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## The selfie practice: experience and intimacy in daily photography

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## Abstract

We seek to initially investigate the present everyday practices of the selfie which, amidst the mediations of digital devices, are incorporated into a contemporary culture of interaction, sharing and communication. This approach is related to the philosophical anthropology developed by Bruno Latour (2012b) and to the theory of spheres by Peter Sloterdijk (2011). We have conducted empirical research on current practices of the selfie, based on interviews with people used to take pictures with smartphones. If thought of as a practice, the selfie displays its complexity, its various experiences of faciality in a multiplication and widespread dissemination of images.

### Keywords

Photography; Selfie; Experience.

## Introduction

The selfie, a global phenomenon which emerged out of the relationship between photography and the smartphone, is not only a type of image but also and mainly a new practice. This neologism, already quoted in the dictionary, indicates the act of taking a photo of oneself, as a type of self-portrait, using a cell phone camera. It is therefore a practice that emerges out of the very experiences of current day-to-day photography, associated with a widespread interaction with technology and digital media.

Analysis that considers it prematurely as representative of the individualism or narcissism of its practitioners are common. This leads to a condemnation of the practice to a hasty judgment likely to ignore a whole network of mediators and their various modes of existence, in the sense of Bruno Latour's anthropology of the moderns (2012b), as well as the diverse formations of spheres of intimacy, from the perspective of Peter Sloterdijk's theory of spheres (2011). Such an approach is an attempt to purify the hybrids related to current day-to-day photography and, in this manner, invalidate the practice itself and the experiences it implies. Generalizing the phenomenon, and defining it prematurely as a result of a contemporary culture of narcissism, hides the practice of the selfie itself.

Choosing another approach, we suggest paying attention to the practices, the experiences, the formations of usage habits of smartphones for photography and, in this manner, start to build an understanding of what one normally calls a selfie. For André Gunthert (2015), for example, there are three main ways to "practice the selfie": using a mirror, turning around the device, and in the case of latest smartphones models, by using the frontal camera. The Oxford dictionary, by incorporating the term and naming it "word of the year 2013"<sup>1</sup>, defines a selfie as "a photograph that someone takes of themselves, normally taken with a smartphone or webcam and shared via social media" (Selfie, 2015).

More than a reference to the image itself, the term selfie denominates a practice in rapid ascension, leading to the emergence of a highly popular type of photograph produced and shared on a daily basis. According to the Oxford dictionary<sup>2</sup>, the use of the word selfie increased by more than 17000% between October, 2012, and the same period in 2013. Records of the earliest use of the term date back to the year 2002 on an Australian website. However, only in 2013

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<sup>1</sup> Available at: <<http://blog.oxforddictionaries.com/2013/11/word-of-the-year-2013-winner/>>

<sup>2</sup> <http://blog.oxforddictionaries.com/2013/11/an-infographic-of-selfie/>

did it start to become widespread. By monitoring the use of this neologism, we can see that the practice of creating photographic images called selfies is exponentially expanding.

Making a self-portrait, be it by using a camera or painting oneself on canvas is not a recent practice. Even the act of turning around the camera and photographing oneself, in a manner very similar to the current selfie, already occurred in the times of analogical photography. What best represents the current practice of the selfie, therefore, is not only the self-portrait, but a digital version of self-photography that enables interaction with the smartphone and, as André Gunthert (2015) explains, gives the image conversational properties, providing exchanges of gesture, as well as an evolution of functions and of the cultural environment surrounding the self-portrait. This relation with the smartphone allows, in a hybrid manner, the emergence and popularization of a practice that is influenced not only by an evolution in self-representation and the construction of intimacy from image, but also by its incorporation into a logic of instantaneity, sharing and communication.

