Exploring tactics of public intimacy on Instagram

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Abstract:
Issues relating to public intimacy characterise current online photo-sharing and visual self-performance practices. People increasingly post personal photos onto public or semi-public online spaces and have the need to negotiate the boundaries of disclosure and privacy. This article explores some of the tactics that ordinary 'Instagrammers' adopt when using the mobile photo-sharing app. Michel de Certeau's theoretical distinction between tactics and strategies is used as a frame to analyse the empirical material. User tactics relating to privacy and authenticity, choices and actions that Instagram users make while operating in the virtual space, are reflected against Instagram's public statements of their company strategy. The study presents that in their public self-performances, users constantly negotiate between their ideal me, their true me, the surrounding social norms and forming of an authenticity contract. The tactical choices are usually individual and users justify their choices first and foremost to themselves. Although users make individual tactical choices when using the app, they do not downright challenge the strategic goals of Instagram, but rather adapt to them.

Keywords: Instagram, social media, self-performance, intimacy, authenticity, privacy, user, tactic, photography

Introduction

As social media platforms have become increasingly pictorial, the popular photo-sharing app, Instagram, has also become a focus of research interest. Instagram has reached over 400 million users globally and is the most popular mobile application for photo-sharing and visual self-presentation (Duggan et al. 2015). Initially an iPhone application, Instagram is known especially for its filter function: when posting an image, the user is able to modify the photo by applying a filter which often gives the image a vintage look, an impression of

analogue photography. In addition to the unique aesthetics of Instagram, the app has been studied, for example, in terms of taste and consumption (Abidin 2014), visibility and fame (Marwick 2015), representations of femininity (Tiidenberg 2015), journalism (Alper 2013; Borges-Rey 2015), affective labour and business (Carah and Saul 2016), hashtags (Highfield and Leaver 2015; Gibbs et al. 2015) and narcissism and self-branding (Sheldon and Bryant 2015). Research on selfies – digital self-portraits – also often deals with the mobile Instagram environment (Albury 2015; Weiser 2015; Burns 2015; Souza 2015). However, there is a call for greater variety in Instagram-related studies as many of the studies referred to here, consist primarily of textual or visual analyses of Instagram profiles or hashtags.

In this article we approach Instagram as a space of 'public intimacy' (Abidin 2014; Bazarova 2012) as the platform offers an opportunity for carefully constructed visual self-performances (cf. Bushey 2014). People mainly publish their personal photos or selfies in their public (or semi-public) profiles, and their personal relations are played out in the public domain. The transition of intimacy towards public spaces or the 'intimate public', as Lauren Berlant (2008, 6–13) calls it, has happened long before social media. 19th century women's literature and 20th century romantic films are often used as examples of public intimacy, as the topics, themes and emotions in them are usually linked to the private sphere. The terms 'intimate' or 'intimacy' have no unitary meaning, but they are related to our innermost thoughts and feelings (Plummer 2003, 12) as well as something that is shared with others (Berlant 1998). Intimacy covers our closest relationships with friends, family, children and lovers, but it also constitutes the deep and important experiences we have with our self: with our feelings, our bodies, emotions and identities. According to Berlant (2008, 6–13), the intimate public is structured to affirm and confirm a promise of belonging and emotional continuity. At the same time it capitalizes the basic human need of belonging. Ziyad Marar (2012) notes that intimacy is the dominant rhetoric of the media industry and permeates the whole of our culture, not only the so-called women's culture.

Intimacy often includes paradoxical and ambivalent needs: the need to be in close relation with others as well as the need to protect one's own space, self, and pursue individual goals (Marar 2012). In social media, ordinary users have to balance between these paradoxical needs in a space which is often at least semi-public. In order to belong, social media users have to disclose something that at least seems authentically personal, while simultaneously feeling the need to protect their privacy. Social media and mobile media are closely connected with practices of intimacy in contemporary everyday media use, where boundaries of work, leisure, public and private become blurred (Hjorth and Lim 2012). Mobile media enables people to keep in touch over the boundaries of place and time in an intimate way that would not be possible otherwise, thus mobile media use has often been studied in relation to intimate relationships (e.g. Lasén & Casado 2012, Sawchuk & Crow 2012).

The aim of this article is to study those user tactics that affect depictions of public intimacy on Instagram. We examine ordinary Instagrammers who mostly use the app for a combination of photo-sharing among their closest network and a self-performance directed

at a larger unknown public. We focus on the tactics of authenticity and privacy, as we consider them the axis where public intimacy appears. Intimacy is understood here, not only as something related to topics of the private sphere, such as sexuality and the body (cf. Miguel 2016) but, more broadly, following Ken Plummer (2003), as something connected to the innermost feelings and being of a person. As the sense of intimacy requires reciprocity and recognition (Berlant 2008; Marar 2012), authenticity – referring to something 'real' 'genuine' or 'being true to oneself' – can be seen as a precondition of intimacy. Intimacy is said to require an authentic response, and thus can only be experienced in spontaneous and genuine encounters (c.f. Fournier & Smith 2006; Kerfoot 2004). Therefore, by using the concept of authenticity, widely used by scholars in gender studies and psychology, as well as by social media users and businesses, we can arrive at questions of intimacy: something that is very personal and real.

