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## The Spontaneous Video and its Impact on the Digital Press

**Abstract**

**Most of us now have instant access mobile phones with integrated cameras so we are able to record an unplanned video at any time and place within a matter of seconds. Modern technology has provided us with the ability to create spontaneous videos.**

**Spontaneous videos are a new way of portraying our society and communicating events and, by means of the internet and web 2.0 applications, they have the potential to reach every corner of the globe, form an integral part of mass media news reports, and influence public opinion. This study establishes the basis for identifying and understanding the spontaneous video, analysing its application in video activism and citizen journalism, and investigating its impact on the digital press. To this end, we have analysed spontaneous videos created and shared online by IES Lluís Vives students in Valencia on the 15th of February, 2012. Students held a protest on this date against education cuts carried out by the Valencian Community government in Spain. The resulting spontaneous videos had a great impact on the media and were reported by Spanish digital newspapers including *El País*, *El Mundo*, *La Razón*, *ABC* and *Público*.**

**Keywords**

**Spontaneous video, video activism, web 2.0, citizen journalism, mobile media, digital journalism, audiovisual communication, social network.**

### 1. The Spontaneous Video

Most modern mobile phones now come with integrated video cameras so we are able to capture any developing events and create videos at any time and place, within a matter of seconds and without any prior planning. This has led to the creation of the spontaneous video.

A spontaneous video is characterised as the recording of a naturally developing event where the creator of a video has minimal influence on events as compared to other audiovisual formats.

Current mobile technology has resulted in a boom in citizen journalism and video activism as, thanks to online communications and web 2.0 applications, a video can now be shared within seconds (92% of users in Spain access the internet using a smartphone<sup>1</sup>). Data, be it text, image or video, has the potential to reach a very large number of online users simultaneously whom, in turn, can share, comment on and participate in conventional news reports such as television and online news publications (Espiritusanto, 2013; Youmans & York,

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<sup>1</sup> Informe Sociedad de la Información en España 2016 (Digital Society Report in Spain) carried out by the Telefónica Foundation: [http://www.fundacionTelefónica.com/artes\\_cultura/publicaciones-listado/pagina-item-publicaciones/itempubli/558/](http://www.fundacionTelefónica.com/artes_cultura/publicaciones-listado/pagina-item-publicaciones/itempubli/558/).

2012; Rovira, 2012). All this has helped the spontaneous video become a socio-cultural phenomenon that has greatly influenced the Information Society (Castells, 1997).

We only have to reach into our pocket and, within seconds, we are able to use our mobile camera phones to record a child's first steps, a cat's hilarious acrobatics, meteorological disasters and unwarranted police actions, as well as capture feelings, situations and natural expressions than occur spontaneously.

### 1.1. *The Spontaneous Video: Concept and History*

These days, practically everyone has a camera built into their mobile phone which they carry with them at all times, and this offers the opportunity to create a record of day-to-day events in our society. According to the SGAE Annual Report of 2017, 94% of homes in Spain in 2016 had a mobile phone, 2.1 points higher than in 2015. According to the Digital Society Report in Spain (Informe Sociedad Digital) carried out by the Telefónica Foundation, 86% of young people own a smartphone and use it for instant messaging, social networks and video and music streaming. On a global level, eMarketer (2016) claims that 47.4% of mobile phone users owned a smartphone in 2016, and this figure is predicted to reach 57.5% by 2020. All modern smartphones come with integrated video cameras; the eyes of technology are all around us.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, spontaneous, from the Latin spontaneous (derived from sponte 'of (one's) own accord'), is an adjective that describes something that is performed or occurs as a result of a sudden impulse or inclination, without premeditation or external stimulus and without apparent external cause<sup>2</sup>. This definition also applies to videos that are recorded spontaneously, without prior planning, after a witness to an event decides to record footage using their mobile phone. The occurring event is what inspires the producer to spontaneously record it, regardless of whether the event in question has developed spontaneously.

Current software on mobile devices has made it possible to share any digital file in a few simple steps or even automatically, so communication of the video itself can also be spontaneous; you can record an event and post it online from your mobile phone within seconds of an event occurring, or even post a live broadcast.

As with photography, art, cinema and documentaries which are based on the concepts of intuition, spontaneity and an immediate desire to capture a "decisive moment" (Carrier-Bresson, 2003), the spontaneous video is also an immediate action with no prior reflexion that aims to document a moment in reality as it really is, with all its nuances.

Both video and cinema are a representation of reality as seen by the director (Nichols, 1997), and although the process may be objective, results will always be subjective (Bazin, 1971; Lipovetsky & Serroy, 2009). The reproduction of physical reality will always lean towards 'illusion'. This leads to the creation of various interpretations depending on how and where they are witnessed, and who the observer is (Plantinga, 1997). We will address the concept of reality in audiovisual formats from two specific perspectives: capturing and viewing.

From the point of view of an image, the spontaneous video still represents the reality of the observer so it is classed as a social product and its interpretation is dependent on cultural conditions, not just perceptions (Ardèvol & Muntañola, 2004).

Realism and objectivity evoked by an audiovisual work can be conditioned by the cinematographic tools or resources applied by the creator (Febrer, 2010; Nichols, 1997). A video can therefore simulate realism, objectivity and spontaneity. In order for a video to be categorised as spontaneous from the point of view of the observer, we need to establish if the event is a simulacrum, defined by Baudrillard (1978, p. 7) as being "The replacement of reality with symbols and signs".

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<sup>2</sup> Definition of spontaneous provided by the Oxford English Dictionary: <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/spontaneous>.

The spontaneous video isn't classified as a cinematographic or journalistic genre; It's an audiovisual extract which, due to its spontaneous and "objective" nature and lack of prior planning or reflexion, is capable of transmitting a sense of reality (Capdevila & Fabra, 2015; Febrer, 2010). It can be included in a documentary, news report or article and can serve as scientific<sup>3</sup> or judicial<sup>4</sup> evidence.

With high resolution cameras with automatic focus and image establishing technology on our ever shrinking mobile devices enabling us to achieve the "camera effect" and not interfere with developing scenes, we are able to create more spontaneous footage that transmits a greater sense of realism (Guber, 1995; Carroll, 1983, cited by Capdevila & Fabra, 2015).

Now, more than ever, we are close to capturing the spontaneity of reality.

## 1.2. *The Road to Immediate Audiovisual Communication*

When the first cinematographic projection was realised in 1895 using a Lumiere Cinematographe camera, many considered film a method of retaining a moment in time and "resurrecting the dead" (Gubern, 1995). Time and spontaneity were captured on negatives at that time, but these days they are captured as a series of zeros and ones and stored on physical memory cards or the "cloud". Images are continuously shared online and become immersed in an alternate temporary dimension.

The documentary format arose during this era, focused on anthropological and social issues and later linked to scientific discoveries. At the start of the cinema and documentary era, images weren't ordered with the intention of transmitting a specific message and they weren't classified as informative or journalistic reporting, although they did include the cultural and social imprint of their producers. Documentaries were used to display specific actions, as demonstrated by the first documentary in history which was projected in Paris in 1895: *Workers Leaving a Factory*. A few years later, documentary-making became a viable profession as the introduction of more sophisticated techniques for transmitting a specific message by means of recorded footage evolved (Francés i Domènec, 2003; Álvarez *et al.*, 1995; Lipovetsky & Serroy, 2009).

Towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a new cinematographic technique appeared, greatly influenced by a transition to lighter cameras that could be used without a tripod and which, due to their reduced size, provided more intimacy during recording and resulted in fresher and more spontaneous footage (García, 2013).

During the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the 16mm format was replaced by 35mm film as it was cheaper to produce and more mobile. Improvements to the sensitivity of celluloid in environments with poor lighting provided more freedom to directors. More accessible prices and increased ease of use of cinematic technology boosted the growing popularity of documentary production. *Direct cinema* and *cinéma vérité*, which aim to transmit a sense of realism through the use of real locations with natural light and sound, were also born during this era.

Sony's Betacam entered the market in 1982. It was more mobile and used magnetic film which was cheaper than negatives to produce and footage didn't need to be developed, so it was easier to adapt to television broadcasting formats. This camera became an indispensable tool for the documentary industry, which would continue to evolve with the arrival of

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<sup>3</sup> *Gizmodo* news report: Por qué este grupo de pavos está dando vueltas alrededor de un gato muerto [Why Are These Turkeys Doing This?] (last viewed 10th May, 2018): <http://es.gizmodo.com/por-que-este-grupo-de-pavos-estando-vueltas-alrededo-1792915025>.

<sup>4</sup> News report from *La Vanguardia*: Interior abre una investigación por el caso de la muerte del empresario del Gayxample [Home Office opens investigation into death of businessman from Gayxample] (last viewed May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018): <http://www.lavanguardia.com/sucesos/20131023/54391567260/interior-abre-investigacion-caso-muerte-empresario-gayxample.html>.

digitalisation (Francés i Domènec, 2003). It offered directors the opportunity to review recorded footage on the scene so that they could make any required adjustments on the spot. The cheap price of film provided more freedom to practice and obtain desired results through “trial and error”. All of these factors lead to the eventual disappearance of the negative, a more expensive format that didn’t offer the immediacy of video (Álvarez, 1995).

By the middle of the 1990s, digital cameras began to enter the mainstream market offering the possibility to record, digitalise and compress images and store them on the device itself. Little by little, the storage of digital data on magnetic tapes was replaced by memory cards and increased storage capabilities. Technology took up less space so cameras became smaller and memory could be re-used.

The communication of digital audiovisual materials was boosted by the arrival of the internet, which enabled videos to be shared from any device connected to the internet and stored on online streaming portals such as YouTube and Vimeo so that they could be displayed to a community of viewers in a quick and comfortable fashion (Ardèvol & San Cornelio, 2007).

The appearance of third generation mobile phones (3G) that were always connected to the internet enabled digital files, including spontaneous videos, to be shared with many people simultaneously, at any time and from any place. The mobile phone, which has evolved into the modern smartphone or “intelligent phone” (Miller, 2012), unites many of the uses that characterises the Information Society, including the recording of videos, to become a *metadevice* (a globally encompassing digital device) (Aguado & Martínez, 2006).

The current smartphone is one of the principal devices used to create and consume videos. The General Media Study (GMS) 2015, prepared by AIMC (Association for Media Research), indicates that 92.1% of homes in Spain own a mobile phone, and 86.3% of internet users connect to the internet using a mobile device. According to the “Consumer Barometer with Google” report from 2017, 84% of Spaniards access the internet from their smartphone, 55% have used their smartphone to view videos in the past week, and 36% do so on a weekly basis. According to Ooyala’s “Global Video Index”, 72% of online videos viewed in the second quarter of 2017 were accessed from a mobile phone. The “Consumer Technology 2017”, report presented by Bitkom indicates that 90% of smartphone users use the camera and video features on their mobile phone, and 85% of photographs are taken using a mobile. Cisco (2017) predicts that 75% of mobile data traffic will correspond to videos by the year 2020.

A growing interest in consuming online audiovisual content has boosted the popularity of online audiovisual streaming (Meso *et al.*, 2010; Bartolome *et al.*, 2007; Ferres, 1996). Video has become the ideal format for communicating on a global network that hosts hundreds of languages and cultures.

According to the 2016 Annual Report “Networked Society in Spain” carried out by the Spanish Observatory for Telecommunications and Information Society (ONTSI), 25.8% of internet users over the age of 15 streamed online videos, 47% of consumers viewed a trending video, four out of five smartphone or tablet users (80.2%) that downloaded apps in the last month of 2016 downloaded video applications, 72.4% of online users used the internet to view videos and, at a rate of 44%, online video streaming is the second most popular online activity. According to the 2017 General Media Study (GMS) in Spain prepared by AIMC (Association for Media Research), 59.5% of internet users viewed a video in the last month of 2016. The 2016 SGAE Annual Report indicates that 85.6% of internet users viewed an online video through platforms such as YouTube (the second most popular activity).

Digital videos can be quickly shared using web 2.0 applications, a more open and horizontal means of communication where the user is the main protagonist in terms of consuming, creating and sharing content (Polo, 2009; Cebrián, 2008). As with digital photography, the modern video is characterised by its non-physical nature, its abundance and its decisive role in communication (Fontcuberta, 2016).

Aside from the universality of audiovisual language which requires minimal prior learning, the speed and ease with which a human being can communicate using video has converted the video into a feasible alternative to the written word as a means of global communication (Sartori, 1998).

The spontaneous video has arisen as a consequence of a desire to retain time and lived experiences in order to relive them at a later time, share them and reinforce the event. The spontaneous video uses a language that has evolved from cinema and documentaries, but it relies on technology that is quick and easy to use and reduces the thought-means-receptor channel thanks to the compression of various digital audiovisual formats, the speed of data transfer and the miniaturisation of video recording devices. In the present digital era, audiovisual communication has become a feasible alternative to oral communication.

Current smartphones, which offer data connections and video recording capabilities, provide videos with a platform to potentially reach thousands of people simultaneously, adding to a growing sense of urgency for audiovisual language communication. Recording, editing and sharing a video has become instantaneous.

All this renders the spontaneous video the perfect tool for video activism and citizen journalism. Any event developing before our eyes can be reported.

## **2. Video Activism and Citizen Journalism through Spontaneous Videos**

Any citizen can spontaneously record an event using a mobile phone video camera, create a spontaneous video, and share it on a web 2.0 application. The spontaneous video can result from political activism or a need to communicate non-political information of interest to society. Once shared on web 2.0 applications, it can acquire new capabilities depending on how it is received by online users and what discussions derive from it, and the discourse need not necessarily align with the original objective of the citizen that created the spontaneous video in question. The video activist or citizen journalism nature of a spontaneous video can be applied by the video creator or by other online users.

According to a 2016 report by the Spanish Observatory of Telecommunications and the Information Society<sup>5</sup>, 31% of the population of Spain has uploaded self-created content to a website for sharing amongst online users (51% of the population in the United Kingdom). Both the mass media and politically motivated platforms are accessed by a huge number of reporters around the world with the ability to register and communicate any message (Espiritusanto, 2013; Tognazzi, 2012).