Novel and polemical, the selfie phenomenon has become an object of recent research that considers it either as a reflection of a narcissistic society based on reproduction and individuality (Persichetti, 2013; Weiser, 2015; Halpern; Valenzuela; Katz, 2016) or within a framework that rejects premature negative conceptions and focuses on the practice itself (Hess, 2015; Lasén, 2015; Gunthert, 2015; Senft; Baym, 2015). By following the second approach, we seek in this research to outline a form of investigation directed at the practices and experiences surrounding self-photography using a smartphone. Therefore, it is not focused on the aesthetics of the images, but rather on the practice itself, understanding the selfie not only as a type of photo, but as a network of mediators and their interactions, constituting diverse habits and experiences. According to Aaron Hess (2015, p. 1630), for example,

As a social practice, the selfie serves as a reminder of our contradictory existence in hybridity. Much like any act of rhetorical expression, selfies are purposeful and offer cultural reflections and interpretations. While the easy explanation is that selfies exist as emblems of a narcissistic contemporary culture, a deeper reading of selfies instead provides insight into the relationships between technology, the self, materiality, and networks.

In other words, we propose to think the practices of production of digital self-portraits that circulate from screen to screen as a network of mediations involving humans and non-humans, following, therefore, the perspective of Actor-Network Theory (Latour, 2012a) to, consequently, seek to follow experience

(James, 1979; Latour, 2012b) and focus on the communicational processes also involving objects (Lemos, 2013).

## Follow experience

Both the proposal to think in terms of sociotechnical networks and the criticism of the dichotomy between nature and society relate to the development of Actor-Network Theory<sup>3</sup> (ANT) and to the anthropology of the moderns by Bruno Latour. Deconstructing this supposed separation is precisely what brings together the elaboration of the concepts of spheres and networks (Latour, 2009; Sloterdijk, 2011). They are two forms, as Latour (2009) argues, of reinterpreting globalization, of avoiding purifying the hybrids and idealizing an exterior world, or, following Whitehead (1994), of distancing oneself from a bifurcation of nature. As Latour (2009) writes, by taking God out of Leibniz's monads, there are not many alternatives except for transforming them into spheres, in the sense developed by Sloterdijk (2011), on one hand, or into networks, in the meaning particular to ANT, on the other. In other words, it is necessary to potentialize the monadology renewed by Gabriel Tarde (2007), leading the monads to infinity, in an oscillation between unity and multiplicity, a connection between micro and macro. Therefore, thinking in terms of networks and spheres, the relations become multiple; oscillating between bubbles, globes and foam (Sloterdijk, 2011) or based on multiple networks in association (Latour, 2009).

This work in particular is interested in maintaining the heterogeneity of the networks and, at the same time, proposing an initial analysis of the relations between microspheres of intimacy and the production of images. For Sloterdijk (2011), to live means to continuously construct spheres that contain us and act as a shared interior which we inhabit. The German philosopher's ambitious project, called *Spheres*, was elaborated in three books. In the first book, the archeology of the intimate is explored by an investigation of microspherical units, named bubbles, forms of relational intimacy, in a spherical communion between bubbles. In this sense, the author believes that individuals are never alone; they always incorporate one another. The second book in the series, *Globes*, deals with the exploration of the globe and the globalization movements, while the third one, *Foam*, develops the question of a poetics of plurality.

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<sup>3</sup> For ANT, the social is made up of associations and the objective is to reveal the networks that they form at each moment. The social, therefore, signifies "a peculiar movement of reassociation and reaggregation" (Latour, 2012a, p. 25).

The starting point in the present study is the 'micro-spherical' relationships. One of the Sloterdijk's analyses relates to the bubbles of intimacy beginning with considerations of the human face. For the philosopher, the possibility of "faciality", beginning from the relationships between faces, is connected to a process of anthropogenesis, meaning that human faces produce each other, in openings and creations. The author develops an especially picturesque investigation of the relations between faces, starting from an image of Giotto, moving on to faces on coins, and finishing with faces in Francis Bacon's pieces, Andy Warhol's self-portraits and Cindy Sherman's photographic montages. "Looking at the entire early history of human faciality", writes Sloterdijk (2011, p. 192), "one can say that humans have faces not for themselves, but for others." An early experience of faciality, therefore, is related to humans who look at other humans; the construction of individuality via the face itself is connected to the experience of the look of the other. This "between faces", this openness and creation of faces, is connected to processes of sharing of intimacy, formations of spheres of intimacy, tied to the multiplication and interaction of faces.