We reflect on user tactics extracted from interviews against some of the strategic enunciations of Instagram, the company, as they manifest in public media texts. First, we present the theoretical frame for our understanding of Michel de Certeau's (1984) notion of tactics and their relation to strategies, and then introduce the research materials. In the empirical analysis, we explore interviews in order to to identify Instagrammers' tactics and to reflect the tactical practices against the public strategic enunciations of the corporation. The aim of this essay is to report on findings of a study about Instagram use, using the notion of intimacy as a focal point, and de Certeau's theory as an analytical framework.

Tactics as a practice of everyday life

According to Michel de Certeau (1984: xix), a strategy is something used by the ones in power, for example, a city, or a scientific institution. Strategies are thoughtfully planned actions that aim to achieve a certain goal, and they conceal their connection with power. Conversely, tactics are a creative way of negotiating situations of everyday life, often more spontaneous and opportunistic, and are used in the limited space governed by more strategic relations. Many everyday practices are tactical, often victories of the 'weak' over the 'strong' (de Certeau 1984, xix). Tactics are often also described as 'everyday acts of resistance' (see Sloop and Gunn 2010). In other words, ordinary people operate tactically in their everyday lives, adapting their actions in relation to an institution, such as a social media platform they are using. By tactics, we refer to those choices and actions that Instagram users make, while operating in the virtual space offered to them by Instagram. Privacy tactics refer to users' choices of what is disclosed or represented publicly, while authenticity tactics refer to the ways in which users strive to represent their self in real life.

As de Certeau writes about reading books (1984, xxi–xxii), the reader makes the space of the book their own, so does also the Instagram user who joins the networked public, borrowing the space from Instagram, and making it their own by posting photos and text. Lingel and Bishop (2014) describe tactics as 'moments of temporary disruption, of deliberately ignoring authoritative instructions for the use of hegemonically controlled space and resources', whereas De Ridder (2015) explains de Certeau's tactics as the way in

which 'people offer continuous resistance to the strategies of power by making places their own'. Users may have different tactics of resistance or defiance towards the social media app. There are many cases of Instagrammers who have tested the company's guidelines. For example, in 2015, artist Rupi Kaur posted a photo showing menstrual blood on Instagram and, in doing so, criticised stereotypical imageries of women by showing a hidden side of womanhood. Kaur's photos were removed several times before public pressure forced the company to permanently restore them to her profile. In Finland, several celebrities have had their Instagram profiles at least temporarily removed because of posting selfies that were too provocative or other material violating the community guidelines of the app.

Some critics of the theory have noted that the distinction between tactics and strategies is too one-dimensional to be used in online environments, where users are also powerful contributors to digital content (e.g. Hills 2004; Booth 2008). We agree with some of the criticism, that social media users cannot be directly compared to de Certeau's (1984) audiences in the television era. Users on Instagram are not only recipients, but also produce the majority of the content and give meaning to networked images. However, without de Certeau's 'space of the other' (1984, xix) – the subordinate position in the power relations, governed by the Instagram platform – no photos would be published, and users would still operate within the boundaries set by Instagram. As one of the informants in Sander De Ridder's (2015) study puts it: 'if you want to be part of it then you just have to accept what they offer you'. In order to utilise the software, the user has to accept their subordinate position in relation to the social media company providing the app.

We find De Certeau's theory suitable to social media analysis especially because of its connection with space and time (cf. Sloop and Gunn 2010), as for example Lingel and Bishop (2014), De Ridder (2015) and Liao and Humphreys (2015) have shown. We analyse mundane, fleeting operations and practices. Social media practices, embedded in peoples everyday lives, are more comparable with everyday practices mentioned by de Certeau, such as cooking, shopping or wandering in the city, than for example fandom practices (see Booth 2008) which are often much more self-reflexive than other mundane events of everyday life. De Certeau's theory is best suited for explaining the space or system of power, where various practices take place; the intersection of users, technology, strategic choices of the company and practices happening in the social media space (the networked public). We use the distinction between tactics and strategies predominantly as a conceptual frame, as a reminder of the context and power relations in the social media environment.

Methodology and user stories

Our approach is grounded in the empirical interview material of Finnish Instagram users and observations of the informants' Instagram feeds. Methods in audience studies, such as interviews and participant observation, offer a fruitful viewpoint to studies of Instagram use. Therefore, in this study, we analyse personal photography and Instagram use from an audience studies perspective.

We examined Instagram tactics through five focused interviews with adult Finnish users and three focus group interviews with Finnish teenagers. Before the interviews, the adult participants wrote a five-day diary, chronicling their Instagram experiences and completing a daily assignment[1]. The daily assignment was offered to the informants who were novice users so that they would get a conception of different uses of Instagram and to inspire them to explore different aspects of the app. The assignments as well as pictures people had posted, were used as incentives in the actual interviews, but the analysis itself is based on the interviews. All interviews were transcribed, coded and then thematically analysed in order to identify tactics that users had adopted.

