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## Mobile innovation and mobile creativity

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### ABSTRACT

Mobile media, mobility, mobile creative arts and mobile communication have significantly shaped the way we live, work, tell stories and how we are creative and stay innovative. Inspired by the trans-disciplinary impact of mobile media, this special issue reflects on developments in creative mobile media practice, including mobile studies, mobile communication, and mobile experience. Based on the discussions and presentations at the University of Nottingham Ningbo China during the Mobile Studies Congress 2022 with the theme *Go Mobile Stay Innovative* and the Mobile Studies Congress 2023 at Zhejiang University in Hangzhou, China with the theme *Go Mobile Stay Creative*, the articles will explore and examine innovation and creativity in screen storytelling, community engagement and novel production formats such as mobile music, drone cinematography, mobile and smartphone filmmaking. As much of our world has gone mobile, it is vital to examine the present changes, challenges, and chances that define mobile media, mobility, mobile creativity and mobile communication now and in the near future. Developments towards Industry 4.0 and ongoing digital transformations continue to disrupt the screen industries. Innovative technologies and mobile creativity allow various communities to create artistic and cultural productions globally and forge new synergies among academic disciplines.

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## Introduction – MINA and MSC

This special issue resulted out of the debates around mobile innovation and mobile creativity as presented at the 4th and 5th Mobile Studies Congress in Ningbo China, in 2023 and 2024, which included the Mobile Innovation Network & Association, MINA, 12th and 13th Mobile Innovation Screening. This special issue further develops the discussions around mobile and smartphone filmmaking through engagement with the environment, identify, drone filmmaking and music making. These developments are driven by Creative

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Arts research and thus this article presents an original approach to Mobile Creative Practice Research. Beyond the aesthetic, process, thematic and conceptual developments of mobile storytelling (Schleser 2021c) this special issue unfolds *Media and Screen Production* to discuss mobility, meta-opinions and mobile fairness. In order to understand the developments in this research field of screen and digital media this introduction will present some background information for the MINA and MSC communities.

The MINA project was established in 2011 in New Zealand, Aotearoa, and thus MINA was called Mobile Innovation Network Aotearoa. After four successful years in Aotearoa in Wellington (2011 and 2012) and Auckland (2013 and 2014) MINA moved to Melbourne, Australia became the Mobile Innovation Network Australasia. After a short time, we decided to change our name from network to association, so it includes more different organizations, such as NGOs and community groups and further develop links for professionals and rookie smartphone filmmakers as we have done in the past (MINA 2020). During the last thirteen years, MINA hosted several screenings in Wellington (New Zealand), Melbourne (Australia), Ningbo (China) and internationally, led workshops in mobile and smartphone filmmaking, social media content production, Mobile AI storytelling, and produced mobile-mentaries (mobile documentaries) and smartphone video projects.

MINA is the longest-running film festival celebrating mobile and smartphone filmmaking in the Southern Hemisphere. MINA creates connections between filmmakers, communities, and the creative industries. Over the last 14 years, MINA has featured new developments in narrative and non-narrative explorations, including documentary, experimental and abstract filmmaking. In 2017, MINA successfully introduced drones, in 2018 Cinematic VR productions and 2024 Mobile AI as part of the screening programme. Mobile XR, Mobile Cinematic VR (MCVR) (Schleser 2020) and drone project videos can include project showcases and documentation of process explorations.

The Mobile Studies Congress (MSC) like MINA provides a space for conversation and critical discussion about trends and directions in the industry and alternative understandings of smartphone filmmaking and Mobile Studies. MINA emerged out of the drive to develop an alternative space and focus on the discussion around mobile specificity rather than established industry conventions or screen storytelling norms. Williams (1981) outlines the principles of independent formations through internal organization and external relations. MINA like MSC is 'not based on formal membership, but organized around some collective public manifestation, such as an exhibition' (Williams 1981, 68) or screening or congress. The external relation in cultural formation is alternative; 'the provision of alternative facilities for the production, exhibition or publication of certain kinds of work, where it is believed that existing institutions exclude or tend to exclude these' (Williams 1981, 70).

The annual *International Mobile Innovation Screening* and the Mobile Studies Congress have become widely recognized for sharing insights and findings in publications and NTROs (Non-Traditional Research Outputs) as well as creative mobile media productions within and beyond mobile media, communication, creative arts, and design. The Mobile Studies Congress continued the annual MINA *Mobile Innovation and Mobile Creativity Symposium* in a more international environment through its location in China (Table 1).