### **2.1. Video Activism**

Antiglobalisation protests in Seattle (1999) were the start of a new era of protests organised by new communication technologies such as the mobile phone and the internet (Postmes & Brunsting, 2002). With the aid of this technology, antiglobalisation movements were able to gather over 150,000 people in Geneva in 2001 protesting against the G8 summit, 100,000 people in Seville protesting against the European Union summit in 2002, and over 100,000 people from all of Europe in Rostock (Germany) in 2007, also protesting against the G8 summit. Protests against the war in Iraq were seen in all Spanish cities on 15th February 2003, support for Wikileaks, the Sinde Law protests, the revolution of Arabic countries (Arab Spring) and the “indignant” protest movement of 2011 are just a few examples of movements where

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<sup>5</sup> ONTSI, individuos que usan internet para subir contenido creado por uno mismo a alguna página web para ser compartido [individuals that use the internet to upload individually created content to websites for sharing]: <http://www.ontsi.red.es/ontsi/es/indicador/individuos-usan-internet-subir-contenido-creado-por-uno-mismo-a-alguna-pagina-web-para-ser-compartido>.

the internet played an important role in activating the collective consciousness of the public (Ferrerías, 2011; Bajo, 2014; Tognazzi, 2012). Manuel Castells called it the “Wiki Revolution”<sup>6</sup>.

Demonstrations of this type have the benefit of being horizontal and decentralised, a process referred to as activism 2.0 by some, as with web 2.0 applications, and protesters use any digital means available to share their message, including videos. Demonstrations can be launched digitally by activists using ICTs to organise and spread their message by any digital means, and they have the potential to reach the streets (Fernández, 2012; Caldevila, 2009; Sivitanides & Shah, 2011; Rovira, 2012).

Video activism is a means of communicating via video to influence public opinion. It is a method of protest used to counteract an abuse of power or injustice that reflects political beliefs and has the potential to transform politics and generate social change (Mateos & Gaona, 2015; Peña *et al.*, 2015). There has been a change in the way video activism is produced, characterised by a mixture of audiovisual snippets and the merging and hybridization of formats and styles. Distribution methods have also changed in recent years. The internet has provided us with a platform for immediate communication, horizontal production and increased media coverage so that more people can be reached in all corners of the world. This is what has come to be known as video activism 2.0 (Vila, 2012), in parallel with web 2.0 technologies.

Video activism 2.0 was present in the 15M protests, born from the internet where various groups united for a shared initiative known as Democracia Real Ya (DRY, Spanish for Real Democracy NOW!). This initiative spread online through various websites, blogs and social networks, and protests were organised in 58 Spanish cities on 15th May 2011 as an effect of it (Piñero-Otero & Sánchez, 2012). Various collectives related to the 15M protests created online platforms where users that sympathised with the movement were able to post videos and view, share and comment on those posted by others, as seen with the example of Madrid Audiovisol and Barcelona 15mbcn.tv<sup>7</sup>. Numerous spontaneous videos were filmed by protesters and shared on these platforms.

The spontaneous video is an audiovisual communication tool that forms a part of current video activism methods as it serves as a “witness video” for current events (Askanius, 2013, p. 6). Video activism is a practice or process and the spontaneous video can be a resulting bi-product (Mateos & Rajas, 2014).

Using cameras, video activists can circumvent the omissions and manipulations often present in conventional mass media sources (Nunes de Sousa, 2017). The use of video cameras can also serve to dissuade the police from the use of violence and influence the political agenda (Wilson & Tanya, 2010).

Present day activists have constant access to a mobile so they are able to capture footage of any event that develops in front of them, helping to support and spread their message. They also have access to online videos posted by other citizens whom, although perhaps not directly involved with political activism, record and publish videos as if they were journalists reporting a news event, and they provide useful resources for the movement.

## 2.2. Citizen Journalism

In the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, journalists were forced to adapt to direct online publications under the ethos “we write, you read” (Deuze, 2003, p. 220; cited in Lasorsa *et al.*, 2011). Before long, with the rise of social networks and web 2.0 applications, journalist had to adapt to online publications where readers were able to give opinions and share information, and they also had the power to transform content. All this broke the monopoly of information

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<sup>6</sup> Opinion piece in *La Vanguardia*. Last viewed May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018: <http://www.lavanguardia.com/opinion/articulos/20110129/54107291983/la-wikirrevolucion-del-jazmin.html>.

<sup>7</sup> 15mbcn YouTube (last viewed May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018): <https://www.youtube.com/user/15Mbcn/videos>; AudioviSol. 15Mpedia (Last seen 10<sup>th</sup> May, 2018): <https://15mpedia.org/wiki/AudioviSol>.

held by major players in the mass media in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Rovira, 2012). Using these new communication tools, citizens were able to take the power away from journalists and influence public opinion (Lee & Kim, 2014).

These days, major mass media platforms use social networks to share news reports in digital formats that might include photographs and videos (Paulussen & Harder, 2014; Lasorsa, 2011), as the majority of users rely on these social networks (primarily Facebook and Twitter) to keep informed about current affairs (Marcos *et al.*, 2018). Social networks have become a useful tool for establishing the general opinions of users as well as a useful source of information (Jordaan, 2013).

Hyperlinks, endemic in blogs and micro blogs, present an opportunity for journalists to be more transparent and, by consequence, more responsible (Karisson, 2010). The ability to include videos in digital news reports enriches the communication of ideas and, as users have access to an immense pool of audiovisual material generated by online users, there is no need to send out a team of professionals to cover a news story.

Present day mass media promotes journalists whom, aside from reporting news, also create multimedia content such as videos recorded from mobile phones. This has all led to the rise of the mobile journalist, a concept commonly referred to as MoJo (Mobile Journalism). These are journalists that do not need to write a report; they can use their portable devices to create material from a distance (Westlund, 2013; Cameron, 2011; Espiritusanto, 2013).

The move towards the audio visualisation of the web has rendered the video a narrative recourse that has formed a part of online journalism from the start and, in recent years, it has had an increasing influence on digital mass media, even dominating the news at times (Mayoral & Edo, 2015). There are a great number of spontaneous videos that have been included in news reports published the mass media, such as those recorded on the evening of 13<sup>th</sup> November 2015 in Paris after the ISIS<sup>8</sup> terrorist attacks, or those recorded by residents of the Raval neighbourhood in Barcelona on 13<sup>th</sup> October 2013 when businessman Juan Andres Benitez died after being detained by the Catalan police force<sup>9</sup> (Mossos d'Escuadra), or the spontaneous video that captured an avalanche in Bessans (French Alps) on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2016<sup>10</sup>.

### 2.3. *The Impact of Spontaneous Videos on The Digital Press: Police Eviction of IES Luís Vives Students in Valencia (2012)*

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of February 2012, students at IES Lluís Vives high school in Valencia were evicted by the police after demonstrating against education cuts. Students used their mobile phones to create various spontaneous videos, mainly centred on the eviction. They hoped to capture and report the extreme police action that resulted in a 17 year old student being arrested. Some of these spontaneous videos reached major news outlets and served to question the extreme police action<sup>11</sup> used against young protesters. Protests against these police actions were held in various Spanish cities in the proceeding days. The spontaneous videos that dominated the news were embedded in many reports published by online national news sources in Spain. These events eventually came to be known as the “Primavera Valenciana” protests (López, 2014).