In this paper, we seek an archaeology of the intimate directed toward faces in the sense of thinking about the current moment of production of images related to the practice of the selfie. If we expand such an experience of faciality to the contemporary production of images, can we therefore perceive some of these relations between faces, possible bubbles of intimacy, as a form of relational interaction between people by a multiplication of images of themselves? The people who will be presented in the following section provide an initial response to this question.

The current relation between photographed, visualized and shared faces refers, just as with the communion between spheres, to a construction of intimacy based on the relational, through approximation and associative processes. We suggest, therefore, to think from a perspective that Bruno Latour (2012b) called a philosophy of being-as-other. This is a proposal which guides the most recent anthropology of the moderns developed in the book *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence* (IME). It seeks to recuperate articulated beings, those capable of being instituted, in the sense of "institution"<sup>4</sup> indicated by Étienne Souriau (2009). Bruno Latour proposes an understanding of the plurality of the modes of existence based on an ontology of subsistence and not substance. In other words, a way of considering essence, which avoids dealing with something inherent to being, interpreting it, to the contrary, as relational, permitting a tracking of experience.

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<sup>4</sup> For Souriau, the modes of existence are not givens, given that the whole of reality is incomplete, and for this reason they need to be instituted. Existence, then, is a trajectory, a process, and in this way, reality itself needs to be instituted, just as with all types of existence.

Subsistence, therefore, is defined from a relationship with the other. Just as there is a critique in ANT of the sociology of the social and a defense of a sociology of associations, in a similar manner, however with a philosophical quality, a philosophy of being-as-other is defended in IME instead of a philosophy of being-as-being<sup>5</sup>.

Bruno Latour, in his most recent work, seeks to expand his anthropology of the moderns by incorporating a perspective of diverse beings – and their various modes of existence – that populate the world, and doing so in a plural and articulated manner. By analyzing the “others”, the Moderns always forget to notice what they themselves are. To understand them we need to make the categorical errors generated by them (us) clear and perceive the interpretative keys proper to each mode. Given this, practices are purified when the pathways, the networks, the conditions of happiness and unhappiness of each mode are confused, when one does not perceive what is specific to law, religion, science etc. To consider the selfie, for example, as simply a narcissistic and individualist act, without understanding the practices and experiences that emerge from it, would be to fall into a categorical error and eliminate any possibility of perceiving the multiplicity of modes of existence involved in the process. We should, therefore, seek that which the Actor-Network Theory still does not permit: to qualify the values, to perceive the various types of associations, grab hold of the diverse types of existence. We begin to understand that the world is articulated. Any being must *pass through* another to be able to exist, just as, in Sloterdijk’s philosophy, the formations of spheres are articulated and generate a shared intimacy. It is, in other words, a relational empirical perspective directed towards experience, in line with William James’s radical empiricism (1979), that is to say, as being capable of remaining true to experience, following the relations and prepositions. We must, in this sense, always demand elements that are directly experienced.

This study is guided by Latour’s and James’ empirical philosophy, in the sense of following the “threads of experience”, that is, to focus on the practices. This is our proposal to conduct our initial investigation: in what manner, in this articulated world, do associations occur in experience and in practical uses related to an imagery production centered on the face and reproduced via digital technology? The emphasis is neither on the image produced, nor exclusively on the device, but rather on experience, in the formation of habits and in the diverse practices of self-photography.

Following experience also represents a methodological proposal, represented, in this case, by an incursion into the quotidian practices of the selfie.

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<sup>5</sup> *l'être-en-tant-qu'autre* and *l'être-en-tant-qu'être*

In the following section, we present the stories of six people<sup>6</sup>, collected through in-depth interviews carried out in the context of previous research on the use of smartphones for photography (Pastor, 2016). The research presented a general panorama of the use of smartphones to produce photographs, seeking to understand the main practices of manipulation of the images (halting the automatism of the device) in terms of day-to-day contemporary photography. Between July 6<sup>th</sup> of and August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2015, 1061 valid responses were collected based on a form with 25 questions regarding the theme. In the second stage of the research, the results were filtered based on two criteria<sup>7</sup>: constant, daily photographic practices via smartphone; intensity of re-appropriation and deceleration of the automatism of the device. In this way, from the respondents to the questionnaire, 11 were selected to participate in in-depth interviews carried out via videoconferencing platforms. Among these, 6 showed a daily relation to the practice of the selfie. From the 11 interviewees, therefore, we selected those who, during the interview or based on observation of their photos published on *Instagram*, showed a habit of producing self-portraits using smartphones. This is the starting point for the present article.