All of the novice adult interviewees had posted photos to other social media platforms (mainly Facebook), and participation in the study served as an opportunity to try out an app they had heard about, but had not used yet. Novice users were chosen because we believed that they might problematise their relationship with photo-sharing more than experienced users with fixed Instagram routines. The young focus group interviewees were fully integrated in online media practices and could be described as representatives of the 'Net generation' as they were all born in the 1990s. They were experienced Instagrammers and participated in the focus group interviews as groups of friends.

A valid comparative setting is not possible with such a small sample of interviews but we wanted to get some variation for the materials by using novice adult users and experienced teenage users. The interviews of teenagers were done in groups, because we suspected that the young might be more open in a group of friends than alone with an adult interviewer they didn't know in advance. We also wanted the interviews to be formed from the conversations between the teenagers rather than from a dialogue between the interviewer and interviewee. The objective of the youth focus groups was the same as with the adult informants: to understand the meaning of Instagram use and the concrete choices and tactics users employed when using Instagram.

In sum, our empirical research questions are:

1. What kinds of tactics do Instagrammers utilise in their everyday visual self-performance?
2. How do the tactics of privacy and authenticity shape their visual performances of public intimacy?
3. How are the publicly stated goals of Instagram and user tactics related to each other?

The following **Tables** illustrate the interviews in the form of short 'user stories' of the five novice users interviewed and general descriptions from the group interviews. The stories give some idea of the kinds of users the informants are. The names of all the informants have been replaced with pseudonyms to protect their anonymity.

Table 1: Summaries of user stories of novice Instagram users

Mika, male, age 32 – He is cautious and private; he will not be an active user who would be posting photos all the time. He says he has a lurker's mentality and feels that it is difficult to integrate Instagram use into his own routines. One might say that for him, Instagram was not thoroughly 'domesticated', but it is not completely true because he also had the consciousness of 'being a lurker' on social media and, therefore, resists 'oversharing'. He did not post new pictures onto Instagram after the interview.
Laura, female, age 42 – She is cautious, private and a reluctant or hesitant user. She is not keen on posting selfies (and sees it as a bit narcissistic). She likes to post more about everyday situations, animals and nature rather than herself. She is hesitant (for example, in privacy settings, mastering the UI and use of hashtags). She had difficulty finding out whether her profile was public or not, and she found her follower requests only at the end of the interview. She said she would continue to use Instagram occasionally.
Saara, female, age 40 – She is careful, nostalgic and slightly disappointed and frustrated in the app. She was curious at first and interested in the aesthetic qualities of the Instagram photos shared by others, for example, on Facebook. She did not have an active Instagram network and used her iPad to access Instagram. She is an experienced social media user but had difficulty finding requests on the app. She is not keen on selfies and is even critical of other people's selfies. She started using Instagram more actively after participating in the study.
Maria, female, age 41 – She is an active social media user but found Instagram difficult to use at first. She was critical of the content posted and felt there was too much of the same content as in Facebook. She found it a bit boring and wanted to bring her own personality in there but was also a rather private user. She is information-oriented and, in her own words, 'a skilled Google user'. She said she would try to continue to use Instagram more actively in the future, but she has not posted new content since the study period ended.
Kristiina, female, age 32 – Her first impression about Instagram was negative as she thought it was for teenagers and did not really find people to follow there. She felt slight disappointment and boredom, at least at first. She found the UI difficult to use and non-flexible. As a user, she is very cautious and conscious of who her intended audience will be. She had some pressure about being on social media to promote her small business. For her, the use of hashtags was at once interesting (she self-identified as a word-oriented person) and confusing because she had difficulty using hashtags at first. She has been a Facebook user for a very long time and uses Twitter, but she didn't really 'get into' Instagram. She does not see privacy as a problem but carefully considers everything before posting. She said that she would try to use Instagram in the future, but she has not posted new content since the end of the study period.

Table 2: User stories of youth focus group participants

Girls' focus group 1: Julia (15), Olivia (16), Amanda (16), Siiri (16) The members of this group had all used Instagram for more than a year, checking their feed daily but only rarely posting photos. They also actively used other social media such as Snapchat, Ask.fm and Facebook. They mostly followed their friends, and the sociality of Instagram was important to them. It was important to present oneself 'right', not to make the Instagram feed too monotonous or flood the feed with content. It was also very important to like at least all of the photos of one's closest friends. Good-quality photos were important to them, and they wanted to limit their photos

to only the best ones.
Girls' focus group 2: Anna (17), Petra (17), Emma (17), Maria (17) The girls used Instagram daily, but they only uploaded their own photos perhaps every other week. They mainly followed their friends, schoolmates and social media celebrities who blogged. The girls considered Instagram a place for best photos only and thought a lot about their impression management. They deleted old photos regularly and those that did not get many likes. They sought inspiration for their photos from other Instagrammers and looked at their everyday environment through the eye of the photographer: to find a good photo-opportunity. Snapchat was their default camera app, and they no longer used Facebook.
Boys' focus group: Valtteri (15), Elias (15) The two boys in the focus group actively used Instagram. Elias was interested in sports and fashion. He especially liked those pictures of himself that reminded him of nice holidays abroad. He used Instagram for fashion inspiration as well as keeping in touch with friends. Valtteri had a video blog and a strong online presence. He was very active on social media, and for him, Instagram was only one channel amongst many. He wanted to present himself in a good light and regularly deleted those photos that no longer felt like they represented him at that specific moment. Both of the boys had a rather large following: Elias from school and sports activities, Valtteri through his video blog.