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<sup>8</sup> News report from *Le Monde*, “Les témoignages glaçants des rescapés du Bataclan”, last seen 10<sup>th</sup> May, 2018: [http://www.lemonde.fr/attaques-a-paris/article/2015/11/15/les-temoignages-glacants-des-rescapes-du-bataclan\\_4810453\\_4809495.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/attaques-a-paris/article/2015/11/15/les-temoignages-glacants-des-rescapes-du-bataclan_4810453_4809495.html).

<sup>9</sup> News report from *El País*, “Dos vídeos destapan los golpes de los Mossos al empresario del ‘Gayxample’”, last seen 10<sup>th</sup> May, 2018: [http://ccaa.elpais.com/ccaa/2013/10/22/catalunya/1382470272\\_155349.html](http://ccaa.elpais.com/ccaa/2013/10/22/catalunya/1382470272_155349.html).

<sup>10</sup> News report from *El País*, “Espectacular avalancha en los Alpes”, last seen 10<sup>th</sup> May, 2018: [http://elpais.com/elpais/2016/01/15/videos/1452884574\\_470167.html?id\\_externo\\_rsoc=TW\\_CM](http://elpais.com/elpais/2016/01/15/videos/1452884574_470167.html?id_externo_rsoc=TW_CM).

<sup>11</sup> *Levante-emv*, “Marea humana en la primera marcha legal de los estudiantes”. Last seen 10<sup>th</sup> May, 2018: <http://www.levante-emv.com/comunitat-valenciana/2012/02/22/marea-humana-primera-marcha-legal-estudiantes/883624.html>.

### 2.3.1. Objectives, Samples and Methodology

The following study aims to analyse the impact of spontaneous videos on the digital press when used as a tool for video activism or citizen journalism. To achieve this goal, we analysed spontaneous videos that were generated during the student protests at IES Lluís Vives in Valencia in 2012 and subsequently included in digital reports from five national newspapers of varying ideologies: *El País*, *El Mundo*, *La Razón*, *ABC* and *Público*.

We began with a quantitative analysis of all spontaneous videos and digital news reports relating to the protest events. We then analysed the contents of news reports and embedded videos to establish what role they video played in the article and what social interaction ensued in each source's comments sections and on external social media networks. The investigation was carried out in three phases:

1. Gathering of online spontaneous videos relating to the student protests at IES Lluís Vives in Valencia on the 15<sup>th</sup> of February 2012. Analysis of views and online journey, with particular focus on those embedded in the digital press: *El País*, *El Mundo*, *La Razón*, *ABC* and *Público*.

The search was limited to videos hosted on YouTube, the leading streaming platform which also serves as a social network. The number of "Likes" and comments on YouTube were tallied as were any mentions in the digital press.

The analysis was limited to those videos with over 5,000 views. This figure was chosen and it was quickly established that videos with fewer than 5,000 views had not been included in news reports.

2. Gathering of all news reported by online publications *El País*, *El Mundo*, *Público*, *La Razón* and *ABC* relating to the student protests at IES Lluís Vives in Valencia on the 15<sup>th</sup> of February 2012. This timeframe was selected as there was minimal reporting on these events by the selected newspapers after 40 days.

3. Analysis of reactions on social networks and online news sources reporting spontaneous videos. All data relating to the event was collated from social networks and news sources, including the number of comments made by readers.

### 2.3.2. Results

A total of 14 spontaneous videos of the student protests at Lluís Vives, with over 5,000 views, were collated from YouTube. All spontaneous videos were recorded by members of the public using mobile phones or domestic video cameras. The majority of videos were recorded from within the protests, with the exception of two videos that were captured by neighbours from nearby balconies.



**Table 1:** Spontaneous videos on YouTube with over 5,000 views.

Video Title	Video Publication Date	n° views	Like	Dislike	Comments
Police Action Against Lluís Vives Students <b>Reported in newspapers: <i>El País, Público, ABC.</i></b>	20/02/2012	721,715	1,076	120	1,648
Police Throw Two Girls Against a Car in Valencia. <b>Reported in newspapers: <i>El País.</i></b>	20/02/2012	393,926	696	62	944
Police Charge Against Student Protests <b>Reported in newspapers: <i>El País.</i></b>	20/02/2012	56,129	37	0	15
Arrested in San Agustín. <b>Reported in newspapers: <i>El País.</i></b>	20/02/2012	69,616	302	15	201
Girl Injured as a Result of Police Action at Student Protest. <b>Not reported in newspapers.</b>	20/02/2012	9,273	6	2	2
Police Hit Elderly Women. <b>Not reported in newspapers.</b>	20/02/2012	118,443	198	33	527
Police Charges Lluís Vives Valencia 20F. <b>Reported in newspapers: <i>El País, Público.</i></b>	20/02/2012	83,837	52	4	115
Student Protests at IES Lluís Vives in Valencia. <b>Reported in newspaper: <i>El País.</i></b>	15/02/2012	15,358	19	1	76
Violent and Unjustified Arrests. <b>Not reported in newspapers.</b>	16/02/2012	32,941	28	6	124
Police Charges Against Students From IES Lluís Vives in Valencia. <b>Reported in newspapers: <i>El País, Público, El Mundo.</i></b>	15/02/2012	278,783	250	29	445

According to the study, all videos that were embedded in news items from external video streaming sites were hosted on YouTube.

Of the 14 spontaneous videos that were analysed, 9 were published by digital press sources and in various online newspapers included in the study: *La Razón, El País, El Mundo, ABC* and *Público*. 2 of these 9 videos were published on the same day in 3 of the analysed newspapers. The three most viewed spontaneous videos on YouTube were included in some of the analysed newspapers and included the most comments.

107 news reports on the student protests at Lluís Vives were collected in total from the five analysed news outlets between 15<sup>th</sup> February 2012 and 25<sup>th</sup> March 2012 (a period of 40 days

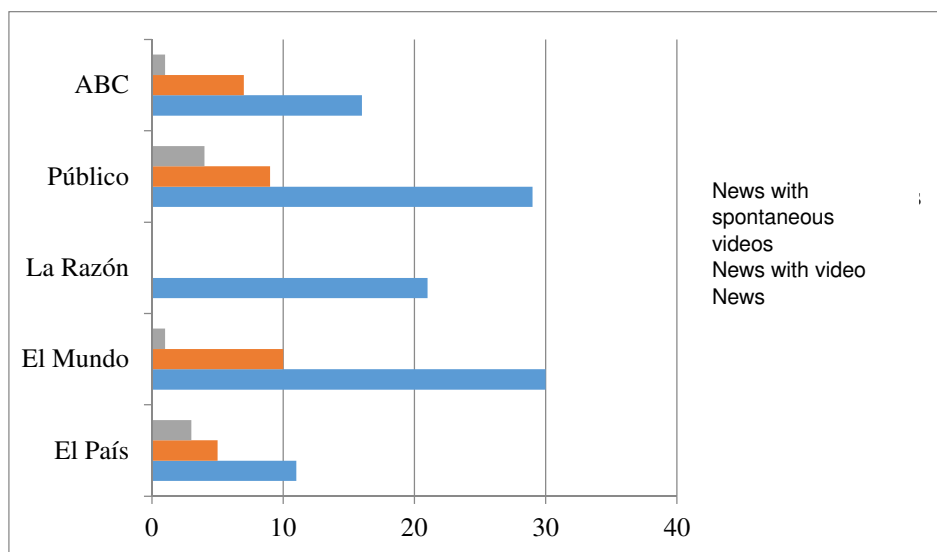
from the event): 11 from *El País*, 30 from *El Mundo*, 21 from *La Razón*, 29 from *Público* and 16 from *ABC*. Of the 107 reports, 31 contained videos and 9 contained at least 1 spontaneous video.