For the analysis of the practices, developed in the following section, not only the reports of the interviewees were taken as a starting point, but also the observation and description of their actions and publications on *Instagram*. It is, in this sense, an investigation of the practices at work precisely via those descriptions, including, as Latour suggests, the textual reports as a “laboratory for social science” (2012a, p. 187). In other words, the laboratory practice of the researcher or ethnographer is also a textual practice, be it in producing descriptions of observations, or through transcriptions of reports of actors and even the formulation of the theoretical text itself.

Via the in-depth interviews, conducted based on the images and interactions of the participants observed on social media, we sought to understand some of the experiences produced there. In this way, the observation of the practices of the selfie, of these individuals, was complemented by their own speech. In this descriptive framework, influenced by the empirical philosophy elaborated by Latour and James, three techniques were adopted: the observation of social media practices, of published images<sup>8</sup> and the interaction with the people selected.

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<sup>6</sup> All the names were changed, to guarantee anonymity, and the interviews were conducted based on the analysis of their photos published on *Instagram*.

<sup>7</sup> For details of the filters and selection criteria, see Pastor, 2016.

<sup>8</sup> To guarantee the anonymity of the interviewees, no photo is presented in image format in this study. On the other hand, it is necessary to point out the importance of describing them, being a necessary step for observation of the processes involved in the current practice of the *selfie*.



## “Let me take a selfie”

“I take a lot of selfies. A lot of selfies”, says Maria. Tomas, Anna, Matilde, Camilo and Isaura, just like Maria, also take selfies, but at different levels of intensity, motivation and experiences.

“I always take selfies from the same angle”, Maria continues. “Almost always from the same angle. If I take it from below, I’ll look fat, if I take the selfie from high up it will look flat, so... It is always in the same way. Always from the same side of the face”. This practice, for her, varies according to the situation and what she is feeling at the time. There are various possibilities and motives to take a self-portrait in the selfie style:

It depends a lot on what I am feeling at the time. It’s not something like “I’ve woke up, I’m going to take a selfie”, I’m not like that either [laughter]. It is more like... I’ve got some incredible make-up on and I want to show it off. Or there are these extremes and also there is “look I just got soaking wet in the rain, I’m here working in the sun”. I already took selfies like this. I spent the whole day in the sun, I was all red, so I took a selfie and posted it on *Instagram*.

In one of the images published on her profile on *Instagram*, Maria appears in four different selfies, together with two friends. There are four distinct photos brought together in a montage using an application. All of them are smiling, but assume different poses in each photo. Maria opens her mouth in one of them, as if she were screaming; in another, she kisses the head of one of her friends, who makes a face sticking her tongue out; in another, one covers the face of the other with her hand. In the description, there is the phrase “only we know what it’s like to miss someone so much”, followed by a heart. In this mixture of funny images and poses, Maria says that she is showing her happiness at seeing her best friend. Her friend had just returned from a foreign exchange, but would only be spending ten days in the city: “she did not want people to know that she was here. So... she is my best friend, my best friend is coming back from England to spend a few days here, I’m not going to miss out on posting a photo with her!”. Sharing these images was very important for Maria, celebrating the meeting and showing how much she had missed her friend. As her friend, however, was only passing through the city and did not want to spread the news, the photograph was published as apparently timeless. “We post a photo that could have been taken before she had left, understand? And with the description, we did not want to say that she was here”, she explains. For the three, however, the happiness of the meeting, as well as the sharing of the image itself, represented a special moment of friendship and longing.

Everyone said that I move around a lot in the photos, precisely because I take a lot of photos, to see which will be the best. Only, with my closest friends, and in this case, these are my best friends, you let go more with people, you do things that you wouldn't necessarily do with other people. You end up creating a sequence of images, as if you had been in movement. I like this, because of this there are various photos in my *Instagram* like these four.