The process of how a social media company's strategy, in the wider sense, is created and implemented is so complex that it is not possible to investigate it in the scope of this article. The strategic choices and design decisions of social media platforms seem to escape internet scholars, which is a larger question in the field. It is often difficult, even impossible, to get interviews from the people who design social media ecosystems or set their terms and conditions of use. In order to reflect the user tactics against the public goals of Instagram as a company, we tracked down some key principles from Instagram's community guidelines and public interviews with representatives of the company to locate Instagram's strategic enunciations concerning authenticity and privacy. We were also able to get an idea of some of the company's strategic goals by studying and observing the app and its features.

According to the Instagram community guidelines, the aim is to be an *authentic*, *positive*, *open*, *diverse* and *safe place* for inspiration and expression. Instagram advertises itself as a caring community where everyone is important, and co-founder Kevin Systrom notes that people come to Instagram 'with positive intentions' and has publicly hoped that Instagram would become an 'all-seeing public feed of what's happening in the world' (Parrish 2015). Using words such as 'safe' and 'caring' gives an impression of friendly intimacy whereby users feel secure as if they were at home or in a private space, which is often the goal of social media companies (cf. Sloop and Gunn 2010). At the same time, the app promotes open interaction and public sharing by encouraging users to comment and like each other's photos and to connect their photos with hashtags into the larger global photo stream. Thus, the problematic of public intimacy is also built into the operating principles of the company. From the interviews we deducted also other tactics of Instagram use, but in this article we concentrate on two groups of tactics in more detail, those relating to privacy and authenticity.

Privacy tactics: selfie shame

In terms of privacy, users appeared to feel that they were most able to have some influence through their tactical choices. While the informants reflected on this in the interviews, their talk about privacy was similarly paradoxical, as in previous studies of internet privacy (e.g. Joinson and Paine. 2007; Jensen et al. 2005). First, they acknowledged that privacy in social media was problematic; however, in practice, they had to dismiss privacy concerns in order to use the app. Secondly, their concrete tactics were mainly targeted to protect their *social privacy*, that is, who is able to see their content. They were less concerned about their *institutional privacy,* which refers to information and metadata that the app collects and shares with third party partners (cf. Raynes-Goldie 2010; Krasnova et al. 2009). Regarding the high visibility of Instagram content, most of our interviewees opposed the idea of complete openness, one of the ideals of the company: to be 'an all-seeing public feed of what's happening in the world' (Parrish 2015).

Instagram's privacy settings are very straightforward as the user has only two options: a private or public profile. Choosing the private profile rules out some of the positive gains of connecting with other users globally. Facebook bought Instagram in 2013, and since then, the two platforms have been connected. Instagram encourages users to connect with their Facebook friends on Instagram and allows them to publish photos simultaneously on both platforms. Perhaps aimed at emphasising the aspect of friendly intimacy, privacy settings are rather easy to locate on Instagram, and users have the option of limiting their content only to their followers (private profile), which most of our interviewees had done. Most of the adult users chose to have a private profile which at first prevented people from finding them (at the time of the interviews Instagram was not as connected with Facebook as it is now, and it did not prompt users to add their Facebook friends also in Instagram). The younger users were divided between a private and public profile. One girl, for example, described how she switched between a private and a public profile, depending on how she felt. This practice of switching is one of the privacy tactics that felt important for users themselves, but when looking at the bigger picture, might not provide privacy at all. One of the boys interviewed even had two Instagram profiles, one to be used more publicly and one intended only for his closest friends.

The users' lack of awareness of their institutional privacy became evident in the use of hashtags, used especially by the teenage informants. A single photo was often tagged with multiple hashtags, and the users seemed to do so mainly because it was a shared practice in that particular social media space. The interviewees did not reflect on the fact that as they were tagging their photos, they were also offering photos to an external public, outside of their following, thus presenting themselves also as metadata. They did not even refer to this issue in the context of privacy. In this sense, Instagram reminds us of a two-way mirror where users upload their selfies and use the app as a self-reflective surface and identity construction, but they are unaware – or unconcerned – that their actions are monitored by the application and its third parties through that same mirror.

Hashtags are a good example of a company's strategy of generating openness that is needed for business purposes, but this is done in such a subtle way that it does not pose a threat to the general atmosphere of friendly intimacy. The Finnish users studied here used hashtags both in Finnish and in English when posting to Instagram. The Finnish language is also a way of narrowing down the potential audience. In addition to using Finnish, many of the informants sometimes used individually composed hashtags that were ambiguous and did not directly connect to any ongoing event or discussion, being 'communicative' hashtags. The use of ambiguous hashtags can in some cases be a practice of 'resistance' whereby users do not conform to the position or the intended way of using the app that Instagram is offering. Users have adopted the cultural practice of using hashtags, but at the same time, they use them tactically in their own ways; sometimes to communicate and sometimes to connect to the global stream of photos.

