not terrorists," "Our demand is freedom." At the time, the regime and official media implied that people who took to the streets were "secret agents" or "armed criminals." In this case, the protesters address both the authorities and the international community – the latter with a plea for help ("SOS"). Viewers who are unfamiliar with an event require a message of utmost legibility, which is achieved by means of language and text, but also by the imposition of order and the proper staging of bodies/messages. Therefore, as we can see, video recordings contribute to the development of an exceptionally rich culture of protest based on performances that are supposed – in a ludic and festive fashion – to express the demands and the identification of the community in revolt.



People forming a sign saying „We are not terrorists“. Link to YouTube film: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iSWTUuwbYZw>.

Recordings as carriers of protest ingeniousness

Not only did the strategic use of video recordings shape the very events of protest, but also favored the individualization of activities by generating space for particularly creative stagings. At the beginning of the revolt it is possible to observe

the near-euphoric reclamation of the street: extraordinary joy is expressed through emotions, bodies, and words in unique spectacles. Depending on the peripheral (or otherwise) location of activities – determining the degree of risk, which in turn depends on the presence of the secret service agents – fun and creative freedom are possible to a varied degree. Therefore, the character of the threat in public space influences the form of new acts of protest that are undertaken during the day or at night, with uncovered faces or anonymously. For instance, in 2012 in Hama, the citizens stage a parody of parliamentary elections, commonly deemed to be a masquerade.²³



First free elections in Hama.

At the beginning of the recording²⁴ the camera operator shows the date and adds: "The parliament does not represent us. This is how we vote in Hama, in a free and fully democratic way." We then see dozens of people walking over stenciled graffiti images of Bashar al-Assad's face that form the command: "Trample on it." Finally, some of them spit on a poster of the president.



Balls of freedom in the al-Muhajireen district. Link to YouTube film:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YBnnCibJJY>.

What ordinary people are re-enacting here is the gesture – frequent at the beginning of the revolt – of destroying statues of the presidents, both father and son. Reclaiming public space physically and symbolically also consists of the revolt of ordinary bodies against images of the president, which by their very nature are cult objects. Video footage offers the possibility of making public the usually ephemeral and hidden activities undertaken in public space. In 2011, fountains in the capital city were colored red in order to allude to the repression.²⁵ A few months later the slogan "Down with" appeared at night on a hill towering over Damascus.²⁶ Revolutionary slogans ("Down with," "Freedom," "Down with religious divisions," "Peaceful") were also written on the ping-pong balls that flooded the steep streets of the capital.²⁷

Creativity unleashed by video recordings also led to the privatization of protest space due to the emergence of forms of action based on a limited number of participants. The framework of activity and visibility thus defined prompts the issue of anonymity. After all, in a crowd, even if individuals protest with uncovered faces,

their identity becomes dissolved in collectivity. In turn, in filmed actions, exposure strengthens individualization, and therefore the majority of protesters hide their identity. Nevertheless, this does not remain indeterminate, but quite the opposite – it is revealed in a new way. Filming one's own activities in private space was initially motivated by the pursuit of avoiding repression. That is why the tactic was most often used by women, who were less frequently engaged in activities on the streets than men – although they were also present there. Many of them preferred less visible forms of engagement, such as humanitarian aid or medical care. Women also played an important role in the organization of protests by creating slogans and banners. Yet for some of them, staying behind the scenes was not enough, and therefore they invented their own type of demonstration, the "home sit-in" [*'tisam manzili*]. This activity – an emblematic example of the privatization of protest – is characteristic of the Syrian revolution, and it became popularized and institutionalized because of video recordings.²⁸ The rules of home sit-ins were quickly defined, although different variants can be observed depending on the group or city. They usually gather around 10 female participants and take place in a living room, whose space and decorations are changed for the occasion with revolutionary standards, banners, and portraits of martyrs. The introduction of the camera and Internet reconfigures domestic space and transforms it into public space. As a result, what emerges is a liminal space between the street and the living room. This domestic abolition of divisions is also expressed through performances such as the reading out of declarations that condemn the abuse of power or express solidarity with the protesters and militants of the Free Syrian Army. An equally important activity consists of singing the Syrian national anthem or revolutionary songs.