Observing Maria's posts on *Instagram*, it is possible to notice her manner of producing selfies, showing the different situations and people involved, group photos during happy hour at work, with friends in the park or alone showing off new clothes in the mirror. In many situations, one notices a feeling of proximity and different forms of intimacy between those who appear in the photos, with faces together and smiles for the camera, or, even in individual selfies, through the commentaries and interactions of friends, with emoticons, compliments and funny phrases. Extending an individual mode of logic, the very act of sharing, amplifying the possibilities of visualization and interaction, shows, in an experience developed by Maria, as a relational practice.

This shared intimacy ends up involving, as Maria herself suggests, the moment of taking the selfie with her friends, as well as the wish to share the images. It is, as Amparo Lasén (2015) calls it, a modulation of intimacy via the banal and day-to-day practices of producing and sharing selfies. Would it be possible, therefore, that the contemporary practice of producing images of oneself is tied to an experience of faciality? According to the author, "contemporary digital photographic practice re-mediate sociability, embodiment and subjectivity" (Lasén, 2015, p. 63), especially including the practice of self-photography via the smartphone. This type of image, argues the author, shows itself as highly interactive and relational.

"Do you tend to take selfies?", I ask Tomas. "Very rarely. I don't have anything against it, I think it is cool, but I don't tend to be the object of my photos", he says. Indeed, in his profile on *Instagram*, he exhibits quotidian photos related to environments and objects in his environment – food, cats, urban spaces, books, diverse objects etc., more often than self-portraits. However, every now and then a selfie is shared. Amongst these, I selected one in which Tomas photographed himself in a mirror, holding the smartphone in one of his hands. The mirror is fixed to a door, and in this one, Tomas is dressed in an orange T-shirt, allowing some tattoos on his left arm to appear, and wearing black shorts and sneakers. "I took it at home, on a Saturday", he said, "so it was more of a personal record". Tomas explains that he had an accident that year, breaking his "right elbow, I had it in plaster and pinned, and some friends had asked to see how it was, and if this had affected the tattoos". It is a photo, then, to show his friends his

improvement. It is a “selfat”, he jokes, merging the words selfie and fat. In the comments section, a friend had responded: “you’re not fat”.

Anna says that selfies and food pictures are the most common types of photo in her day-to-day photography. For her, the practice of the selfie mainly refers to a way of creating her own visual record of her appearance. “Firstly”, she explains, “selfies are a diary, a diary of myself, of how I look, because my appearance is a question of empowerment for me”. Anna’s profile on *Instagram* is full of selfies, be they at home, on the beach, at tourist locations or in the classroom. Her look also changes constantly, especially her hair: pink highlights at one moment, totally dyed blond at another, or then completely black to combine with the black lipstick.

When I cut my hair short the first time, I kinda made an aesthetic break in terms of my past. It was very important for my trajectory as a person, so I kinda made a visual diary of myself, as I am, how my hair is. Currently, it’s like this, but it already had various styles. It is also a question of you putting an image that you have total control over on the internet, something that happens rarely, right? You don’t have much control when and where you get exposed, be it from friend’s posts or people who become memes and are ridiculed. The fact that I am not exactly a person with a mainstream look - I’m fat, I’m queer, I’m various things... So there is an important question of empowerment as a subject, as an individual.

In one of the selfies published on *Instagram*, Anna is in a sunny place, lying in a hammock, using sun glasses and with her hair dyed completely blond. At the bottom of the image, she wrote “holidays”, placing an icon of the sun to the side. As it was hot, Anna explains, she lay in the hammock of the hostel where she was staying with her girlfriend, and so she took the selfie in this position. “You can see that it is another moment with my hair, in this thing of also recording the look itself”, said Anna. “So it is partly a photo to say ‘I’m travelling and on holidays, I’m in a cool place, I look hot’. Partly it’s like this, to record the trip”.