29% of reports included a video and 8% included a spontaneous video. Above all, the spontaneous video is used in reports closer in time to the event.

**Table 2:** N° of reports, videos and spontaneous videos per news outlet.

Newspaper	News Report	Report with video	Report with spontaneous video	% Reports with video	% Reports with spontaneous videos
<i>El País</i>	11	5	3	45	27
<i>El Mundo</i>	30	10	1	33	3
<i>La Razón</i>	21	0	0	0	0
<i>Público</i>	29	9	4	31	14
<i>ABC</i>	16	7	1	44	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>8</b>

**Graph 1:** N° of reports, videos and spontaneous videos per news outlet.



*El Mundo* reported the most news about the analysed event, although it included fewer embedded videos than *El País* and *ABC*. *El País* and *Público* included the most embedded spontaneous videos. *El País* published the most news reports with embedded videos with 45% of reports, followed by *ABC* with 33%. *El País* also published the most videos with embedded spontaneous videos with 27%, followed by *Público* with 14%.

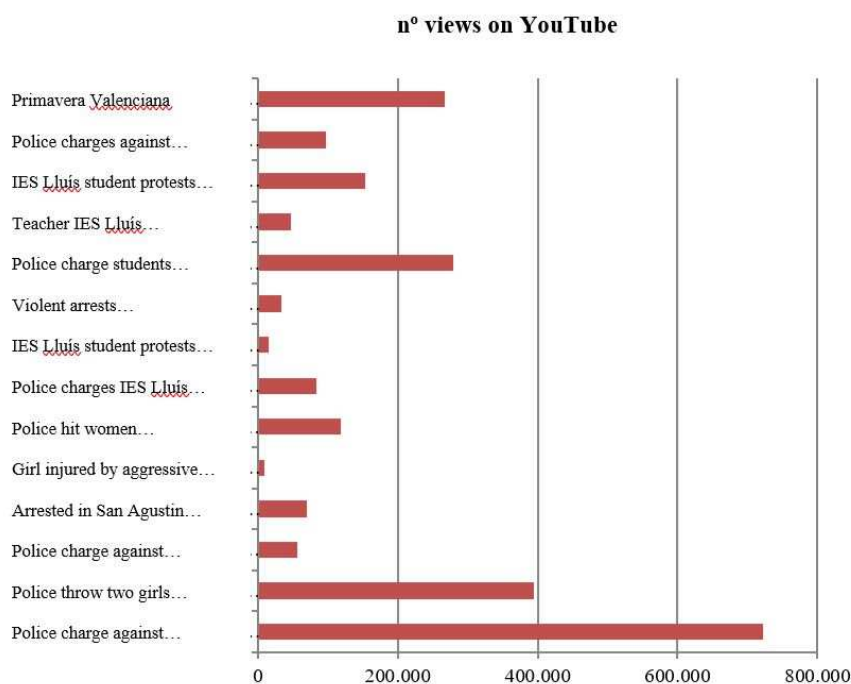
Of the five analysed newspapers, *Público*, *El País* and *El Mundo* published a report on the events through their online publications the following day, 16<sup>th</sup> February, where the same spontaneous video was embedded. This video received the most views and comments on YouTube. It was recorded by one of the protestors using their mobile phone and it is titled “Police Charges against IES Lluís Vives Students in Valencia”<sup>12</sup>.

News stories after the 16<sup>th</sup> of February 2012 included videos recorded by journalists that had travelled to Valencia and to other cities in the country to report the subsequent protests that resulted as a reaction to police actions.

Indicated data for consulted news sources were used to analyse the impact on social media networks. The five analysed newspapers offer readers the chance to comment on news reports and share them on social networks. *El País* provides the most sharing options: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and G+. *El Mundo* and *La Razón* offer the fewest: Facebook and Twitter. Readers of *El País* and *Público* participated in the most discussions on social media platforms and those of *La Razón* participated the least.

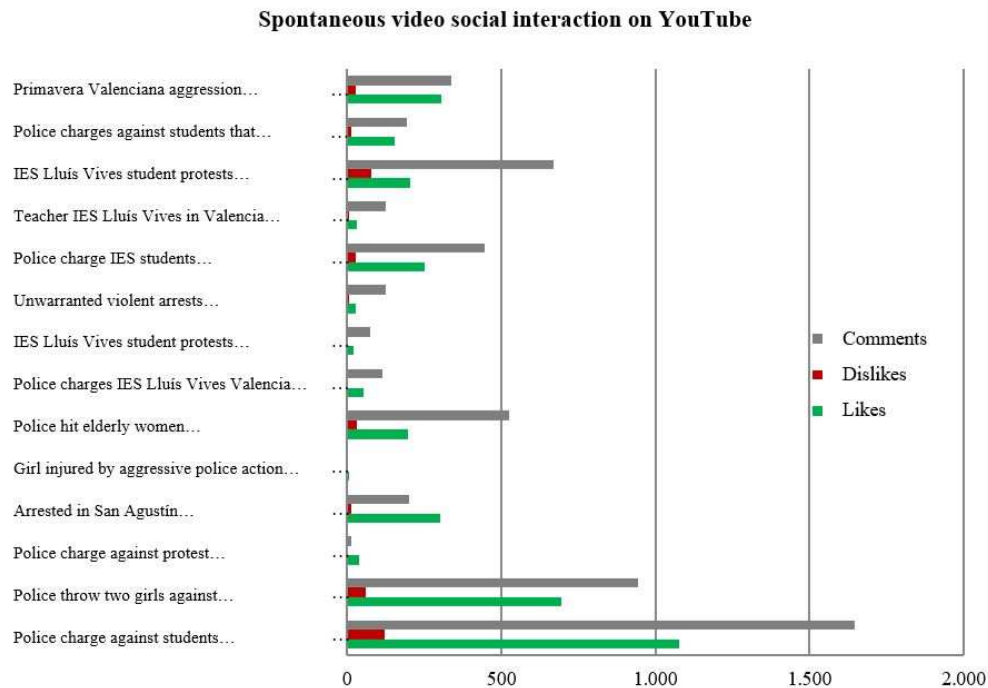
Readers of the five analysed newspapers used Facebook the most, followed by Twitter. YouTube also offers the option to comment on and like/dislike videos.

**Graph 2:** N° of spontaneous video views on YouTube.



<sup>12</sup> Vídeo last seen 10<sup>th</sup> May, 2018 en: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ceF6zSJh4m4>.