In one of the films, shot in Damascus and posted online in May 2011, a sit-in begins with a minute of silence to honor the victims of repression, after which the women sing the national anthem.²⁹ The protesters are careful not to sing too loudly in order to avoid alarming neighbors and risking denunciation. Inscriptions on paper sheets shown to the camera at the beginning read: "We want liberation of Syria from security forces." There are also other inscriptions: "We're organizing sit-ins at our homes because we fear we won't return to our children and families," "Syrian people united," "Freedom," and "We are not Salafists or foreign agents." One can also spot the photograph of Hamza al-Khateeb, an 11-year-old boy who took part in

a protest with his father and was then kidnapped and tortured to death by the security services. He soon became an icon of the revolt. The sit-in as a protest performance relies on numerous props – carriers of text and image – that are supposed to be captured by the camera. The message is therefore conveyed by means of text, images, and singing, but also through showing/hiding the protesters. Even if their private identities remain secret, the visibly varied appearance and attire of the participants expresses a strong message regarding identity. Some of the women are not veiled, but they hide their faces in other ways: behind a pennant, with sunglasses, or by blurring the image. The depiction of this diversity of images highlights the femininity of the participants, but also underlines their varied identifications in terms of religious belief, which is supposed to counter the official narrative that unambiguously associates the revolt with Sunni extremism.

Experience, action, and memory

At the beginning of the revolt, protesters held cell phones in their hands not only to document events: by filming, they challenged the authorities and reclaimed the streets from them. The visual and aural reclamation of public space is an obvious reason why video recordings – however blurry – were posted on YouTube on such a mass scale. In this context, uploading content online served to confirm the authenticity and scale of the revolt. It also offered the possibility of preserving traces of it, however weak or illegible. Those who come across these films – hastily shot and posing a risk to their creators – through the determining work of algorithms and keywords have an opportunity to sense the intensity of the experience of revolt. Video recordings stimulate the creation of new regimes of image and sound expressed in a straightforward manner by protesting bodies. The spontaneity of the protest footage fairly quickly gives way to the practice of recording images driven by strategies of increasing the visibility of revolt and explaining it. Such a rationalization of filming influences the way protests are staged. Rebellious communities rely on visuality and sound to express their demands and identifications through numerous material means and performative elements. Recordings are created in the belief that they have an impact on the viewer: they are supposed to elicit empathy, raise sensitivity, encourage action, and convince. In the long run, however, they have played little role in raising awareness of the revolt and increasing its visibility. Nevertheless, recording practices – adapted by hermetic groups that do not usually take part in protests – made it

possible to invent new ways of engagement and of seizing public space. Protesters' creativity is enhanced by the way the Internet helps enrich creative competences. The visual aspects of the revolt in Syria manifest themselves in different ways depending on time and space. They focus on the experience of protest, its narrativization and imaging, as well as on its commemoration. The majority of the recordings did not attract a large number of views and, despite their ubiquity, the films have not had any impact whatsoever on the relations between forces in the area. They are therefore ineffective, weak images. Their value and force obviously lie beyond the ephemeral temporality of politics and the media: they derive their power from the intensity and uncertainty of lived experience, which undergoes a twofold process of the compression and extension of time and history – a process that characterizes the situation of revolt.

Footnotes

1 A precise count is impossible, but the number of such films can be estimated in the 100,000s.

2 Sahar Khamis, Paul B. Gold, Katherine Vaughn, "Beyond Egypt's 'Facebook Revolution' and Syria's 'YouTube Uprising'," *Arab Media & Society* no. 15 (2012), 1-30.

3 See: Olivier Blondeau, Laurence Allard, *Devenir média. L'activisme sur Internet, entre défection et expérimentation* (Paris: Éditions Amsterdam, 2007).

4 See: Peter Snowdon, "The Revolution *Will* be uploaded: Vernacular Video and the Arab Spring," *Culture Unbound* vol. 6 (2014), 401-429; Dork Zabunyan, *L'insistance des luttes. Images, soulèvements, contre-révolutions*(Paris: De l'incidence éditeur, 2016).

5 Cf. Annabelle Sreberny, Gholam Khiabany, *Blogistan: The Internet and Politics in Iran*, (London: Tauris, 2010); *Mouvements sociaux en ligne, cyber activisme et nouvelles formes d'expression en Méditerranée*, ed. Sihem Najjar (Paris: Karthala, 2012), among others.

6 Madeleine Pastinelli, "Pour en finir avec l'ethnographie du virtuel! Des enjeux méthodologiques de l'enquête de terrain en ligne," *Anthropologie et Sociétés* no. 1-

2 (2011), 35-52.

7 Tom Sherman, "Vernacular Video," in *Video Vortex Reader: Responses to YouTube*, eds. Geert Lovink and Sabine Niederer (Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, 2008), 161-168.

8 Since the beginning of my research, around 10% of the corpus of sources has become unavailable due to closures of the accounts of users who posted them online.

9 Kari Andén-Papadopoulos, "Media witnessing and the 'crowd-sourced video revolution'," *Visual Communication* no. 3 (2013), 341-357.

10 According to Roger Odin, this paradoxical tension is part and parcel of the aesthetics of films shot with cell phone cameras. Cf. *Téléphone mobile et création*, eds. Laurence Allard, Laurent Creton and Roger Odin (Paris: Armand Colin, 2014).