The congress runs alongside the MINA Smartphone Film Festival. Schleser designed the festival's concept with the research aim to build an international community. The

**Table 1.** MSC and MINA academic conferences and film festival screenings.

| Month/Year    | Conference Name   | Venue  |
|---------------|---|--|
| November 2011 | Mobile Innovation and Mobile Creativity Symposia        | Massey University (Wellington, NZ) CoCA College of Creative Arts |
| November 2012 | Mobile Innovation and Mobile Creativity Symposia II     | Massey University (Wellington, NZ) CoCA College of Creative Arts |
| November 2013 | Mobile Innovation and Mobile Creativity Symposia III    | AUT University (Auckland, NZ) CoLab                              |
| November 2014 | Mobile Innovation and Mobile Creativity Symposia IV     | AUT University (Auckland, NZ) CoLab                              |
| November 2015 | Mobile Innovation and Mobile Creativity Symposia V      | RMIT University (Melbourne, Australia) Australia                 |
| November 2016 | Mobile Innovation and Mobile Creativity Symposia VI     | Swinburne University (Melbourne, Australia)                      |
| January 2020  | International Mobile Storytelling Congress              | University of Nottingham Ningbo China                            |
| November 2020 | Mobile Studies Congress: Go Mobile Stay Healthy         | University of Nottingham Ningbo China                            |
| November 2021 | Mobile Studies Congress: Go Mobile, Stay Sustainable    | University of Nottingham Ningbo China                            |
| November 2022 | Mobile Studies Congress: Go Mobile, Stay Innovative     | University of Nottingham Ningbo China                            |
| December 2023 | Mobile Studies Congress 2023 – Go Mobile, Stay Creative | Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China                             |
| November 2024 | Mobile Studies Congress 2023 – Go Mobile, Stay Smart    | Sino-German Faculty of Branding, Zhejiang Wanli University       |

ongoing Creative Arts research advances research methodology through developing ‘supportive structures for new ventures’. The creative practice research approach centres around ‘community building’ (Candy 2020). This objective is achieved through linking industry partners, community outreach and curated knowledge-sharing events as part of the smartphone film festival. The industry support and international submissions from 14 different countries demonstrate the festival’s creative currency in re-defining constantly changing directions in smartphone filmmaking.

While smartphones are more accessible than ever before, MINA bridges the gap between the creative industries and communities. Through MINA, Schleser curates annual updates that crystalize in the screening programme, which expresses new knowledge in relation to smartphone filmmaking’s specific practices, aesthetic refinements, and formulating alternatives to mainstream storytelling. As there is no national or international body or organization for smartphone filmmaking, this research project established a peer-to-peer approach for new knowledge creation and support to advance the dynamic field of mobile and smartphone filmmaking (Table 2).

In addition the mobile stories and smartphone films screened at the *International Mobile Innovation Screenings*, MINA published special editions in *Ubiquity the Journal of Pervasive Media* (Schleser 2014), *Journal of Creative Technology* (Schleser 2014, Antonczak 2015) and an edited collection *Mobile Media Making in an Age of Smartphones* (Berry and Schleser 2014), and *Mobile Story Making in an Age of Smartphones* (Schleser and Berry 2018). Further publications resulting out of the past Mobile Studies Congress include *Mobile Story in An Age of Smartphones* (Schleser and Xu 2021), *Coping with COVID-19, the Mobile Way: Experience and Expertise from China* (Xu 2022), *COVID-19 News Reporting and Engaging in the Age of Social Media: Comparing ‘Xinhua News Agency’ and ‘The Paper’* (Chen and Xu 2021) as well as Sightlines Special Issue *Smartphone Filmmaking – Past, Present and Future*.

**Table 2.** MSC and MINA academic conferences.

| Month/Year    | Film Festival name                             | Venue   |
|---------------|--|---|
| November 2011 | International Mobile Innovation Screening      | Massey University (Wellington, NZ) CoCA College of Creative Arts  |
| November 2012 | 2nd International Mobile Innovation Screening  | Massey University (Wellington, NZ) CoCA College of Creative Arts  |
| November 2013 | 3rd International Mobile Innovation Screening  | AUT University (Auckland, NZ) CoLab   |
| November 2014 | 4th International Mobile Innovation Screening  | AUT University (Auckland, NZ) CoLab   |
| November 2015 | 5th International Mobile Innovation Screening  | RMIT University (Melbourne, Australia)  |
| November 2016 | 6th International Mobile Innovation Screening  | Swinburne University (Melbourne, Australia)   |
| November 2017 | 7th International Mobile Innovation Screening  | ACMI, Australian Centre for the Moving-Image, Melbourne and NGĀ TAONGA Sound & Vision, Film Archive New Zealand, Wellington |
| November 2018 | 8th International Mobile Innovation Screening  | Swinburne University (Melbourne, Australia)   |
| November 2019 | 9th International Mobile Innovation Screening  | University of Nottingham Ningbo China   |
| November 2021 | 10th International Mobile Innovation Screening | Swinburne University (Melbourne, Australia) and University of Nottingham Ningbo China (Online)                              |
| November 2022 | 11th International Mobile Innovation Screening | ACMI, Australian Centre for the Moving-Image, Melbourne   |
| November 2023 | 12th International Mobile Innovation Screening | ACMI, Australian Centre for the Moving-Image, Melbourne   |
| November 2024 | 13th International Mobile Innovation Screening | ACMI, Australian Centre for the Moving-Image, Melbourne   |