**Graph 3:** Spontaneous video social interaction on YouTube.

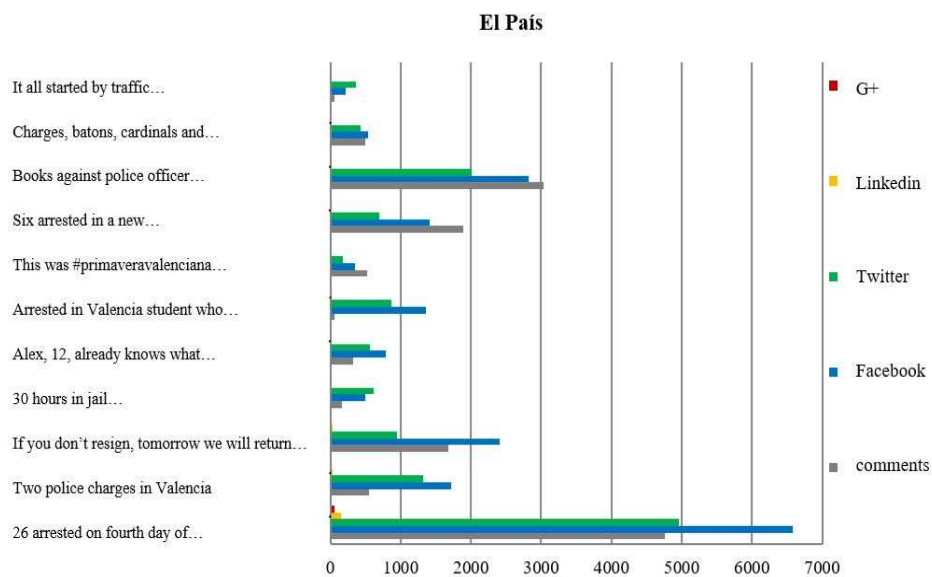


The most popular video on YouTube relating to the analysed events received 721,715 views, 1,076 “Likes” and 1,648 comments on the platform and was one of the spontaneous videos embedded in online reports by three newspapers: *Público*, *El Mundo* and *El País*. The report in *El País* that included said video received 4,755 reader comments and was shared 1,358 times on Facebook, 872 on Twitter, 17 on LinkedIn and 17 on G+. The report in *El Mundo* was shared 41 times on Facebook and 41 times on Twitter, and the report in *Público* received 187 comments and 1,408 “Likes” on Facebook, 14 on G+ and 80 reader votes.

The 5 most reproduced spontaneous videos were included in online newspaper reports and the most viewed video was included in the largest number of news reports. Those included in newspaper reports also received the most comments, “Likes” and “Dislikes”. According to these results, YouTube videos that are embedded in online newspaper reports receive more views on the platform. News reports that include spontaneous videos also result in more social media interaction and comments on the platforms themselves.

Both YouTube and online newspapers experience increased interaction when both are combined. Out of all analysed newspapers, the news report with the most reader comments, which was also shared the most on social network platforms, was reported by *El País* and contained two spontaneous videos. It was titled “26 Arrested on Fourth Day of Protests against Education Cuts”<sup>13</sup>. In addition, out of all *El País* news reports, the most shared and commented on are those that contained embedded videos –5 reports out of 11– and of those 5, 3 contained a spontaneous video. This indicates that videos are well-received as a means of communication by online readers of this digital publication.

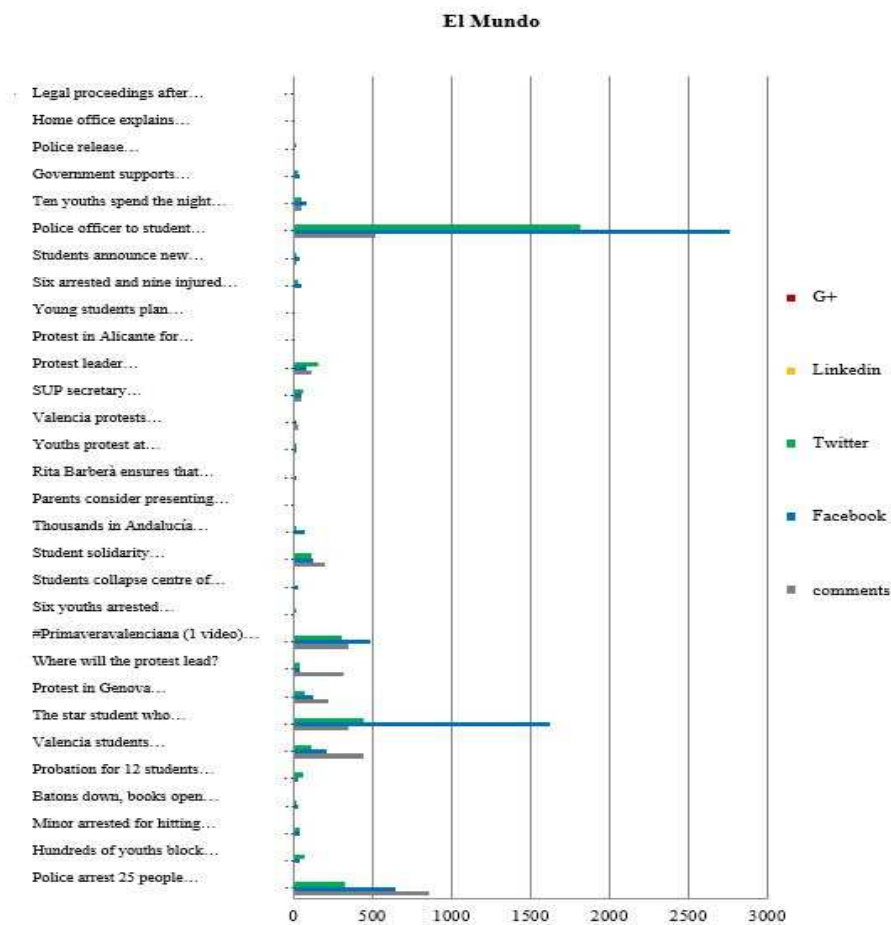
**Graph 4:** Social interaction with news reported by *El País*.



<sup>13</sup> News report last viewed 10<sup>th</sup> May, 2018 en: [http://ccaa.elpais.com/ccaa/2012/02/20/valencia/1329747482\\_238876.html](http://ccaa.elpais.com/ccaa/2012/02/20/valencia/1329747482_238876.html).

In the newspaper *El Mundo*, there was less reader participation in the comments section and on social networks. The news report that received the most comments didn't contain a video and the headline referred to an aggressive comment made by a police officer to a protester: *Officer to Young Student: You're Not Even Old Enough to be a Hooker*<sup>14</sup>. Reports that included an embedded video (10 out of 30) were observed to have received more comments and shares. Of the 10 reports with videos, only one contained a spontaneous video. According to these results, videos are well-received as a means of communication by online readers of this digital publication.