In terms of social privacy the novice adult users controlled their privacy in a different way than the young – by being cautious and avoiding content or subjects that they felt was overly intimate. Interestingly, the selfie was a photographic practice that divided the views of young experienced users and the novice adults. Many of the adult informants considered selfies too personal to be posted onto Instagram.

Rather than by selfies, the adult users presented themselves through photos of their pets, hobbies or surroundings. The following quote from Laura reveals the cautious attitude of the adult informants. They did not completely buy into the strategy of Instagram being a 'safe and authentic' place; instead, they resisted it in their own ways.

> I wouldn't post very many pictures of my family, or myself; if you think about posting some gym photos or something like that, it is really 'no'. Because, I'd rather not. I would rather stay more private. And if you want to post other people's pictures, you have to know; you have to have permission or something so you don't share anyone's pictures who doesn't want to. (Laura)

Whereas the adult informants avoid too much self-presentation, for the younger informants, posting a selfie did not constitute a privacy issue. On the contrary, they thought that if they posted selfies and photos with friends, but not that many photos of their surroundings, hobbies and other details of their lives, their followers would not really know them based on their pictures; thus, their privacy would be better secured. We observed that in general, there were more people present in the photos of the teenagers than in the photos of the adults, with the latter rather posting photographs of objects, animals or landscapes. In general, the young practiced more nuanced tactics compared to the adults, and they evaluated their photos, not so much by topic, but by quality, freshness, aesthetics or coherence with their profile. The younger users reflected on their Instagram-use as it had changed during the years, as in the following quotation:

> When I created the profile, I was younger and so on. So, in the beginning, you always use it not-so-wisely. Back then, I used to post loads of those selfies. But nowadays, I don't; I only post photos that someone else has taken of me. So I don't look so… we'll they turn out better, of course, and then you don't look so lonely either. But that's not what I'm thinking; it's about how to make the photos good. (Julia)

Teenagers regularly deleted 'old' or 'bad' photos that they no longer felt were representative of themselves,[2] thus shortening the lifecycle of their pictures and minimising the possibility of photos being misused later in other contexts. However, they seemed to do this mainly for impression management reasons and not because of privacy concerns. The young informants primarily considered the app rather as a platform for self-branding than a virtual photo album or memory tool. It was not considered as a place of personal history, life-chronicling (Van House 2011) or a self-narrative, as is the perception of many other SNS profiles (Uski 2015, 24, 68). For one of the teenage informants, Anna 16, her reason for deleting old photos was because 'no one bothers to browse through so many images on Instagram'. This argument implies that Instagram images are mainly addressed for potential followers and not so much as a memory tool for the private use of the profile owner. Users' conceptions of their audiences and best practices of Instagram use vary from person to person and are therefore tactical.

The actual situation of taking a selfie was a moment the users preferred to keep private. It might be that they wanted to avoid being stigmatized, as the selfie includes, both in research and in common conceptions, a notion of narcissism and vanity (see Senft and Baym 2015; Sheldon and Bryant 2015), but these normative conceptions have also been challenged in academic studies of the selfie practice (Senft and Baym 2015; Burns 2015). Taking selfies in public settings requires two-fold impression management and posing: one for the camera and the other for those who might be around, physically witnessing the act of taking a photo of oneself (cf. Lasén 2015). While selfies are often seemingly intimate, they are also carefully constructed representations meant for public display.

Our interviews revealed the complex and contextual nature of private and public. There are multiple hybrid publics and privacies (cf. Sheller and Urry 2003) in the everyday life of Instagrammers, of which the practice of taking selfies or using hashtags are some examples. Users have very different conceptions of best privacy practices on social media, instead of a universally shared idea of privacy. This observation shows Instagram use as 'tactical' as individuals make their own choices about using the app and construct – mainly for themselves – a reason for doing so. Instagrammers construct their own rules about securing their privacy and justify those rules mainly for themselves, as in choosing to post selfies, but not pictures of their home or their bedroom. Their notions of privacy may also change, based on their current feeling states or incidents happening in their online environment. Tactics as resistance are not necessarily conscious resistance towards, for example, the strategy of a social media platform, but rather very individual justifications of

one's actions. For example, the user may choose not to post pictures of his/herself or friends to the platform but rather share images of his/her surroundings, landscapes and pets. This is a tactic that 'feels good in the moment' (Sloop and Gunn 2010) and can be used to rationalise privacy choices to oneself.