Matilde, just like Anna, expressed similar interests in terms of the practice of self-portraits using smartphone: “I like selfies, I like to break with this thing of not being allowed to photograph yourself, in the sense of recording something that is beautiful, understand? I think it is interesting, this gaze thing”. This is precisely the impression obtained when attentively observing Matilde’s publications on *Instagram*. Her selfie practice goes in an experimental, theatrical and expressive direction. We see Matilde in different poses, image filters, make-up, clothes and situations. In one of these publications, for example, she appears with her lips and the area surrounding her eyes painted with a bright blue color, looking fixedly at the camera. The framing is very close, cropped just above the eyes and below the shoulders. The caption completes the image: “Put a lace of snow on my face, let

the mist cover my retina". When asked about the situation surrounding the photo, Matilde said that it was a playful moment in which she decided to experiment with different make-ups. "At a certain moment, it was exactly how I wanted it, something a little mermaid [sic]. (...) So I kept photographing, taking various photos", she explains. After numerous photos taken in the selfie format, one of them is shared. This practice, therefore, is also complemented by interaction on social media. Especially in this case, her friends expressed their admiration and affection: "Goddess!" "Beautiful", "ah, my heart", or simply "miss you".

This look-to-oneseif, as well as the sharing of images of oneseif, is both self-affirmation or acceptance of one's lifestyle and look, as is the case with Anna and as Matilde indicated, in terms of forms of nearness and sharing between those who participate or visualize a selfie. This also includes the example of Tomas, showing himself as healed or Maria in an intimate moment of enjoyment with her friends.

Such forms of producing intimacy, and subjectivity, reveal the need to avoid a radical rupture between the exterior and the intimate<sup>9</sup>. We need also to take note of the material forms, the whole vast world of objects and people around us, capable of associating themselves with our psychological states, be it medication prescribed by the psychiatrist, a horror film, a love letter or a selfie with one's best friends. We follow, therefore, the networks that permeate our interior via the exterior world, revealed, in our case with the experiences involved in the practice of photographing oneseif using a smartphone.

Many of these images, produced and shared by the interviewees, instigate a modulation of their personal sphere; making Anna feel good and show her friends every new look; allowing Maria to have fun with her friends, reflecting the care and affection that she feels for them. It is not simply an image, but also the very moment of production and the subsequent sharing of the selfie. It is important, therefore, to perceive the practice and the photographic process. They are experiences of faciality tied to the photographic practice itself, faces interconnected with the experience of the look towards the other, sharing intimacy, a communion between relational microspheres, as Sloterdijk suggests (2011), via the multiplication and diffusion of digital self-portraits. It is not a purified individualism, but an individuality constructed in relation and via images of oneseif.

In conformity with the materiality of this sharing of intimacy, we still need to perceive that there is no selfie without the involvement of devices and techniques<sup>10</sup>. The very practice of the selfie emerges, and becomes a neologism soon transformed into a dictionary word, in association with information technology and

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<sup>9</sup> See the particularities of the mode of existence of metamorphosis (Latour, 2012b).

<sup>10</sup> See the particularities of the mode of existence of technology (Latour, 2012b).

communication. It is not only a self-portrait, but a self-portrait made using a smartphone and shared on social media applications.

Now we take as an example images made by Camilo and Isaura. Sweating, with a light green T-shirt and in the middle of the road, Camilo shares a selfie with the following caption: "I work, study, work-out and run!!! It's love". On the bottom of the image, there is some data regarding the race generated by the *Nike Running* application<sup>11</sup>, through which it is possible to measure your performance in a race and later share it together with an image. Appearing to be at the same time tired and happy, Camilo put out his arm and photographed himself using the frontal camera of the smartphone.

Isaura, in turn, shared a selfie very close to her face, only showing herself from the shoulders up, using dark glasses and with a blue tiara on her head. It is the self-portrait that shows the contrast between her black hair and her white skin. Observing more closely we perceive, in the reflection of the dark glasses, a blue sky, a coconut tree and her two hands outstretched holding the smartphone. "That was a day at the beach, I was very relaxed, enjoying myself and I decided to take a selfie", she explains. "How did you do it, did you use the front camera?" I ask. "It was the frontal camera. I was lying on the sand, if I remember correctly. I don't like it much because the reflection of my hand holding the cell phone appears in my sun-glasses, but I liked the color in the photo, of my skin, and I have a lot of freckles, so I liked it and took the selfie", said Isaura. In other words, she put out her two hands and started to see her image in the screen of the phone, placing it so as to maintain the desired framing.