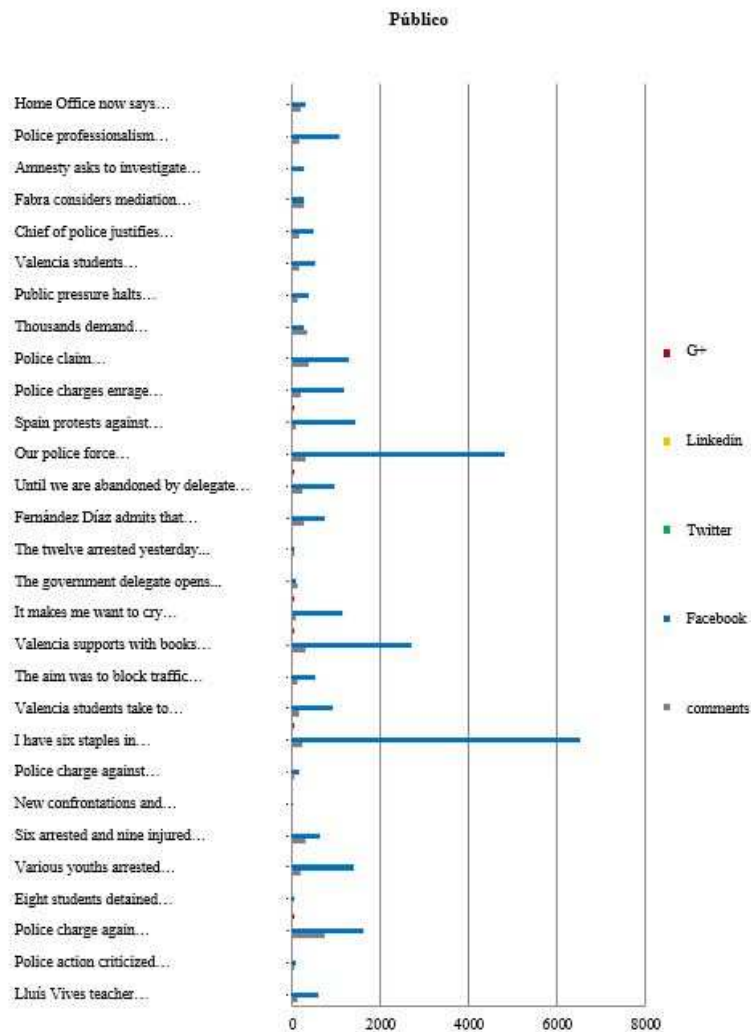
**Graph 5:** Social interaction with news reported by *El Mundo*.



<sup>14</sup> News report last viewed 10th May, 2018: <http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2012/02/17/valencia/1329497253.html>

The newspaper *Público* published 9 out of a total of 29 news reports with videos, 4 of which contained spontaneous videos. The news report that contained the most comments contained an embedded video, although it was not spontaneous. The report that received the most shares on Facebook included a spontaneous video and referred to the staples received by a protesting student after receiving a head injury from being hit by a police baton: *Six Stitches and a 7cm Wound for Defending my Rights*<sup>15</sup>. The spontaneous video captured the moment the injured student was taken to hospital escorted by a police officer. Again, results indicate that news reports that contain an embedded video receive more social interaction.

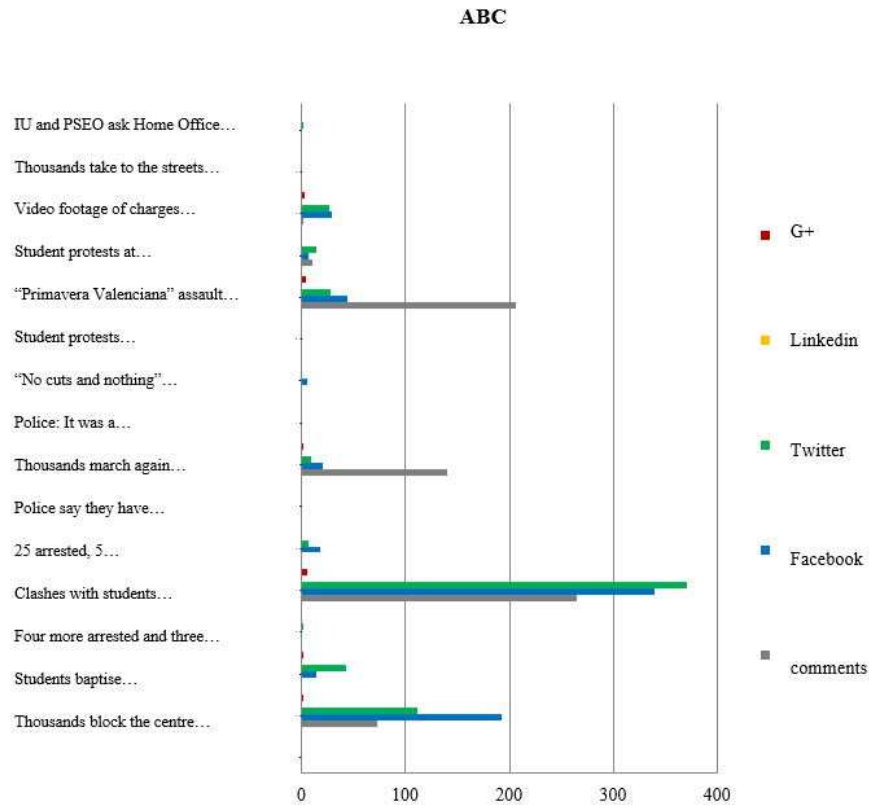
**Graph 6:** Social interaction with news reported by *Público*.



<sup>15</sup> News report last viewed 10<sup>th</sup> May, 2018: <http://www.publico.es/espana/422938/tengo-seis-grapas-y-una-brecha-de-siete-centimetros-por-defender-mis-derechos>.

In *ABC*, the 3 reports that received the most comments contained an embedded video, although they had been recorded by on-the-scene reporters and therefore were not spontaneous. As with *La Razón*, news reports for this newspaper received few comments and social network shares, much lower that for *El Mundo*, *El País* and *Público*.

**Graph 7:** Social interaction with news reported by *ABC*.



### 2.3.3. Descriptions of Spontaneous videos included in News Reports

#### Police Charges against Lluís Vives Students 20-2-2012 15h

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xoMQqr65344&feature=colike>

This video was captured by a domestic video camera from the balcony of a nearby residence. The individual recording the video intended to record the events developing on the street below their residence. The video focuses on police action and contains violent images.

The camera is being held by the recording individual who captures a single shot of events. The individual uses the zoom function to focus on developing events. The footage is of good quality and has a resolution of 720p on YouTube.

#### Police Throw Two Girls against a Car in Valencia

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A6G\\_4eIaDyY&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A6G_4eIaDyY&feature=youtu.be)

Video recorded by a member of the public who was present during police charges and whom, by means of a portable camera, recorded police actions against two young protesters. The video captures a violent scene where two young individuals are pushed by a riot police officer against a vehicle that was parked nearby. The video focuses on police actions and then the victims.



The footage is captured in a single shot as the camera is hand-held. The quality of the video isn't good (resolution of 240p according to YouTube) but events are clearly displayed.

#### **Police Charge against Student Protests**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ABWWXLXwt2o>

Video captured by a member of the public, using a domestic video camera, from the balcony of a nearby residence. The individual recording the video intended to record the events developing on the street below their residence. The video captures protesters, the police and screams. The footage is jumpy as it was filmed using a hand-held device and the individual moved the camera around in an attempt to record everything that was happening on the street. The footage is very pixelated (resolution 720p) but events are clearly displayed.