Authenticity tactics: balancing between the ideal me and the true me

Authenticity is one of the essential principles of social media, as for example popular bloggers strive to produce 'true to life' content that has an authentic feel the audience can relate to (Lövheim 2011; 2013; Lopez 2009). User-created content seems to resonate with people if it has the feeling or appearance of authenticity, therefore, it is not surprising that one of the goals of Instagram is to make the platform into an authentic environment. Traditionally, the concept of authenticity has also been connected to the photograph: a marker for authenticity and something that 'really happened'. Although the word authenticity has undergone a renaissance in the era of social media, the moral idea of 'being true to myself' gained currency ever since the 18th century in the thoughts of Rousseau and Herder (Taylor 1991). The concept frequently comes up in studies about culture and media (Aslama and Pantti 2006; Banet-Weiser 2012; Talvitie-Lamberg 2014; Enli 2015; Mast 2016; Valaskivi 2016). Gunn Enli (2015) has identified seven general characteristics of (mediated) authenticity: predictability (trustworthiness), spontaneity, immediacy (shared 'now' between the audience and producers), confessions, ordinariness, ambivalence and imperfection. In a sense authenticity is a precondition of intimacy. Without the impression of authenticity, intimate and credible communication would not be possible.

Authenticity is mentioned in the Instagram community guidelines as one of the company's objectives. However, if we take the concept literally as 'the quality of truthful correspondence between inner feelings and their outward expression; unaffectedness, sincerity' (OED, 2016), that kind of authenticity is hardly the goal of Instagram, as the company has many content-specific restrictions. It does not allow, for example, violence, nudity or images of self-harm. Instead, Instagram seems to expect from users both acceptance of the guidelines and 'positive authenticity' whereby the negative sides of people's lives are purposely filtered out. Perhaps in its notions of authenticity, Instagram relies simply on photographs, which are traditionally seen as 'true to life' (Banks 2013) and are used as authenticity markers on social media (Enli 2015). Vintage filters also play with the idea of authenticity because they generate impressions of 'analogue authenticity' (Chandler and Livingston 2012; Gómez Cruz and Meyer 2012).

Our interviewees had internalised the discourse of authenticity, and the contextual nature of the concept became very clear as they mentioned authenticity as an ideal in online communication. The following quotation from the interview of the two teenage boys is a fitting example of 'authenticity speech', often heard in relation to social media. The boy, Valtteri, seems to have internalised the requirement of authenticity and is almost presenting himself as a personal brand, which he is trying hard to maintain:

> Valtteri: I try to create the impression of myself online, that it expresses who I really am, but it's really, really hard, for example, on Ask.fm, it's honestly, really ridiculously hard. Really, you can't perfectly create the same impression of your real self. But you can try of course. Try anyway.
> *Interviewer: Can you tell how you try to show your own personality?*
> Valtteri: Probably through the photos mostly …
> *Interviewer: Yeah. How about Elias? Do you think about it, presenting yourself in public?*
> Elias: I do try to be positive, so that I don't have sweatpants on. Nice clothes on. Nothing special.

The other boy, Elias, mentions his clothing as something that he thinks of when taking an Instagram photo and later talks about being positive, and therefore sets himself in line with the Instagram ideology of 'positive authenticity'. When compared with the characteristics of mediated authenticity, it seems that Valtteri and Elias are not talking about the same kind of authenticity, that is 'ordinary' or 'imperfect', but rather a more ambiguous form of social media authenticity, highly positive and desirable, but at the same time something that the boys were not able to verbalise in the interview, a public ideal me.

For our interviewees, representing themselves as authentic meant, for example, not standing out from the visual orders of friends, showing some personality by posting photos of hobbies and leisure, not posting only selfies and not overusing filters and photo-editing. Lobinger and Brantner (2015) refer to such choices as 'expressive authenticity', which is achieved when people feel that visual representation is true to their nature. Our interviewees considered the 'realness' of photos very similarly, as did the participants in the study of Lobinger and Brantner, who considered the selfie as a prototype of expressive inauthenticity. It was important for the young interviewees to take good selfies, which often were carefully staged, but at the same time made them look as spontaneous as possible, not showing the work done behind the scenes in order to get a good photo. The work done in order to get a good photo was not to be visible to the viewers of the photo. In practice, this meant, for example, not posing too much or overexposure of sexy details. The intent was to appear as effortlessly beautiful as possible.

Using different kinds of photo filters has been a key aspect of Instagram use. It also shows how users maintain balance in their construction of authenticity on Instagram. Applying filters was often viewed as the 'most fun' part of taking pictures for Instagram. The filters were also one of the main reasons the adult users wanted to try the app, and perhaps, the filters have been one of the reasons for the success of Instagram. By offering the opportunity to make photos better, Instagram has been able to get people to join the new social network. However, using too many filters give photos a false appearance, not only for other viewers, but also in the eyes of the photographer; so the use of filters is also a balancing act between authenticity and conscious construction. In their use of filters, users have been able to make photos better; at the same time, they have learned to take better

photos (cf. Manovich 2016a; 2016b). The app has affected the photographic 'eye' of its users. As a consequence, Instagram has also become a place for publishing only the best photos. Therefore, the features of the app also influence how the app is used.