As André Gunthert (2015, p. 5) reminds us, the frontal camera of the *iPhone 4*, launched in 2010, has a definition of only 480 x 640 pixels and was developed with the intention of allowing videoconferences. "The frontal camera is inscribed in the genealogy of the webcam, a common device in the 2000's, destined specifically, not for portraits, but for visual communication"<sup>12</sup>. The hybrid relationship between the photographic experience and the device leads to the emergence of a new practice, called the selfie. At the same moment, it reconfigures the smartphone itself. The frontal camera increasingly becomes both a driver of the practice and, one could say, was improved due to its intense use for self-portraits. It is still a type of visual communication, but it is no longer tied to videoconferencing, but rather to the constant production of selfies. With the popularity of this practice, the

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.nike.com.br/running/nikeplus?icid103771>

<sup>12</sup> "La caméra frontale s'inscrit dans la généalogie de la webcam, un équipement courant dans les années 2000, spécialement destiné, non au portrait, mais à la communication visuelle."

device itself already incorporates, via the forms of organization of the experience, such as in the case of the *iPhone*, the capacity to automatically organize images called selfies in an associated folder.

The smartphone, in the case of this photographic relation, is also shaped based on its use, through the everyday appropriations and experimentations of those who use it to produce images. It is, as Vilém Flusser (2009) pointed out in relation to photography, always a fusion between the functionary – the subject who photographs – and the device – in this case, the smartphone. It would not be possible, therefore, to think of an autonomous subject or a neutral device; we perceive a “photographic-device”, just as, in a similar manner, according to ANT, there are always hybrids. For Flusser (2009, p. 53), “the device of the photographic industry will learn, through the behavior of those who photograph, how to always program better the photographic devices that will be produced”. These people, as the author argues, are also therefore functionaries of the device itself. In our analysis, this character is still more hybrid: the smartphone drives the practice of the selfie, at the same time in which it molds itself and transforms itself to be adequate to the practice itself.

## Final considerations

Images called selfies multiply daily on social media. Maria, Tomas, Anna, Matilde, Camilo and Isaura show only a small sample of the possible experiences involved in the practice of photographing oneself carried out with smartphones. The objective of this article, therefore, is to initiate an investigation that warrants further development, calling on more subjects, new descriptions and further discussion. The six people, however, already indicate some possible ways to understand the relations involving the hybrid photographic device, the experiences of faciality and the practice of producing images.

From the descriptions presented, we perceive conversational aspects provided by the images with a practice of self-photography strongly associated with sharing on social media. Additionally, different types of relations and interpretations of intimacy are created, being a relational intimacy shared via the production and dissemination of images of oneself. In other words, we perceive that instead of the centrality of the individual, a type of experience in which the relation with the other, via the sharing of feeling, images, faces and moments, is placed as an important factor for the constitution of the processes around the practice of the selfie. Intimacy becomes therefore, relational; it overpasses a representation of

oneself as a simple exaltation or exposure of the 'I', being rather supported, as the practices of the people presented here indicate, in an experience of sharing.

Given this, the practice of the selfie shows, beyond the apparent banality of a production of instantaneous self-portraits, possible ways of relating to one's own appearance as a playful experience of proximity. In this sharing of intimacy, in a union of relational spheres, we also see the hybridity of the device itself. The practice of the selfie emerges, mixing itself with an extensive imagistic and cultural network of self-portraits, associated with the communicative potentials of the smartphone.

With the support of relational philosophy, the article is directed towards not only the images, the camera or the subject who photographs, but also towards the very practice of producing self-portraits using the smartphone. We develop, in this manner, an attentive eye toward experience. The selfie is understood as a practice, not only as a type of image. From this perspective, we avoid prior positions to judge the phenomenon, be it calling it noxious and narcissistic, as is most common, or, in an opposing manner, treating it prematurely as liberating and revolutionary. By considering it as a practice instead of purifying it, the selfie exhibits its complexity, its diverse experiences of faciality in an intense multiplication and dissemination of images.

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