#### **Arrests in San Agustín at 4pm (approx.) on the 20<sup>th</sup> February #PrimaveraValenciana**

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=gMIOmdVrzqQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=gMIOmdVrzqQ)

Video captured by a member of the public using a domestic video camera from the balcony of a nearby residence. The video focuses on the police action. The individual recording the video films a group of protesters where a woman is being arrested by the riot police. The individual that posted the video appears to have uploaded the video to YouTube with the intention of publically shaming police actions.

The footage is of good quality (resolution 480p) and slightly jumpy. Various other individuals can be seen in the footage holding cameras and recording the scene, mostly using mobile phones.

#### **Police Charges Lluís Vives Valencia 20F #PrimaveraValenciana**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sSb5vT8Xd7Q>

Video captured by a member of the public using a portable video camera, most likely a mobile phone, recorded from above the middle of the street, possibly from up a street light or the like. The video focuses on violent police action and police officers hitting members of the public with batons. The footage is captured in a single shot (resolution 480p) and focuses on police and citizen movements.

#### **Police Charge against IES Lluís Vives Students in València**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ceF6zSJh4m4>

Video captured by one of the protesters at IES Lluís Vives using a portable video recorder, most likely a mobile phone. The individual recording the footage is located within the protest when they are evicted by force by the National Police who are also making arrests. The video focuses on police actions and the protesters being evicted. The video captures the first moments of the police eviction where students, including a 17 year old, were arrested. This video was used by newspapers *El País*, *El Mundo* and *Público* on their digital platforms to report news the day after the eviction and arrests, and is the only available audiovisual footage of the event.

The image, of poor quality (resolution 240p), is captured in a single shot and filmed using a hand-held device. The citizen recording the footage is in the middle of the protest and recording from a first person point of view, as if the camera were eyes, transmitting a sense of realism.

#### **Student Protests IES Lluís Vives in València**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NMLd4kxNQqQ>

Video captured by one of the protesters at IES Lluís Vives using a portable video recorder, most likely a mobile phone. Video recorded under similar conditions as previous video: Police Charge against IES Lluís Vives Students in Valencia. The citizen recording the footage is

located within the protest when they are evicted by force by the National Police who are also making arrests.

As with the previous video, the individual recording the footage is in the middle of events, participating in the protest and filming with a hand-held device. The video portrays a realistic perspective from the point of view of a protester evicted by the police and faced with violence. The footage is of poor quality and very pixelated (240p resolution).

#### **Primavera Valenciana Protests. Police brutality Lluís Vives 20-2-2012**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D-JVWoDz6Q4>

Video captured by one of the protesters at IES Lluís Vives using a portable video recorder, most likely a mobile phone. The individual recording the footage focuses on the police eviction of protesters and captures the moment in which a police officer hits a student that was stationary on the street. The impact knocks their glasses to the ground. The footage is captured in a single shot and has been recorded using a hand-held device (resolution 360).

#### **Police Charges against Students Protesting Against Cuts**

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=U9WDG2EwES4#!](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=U9WDG2EwES4#!)

Video recorded by a student participating in the IES Lluís Vives protests. It comprises several individual videos recorded at different points of the protest using a mobile video camera. The individual recording the footage focuses on police actions against protesters and pays specific attention to the force deployed. The purpose of the recording appears to be social video activism to denounce the police brutality deployed by the police against students.

As the video has been edited, it loses a degree of spontaneity as it has been moulded to fit the message that the publisher wishes to convey, although individual elements are classed as spontaneous.

### **3. Conclusions**

The arrival of the spontaneous creation and distribution of audiovisual content has rendered the video an alternative means of communicating to traditional oral communication. This investigation has focused on audiovisual communication from the perspective of spontaneity in order to reflect on some of its communicative applications such as video activism and citizen journalism.

The spontaneous videos analysed in this study were shared online as an effect of social network user activity, the support of social protest platforms such as 15M Valencia, and reporting on national newspaper online publications with great influence on the media.

Journalists participate in social networks to investigate and obtain audiovisual resources, such as spontaneous videos, that enrich news reports in a quick and cost-free manner. Readers accept videos embedded in news reports as they promote interaction and sharing, especially in those cases where a video is as much a part of the news story and clearly portrays reported events. This conclusion coincides with a study carried out by Alberto-Gabriel (2014) on the role of Twitter in the Primavera Valenciana protests: news reports containing audiovisual content are more likely to be shared on social networks. Spontaneous videos that are embedded in newspaper articles receive more views and interaction on social media platforms.

In terms of its role in video activism and citizen journalism, the spontaneous video benefits from its effect on mass media generated by digital newspapers and the legitimacy said sources can transmit. Concurrently, newspapers benefit from videos produced by citizens that demonstrate developing events, as they also provide legitimacy to news reports and add a sense of realism to the narrative. Citizen journalism feeds news reports published by the conventional mass media.

Articles published by digital newspapers that include an embedded video receive more digital interaction from their readers. The use of new communication technologies by digital newspapers is directly related to the increased use of videos for reporting news and, external to newspaper sources, YouTube has become the principal video streaming platform used.

The spontaneous video gains more popularity in the news when there aren't journalists on the scene whilst an event is developing. A member of the public is more likely to be at the right place, at the right time, than a journalist.

Further to publication of the analysed videos and news reports, new protests arose against police action at the event, and spread through various cities in Spain. Many politicians voiced their disagreement with the events captured by spontaneous videos. The spontaneous video is a useful tool for video activism 2.0 and citizen journalism as it can have a big influence on mass media and both politics and society in general.

The vast majority of audiovisual material generated by journalists and citizens, the number of news reports that include videos and the level of interaction on social networks all confirm that the use of audiovisual content is a principal means for communicating an event and reporting unjust events using the internet.

The spontaneous video helps to communicate credibility and it is used by conventional online mass media publications for newspapers and/or television to reach citizens who can comment on and share news events. Spontaneous videos embedded in news reports can serve to provide additional information or even dominate the news if they become an integral part of a developing event.

A great number of spontaneous videos included in news reports have succeeded in capturing an event and communicating a sense of realism as spontaneous actions and expressions are captured, as was the case after the devastating earthquake in Japan in March 2011<sup>16</sup> or videos captured during the terrorist attacks in Paris in 2015<sup>17</sup>. Spontaneous videos can also serve as valid evidence in a court of justice, as with the case of footage recorded by a neighbour during police brutality at the IES Lluís Vives protests in Valencia where footage clearly contradicted the statements of two police officers present during the arrests.

Many social networks are based on the concept of audiovisual communication and these days most new devices contain integrated cameras so life experiences can be captured and shared. This is leading us to the rise of Panopticism (Foucault, 1975) –where we watch and we are watched– and it is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish between the reality before us and that viewed on a video, where a spontaneous act becomes artificial and commonplace.

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<sup>16</sup> RTVE vídeo on earthquake in Japan in 2011, last viewed 10<sup>th</sup> May, 2018: <http://www.rtve.es/alcarta/videos/television/informe-semanal-tsunami-japon/1043671/>

<sup>17</sup> News report in *El País*, “Hollande responsabiliza al Estado Islámico de la matanza de París”, last viewed 6<sup>th</sup> June, 2018: [https://elpais.com/internacional/2015/11/14/actualidad/1447488228\\_812104.html](https://elpais.com/internacional/2015/11/14/actualidad/1447488228_812104.html).

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