Our analysis shows that the impression of authenticity is achieved through negotiation between the 'actual me', the 'ideal me' and the social norms of the environment. In the often-quoted work of Erving Goffman (1990), he emphasises that people can produce idealised self-presentations only to a certain extent. Excessive idealisation gives self-presentation a fake or artificial appearance. In a successful self-presentation, the 'actual self' and the 'ideal self' closely resemble each other. Gunn Enli (2015) calls this kind of negotiation an authenticity contract. In the authenticity contract, the main stakeholders – audiences, producers and regulatory authorities – turn to the genre system for guidance. Genres, in turn, include tacit knowledge of values, audience expectations and market strategies that help people interpret media content. In addition, the authenticity contract is always based on irrationality as people choose to believe in something that they know is created for them. (Enli 2015, 16–18.) In the Instagram context, it is better to talk of visual orders (Seppänen 2006, 16– 17), rather than genres, in regulating the creation of authenticity.

The following excerpt is a good example of an authenticity contract negotiation. Our group of teenage girls was rather unanimous in describing this balancing between the 'actual me', the 'ideal me', social norms and audience expectations:

> *Interviewer: What do you think of when you're editing photos? What are you trying to achieve?*
> Anna: Well, editing will make them look better… (*social norms & ideal me*)
> Petra: Yes, I try to make the photo look as neat as possible but in a way that still looks natural. (*ideal me & true me*)
> Emma: You should not overdo them like some people do… (*social norms & true me*)
> Anna: Just minor improvements. Some filtering or adding a little brightness or so… (*ideal me & true me*)
> Petra: Because I don't want my photos to look totally different to me and who I really am. (*true me*)

The example demonstrates the manner in which users make complex choices to simulate the real world through the networked image (Rubinstein and Sluis 2013). The teenage girls described that their ideal Instagram profile is composed of an aesthetically harmonious ensemble. The style of the entire profile mattered more to them than individual photos. Overall, all interviewees, including the novice adults, considered Instagram a place of carefully curated content whereas, on Facebook or Snapchat, they were able to share more mundane photos. The emphasis of a carefully constructed aesthetic, in part, comes from the origins of Instagram, as it initially offered a way of publishing more beautiful photos by using

filters. Our interviewees had adopted the company's goal of publishing aesthetically beautiful photos, as the girl group describes in the next excerpt:

> *Interviewer: Do you post photos on Instagram spontaneously, or do you think about it a lot before publishing?*
> Petra: We think before publishing…
> Anna: Yes, at least I give it a lot of thought.
> *Interviewer: How come?*
> Petra: Because you always think a little bit about how you would like to present yourself to others. So you don't publish any photo but prefer, kind of, PR photos on Instagram.
> Emma: It's irritating if everyday someone posts photos where she is drinking coffee, for example.
> Petra: Yeah, you often stop following those guys who post too many photos.
> *Interviewer: What is too many photos?*
> Emma: It depends whether you post beautiful photos or ugly photos with bad quality; then it is a different thing…

In particular, the teenage girls' focus groups were eager to evaluate which kinds of photos were worthy of being posted to Instagram and which were not. The focus group conversations with the teenagers were revealing in terms of strict rules from their social circle and the visual orders (Seppänen 2006, 16–17) in which they operated. The quotation above also depicts the calculated nature of social media self-presentation, even mentioning personal 'PR' photos. The girls were very keen on judging breaches of social norms and the wrong kinds of visual representations, such as overly monotonous Instagram feeds, un-sharp photos or posting selfies with too many similarities (cf. Miguel 2016). Looking good was the principal criterion for publicity: intimate or sometimes rather daring photos could also be public if they looked good enough (cf. Ringrose et al. 2013). Therefore, photos that did not portray the person in a good light belonged in the private sphere or on other platforms. The adults also followed some internalised norms in their self-presentations; they did not, for example, want to present themselves in the centre of attention. As Ringrose et al. (2013) and Miguel (2016) have shown, certain norms regulate visual self-presentations on social media.

According to Tifentale and Manovich (2015), most Instagrammers follow the so-called 'home mode' in their photographic practices. That is, they post photos of common everyday topics, mostly for peers and friends. It is typical for the 'home mode' to emphasise emotion over aesthetics. Another category of Instagrammers called 'competitive photographers' publish only their best shots and try to get as many likes as possible. If we try to fit our interviewees into this typology, it is rather easy to see that the novice adults almost exclusively followed the 'home mode'. The teenagers, however, comprised a combination of these categories. They published photos mainly for their peers, but

aesthetics and the 'likeability' of the photos were also important. The profiles were constructed for public self-presentations and image-management; otherwise, the teenagers' profiles would have included more photographs of everyday life, such as doing homework or spending time with friends and siblings, instead of photos of ski-trips or other exotic holiday destinations, some of the most typical profile topics among young people.

The irrational aspect of the authenticity contract became clear when our interviewees talked about the people they followed on Instagram. For example, Mika described himself as a social media 'lurker' who also wanted to maintain his distance on Instagram. His photos were mostly of his two cats, one in which he appears with his cat. Other than that, he has not posted a profile picture of himself. Apart from cats, he also had photos of food and drink. The photos express his privacy-oriented mentality, so we do not, for example, get an idea of where he lives on the basis of his profile.