11 This deficit of legibility is often compensated for by texts that accompany videos posted online. 90% of those texts are in Arabic.

12 Translation of the Arabic caption. Video uploaded on YouTube on 25 March 2011: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ywviRWqZE7U>.

13 Meaning: "The revolution is peaceful." I would like to cordially thank Jakub Sypiański, translator and expert on the region, for broad-reaching and invaluable consultations regarding translation from Arabic and nuances of the situation in Syria. Polish transl. note.

14 The initial words of the Shahada, the Muslim testimony of belief. Polish transl. note.

15 Writing about footage from the revolt in Tunisia, Ulrike Lune Riboni defines this type of image as a *bodyimage* in order to emphasize the unique intertwinement of the body and the record. At the same time, the researcher likens the cell phone camera to the *paluche* – the miniature camera invented at the beginning of the 1980s which made it possible to detach the act of directing the lens from the eye. Cf. idem, "Notes pour une définition: 'bodyimages'," *WINDOW. Carnet de recherche de Ulrike Lune Riboni*, entry as of 7 October 2013, <http://window.hypotheses.org/102> (accessed October 28, 2017).

16 In his concept of filming practices by means of portable cameras – which the author himself defines as *mobilographie* – Richard Bégin emphasizes the shift from the event to the experienced event, which also entails a shift from seeing to feeling. Cf. idem, "L'image au corps," *Vertigo* no. 48 (2015), 6-16.

17 *Idlib, al-Has, manifestation on Friday "Down with Annan,"* posted online on 13 July 2012, archived on 3 December 2012, currently unavailable on YouTube due to account closure.

18 Reference to "slogan for Friday" – Friday, a day off, is at the same time the main day of protests. The slogan was selected through preliminary voting on a Facebook page (The SyrianRevolution 2011 *الثورة السورية ضد بشار الاسد*, <https://www.facebook.com/Syrian.Revolution>). Such a manner of presentation made it possible to simultaneously manage protests across the entire territory: to demonstrate suggested common slogans and confirm the dates of manifestations.

19 Particularly visible are: "Unyielding Has" [reference to a city in the Idlib Governorate, i.e. the north-western part of Syria – Polish transl. note], "Solidarity with Al-Turaymisa" (a village that had previously witnessed a massacre committed by regime forces), and "To those escaping from the sinking ship of the regime: welcome to the ranks of the revolution, but not among its leaders."

20 Such tacit rules can be observed especially in numerous video recordings where protesters are filmed from the back or from a distance in order to guarantee anonymity. Whenever a face appears, it is blurred. Such preventive measures were put into force after the arrests of protesters who had been recognized in the recordings by the secret services.

21 The demand of Arabic satellite networks for media transmissions was higher in large cities, where collaboration was established with filming individuals (who received the necessary equipment and advice). It was also in the cities that young filmmakers gave volunteers lessons in recording and editing. Cf. Cécile Boëx, "Mobilisations d'artistes dans le mouvement de révolte. Modes d'action et limites de l'engagement," in *Au cœur des révoltes arabes. Devenirs révolutionnaires*, eds. Amin Allal and Thomas Pierret (Paris: Armand Colin, 2013), 87-108.

22 *Binnish. An ingeeeeeinous creative carnival transmission of a Friday*

manifestation (title in Arabic), YouTube, video posted online on 25 May 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iSWTUuwbyZw>, and *Binnish creative work, 27/4. Hymn "Lord, we only have you". Ingenious* (title in Arabic), YouTube, video posted online on 27 April 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FaOkxce-Mwo> (both accessed October 28, 2017).

23 There are around 50 video recordings mocking the elections; they originate from all regions of Syria.

24 *Hama. The course of completely free elections*, YouTube, video posted online on 7 May 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eT1FXVzTAK4> (accessed October 28, 2017).

25 Cf. e.g. the video *Revolutionaries from Damascus give the fountains of Damascus the color of blood*, YouTube, video posted online on 10 May 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PhQPz411vs8> (accessed October 28, 2017).

26 *Heroic members of Roukn ad-Din support Bashar in their own way*, YouTube, video posted online on 18 November 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i7heyIwP3Co> (accessed October 28, 2017).

27 A video created by the protest management committee of the al-Muhajireen district documents the action and the preparations. Cf. *Balls of freedom in the al-Muhajireen district*, YouTube, video posted online on 28 July 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YBnnCiblJJY> (accessed October 28, 2017).

28 I have so far gathered around 60 video recordings of home sit-ins held throughout Syria between 2011 and 2014.

29 *Home sit-in, Damascus 30 May*, YouTube, video posted online on 31 May 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iv7CdmLkURs> (accessed October 28, 2017).