However, paradoxically, despite being private himself, Mika felt that it was possible to get to know other people better through Instagram and to find out more about their real lives. Mika admitted that Instagram pictures revealed something about a person's values, for example, posting photos of outdoor living or healthy foods gives an impression of a healthy lifestyle. He thus expressed belief that other people represent themselves authentically 'as they are' on Instagram, believing in the authenticity contract, even though he himself was very conscious of his own tactic of maintaining distance and keeping his personality features away from social media. In the following quote, Mika explains how he feels that through Instagram, he may learn to know more about the people he follows, what kind of people they 'really are'. The quotation reveals the authenticity expectations that Mika has about Instagram content:

> If you think about it as a visual diary, if you don't know much about, say, your nieces' everyday lives or (name of acquaintance)'s life, who is rather unknown and a private person, that of course slightly opens a view to what they're usually doing and what kind of people they really are. (Mika)

It seems that photos have preserved at least some of their testimonial power and people still tend to believe that the 'photographic truth' reveals something intimate and real about a person, despite their own occasional tactics of resistance and the fact that editing photos and staging situations are typical practices on Instagram.

Conclusions

In this article, we examined the Instagram tactics of authenticity and privacy through focused interviews, focus group interviews and observations of the informants' Instagram photos, using de Certeau's tactic-strategy distinction as a framework. Specifically we focused on two categories of tactics, those related to privacy and authenticity. Our aim was to study public intimacy in the manner in which it is constructed in visual self-performances on Instagram. In this study Instagram appears as more of a connective (Van Dijck 2013, 13–

14) than a social media platform as the app was mostly aimed at keeping up appearances (impression management) and social connections (phatic communication). The users' tactics were mirrored against observations of Instagram's communication of their public company strategy. The Instagram profile is a carefully considered expression of oneself, almost like a business card, aimed at friends and acquaintances. Especially for the teenage users, it was evident that Instagram was very important in maintaining social circles and liking each other's photos. They were, thus, in accordance with what Instagram-founder Kevin Systrom said: 'Instagram is less about the medium and more about the network'. (Kiss 2015)

We conclude that there are distinct user tactics to which people attach themselves. The novice adult users in our study tended to be more cautious prior to publishing images whereas the younger users often deleted images at a later date if they felt these photos were no longer of sufficiently good quality or did not represent their current self in the best possible way. These are different privacy tactics adopted by users; they negotiate what aspects of their lives they want to showcase. Young Instagram users are more involved in the ephemeral online culture whereby images may be deleted, or disseminated only momentarily, as in the photo-app Snapchat. The novice adult users had already been publishing photos on Facebook, and they had some reservations in starting to use Instagram. The interviewees were generally aware of privacy issues in relation to social media. Users who were new to Instagram were cautious about their privacy, so they ensured that their pictures were not excessively intimate as, for example, the selfie. The more experienced users were also aware of privacy issues in relation to social media use, and for example, avoided posting photos that revealed the location of their home. However, what people understand as a tactic of ensuring privacy varies from person to person. One person's privacy tactic may be seen as a privacy violation by another person, which shows that users do indeed operate tactically on Instagram, choosing the mode of operation based on context. These tactics are usually individual and the users justify them mostly for themselves.

The interviewed Instagrammers were more concerned about their social privacy than their institutional privacy. They produced the appearance of authenticity by negotiating between the ideal and 'real' selves. The practice of taking and publishing selfies was one that divided users. For the novice adult users, posting a photo of themselves was generally perceived as too private, whereas the teenage users felt that other details of their daily lives were more private than showing their face in a selfie. In many cases, talk about privacy and authenticity were intertwined. The users largely adopted the use of filters, one of the main reasons they were attracted to the app. Therefore, they were also consenting to one of the goals of Instagram: to produce more beautiful pictures to the world.

The users did not knowingly challenge Instagram in the ways, for example, the artist Rupi Kaur has done, but some of the personal choices of using Instagram (e.g. using ambiguous hashtags, making a limited amount of photos visible at a time) were such that they were not completely in line with the expectations of Instagram (connecting people across the world with hashtags, keeping photos up there, 'to stick around' as an archive

(Parrish 2015)). As different users seem to have different conceptions of the best ways of protecting their privacy and producing an appearance of authenticity, we can say that the ways in which people use Instagram are indeed tactical. This study is an illustration of how opportunistic and individual choices, concerning for example privacy, shape the ways in which we use social media platforms. For regular users, difficult questions of institutional privacy tend to remain in the background, while questions of social privacy are dealt with daily in their social media use.

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Notes:

[1] The assignments, for example, prompted the respondents to observe their feelings and motivations for Instagram use. Daily assignments included tasks, such as: 'Post a photo of your home or surroundings. What kind of photo did you choose and why? What kind of photo would you not share?', and 'Follow a celebrity. Who did you follow? What kind of an impression do they give out?'

[2] Adopting different tactics may have something to do with age, but in terms of privacy practices on Instagram, it is too much of a generalisation. We prefer to think that it depends more on experience than physical age.