Schleser, Sills-Jones, and Xu are now presenting this special issue featuring selected contributions from the Mobile Studies Congress in 2022 and 2023.

### Mobile and smartphone filmmaking

Smartphone filmmaking, particularly the practices around mobile filmmaking, can be understood within the broader historical context of the medium technology movement and its emancipatory aspirations, which focused on technologies that enhanced personal autonomy and community resilience. In the area of communications, the idea of medium and appropriate technologies was echoed in the rise of personal computers in the 1980s, and the evolution of the World Wide Web as a relatively free-to-access service in the 1990s. The rhetoric around these developments promised the democratization access to information and creative tools (Rheingold 1993) that echoed the ideal of medium and appropriate technologies. Similarly, the proliferation of digital cameras in the late 1990s and early 2000s seemingly allowed more people to engage in photography and filmmaking (Dovey 2000), previously restricted to those with professional equipment and training (Jenkins 2006), with the promise that anyone could author their own narratives of the world and thus escape the often race-, class- and gender-bound practices of official media gatekeepers.

However, the yearned-for utopia of late modern communications delivered through medium-tech-inspired decentralized networks and ubiquitous mobile devices has not fully arrived. While the internet was expected to democratize access to information and opportunities, it has also exacerbated existing inequalities. The digital divide remains a significant issue, with marginalized communities having less access to high-speed

internet and digital literacy and therefore unequal access to educational and economic opportunities, reinforcing socioeconomic disparities (van Dijk 2020). This special issue recognizes these debates and the article *From Mobile First to Mobile Fair: Advancing China's Sustainability* proposes a Mobile Fairness Index for monitoring mobile equity in China. Beyond the Chinese context, the proposition for available, accessible, affordable, engaged, enlightened and empowered (Xu 2025) provides a foundation to discuss Mobile Innovation and Mobile Creativity in a decentralized approach. Inspired by Kerrigan's keynote at MSC 2023, we use the systems model of creativity to map out developments in mobile storytelling and smartphone filmmaking. She drew upon Csikszentmihalyi (1996) to explain how individuals and smartphone filmmakers as creative agents operate in a system of culture and society. The members of the field accept the creative contribution to the domain or reject it. In this context, it is key to understand the mobile ecosystem as a domain of its own in a larger system of media, arts and design. In the book *Creativity and Creative Industries in Regional Australia – Interconnected Networks, Shared Knowledge and Choice Making Agents*, McIntyre, Kerrigan, Fulton, King and Williams use the systems model of creativity and the creative (eco)system of the field in action. While their book covers the Creative Industries extensively the field of mobile media and mobile screen production needs further examination as it relates to other Screen Industries but operates in its own contexts. In their analysis of the creative system (ecosystem) in action, the Creative Industries is defined through the interdependencies, interactions and interplays of social and cultural structures and systems. The domain in mobile storytelling and smartphone filmmaking can be described as a fusion of the screen industry and the arts world. As outlined in detail in *Smartphone Filmmaking: Theory and Practice*, smartphone filmmakers and mobile artists, as insiders or insider outsiders, need to operate as the judges and/or peer-review committee as the knowledge domain is distinctive. At MSC/MINA an inclusive and Open Space New Media (Zimmermann and De Michiel 2018) approach characterizes the domain. As Zimmermann and De Michiel shift from director to convenor and designer,

rather than discussing the film as an auteur, the filmmaker becomes a community facilitator, carefully framing a dialogue with the group, perhaps including other invited speakers, and encouraging everyone to participate in the exchange. (Zimmermann and De Michiel 2018)

We hope to shift from gatekeepers to stewardship, from audiences to pro-d-users, pro-users or pro-am (professional amateurs). McIntyre et al. see ecosystems as 'dynamic and scalable and can be used to represent holarchies, that is, systems operating above and below the one being observed' (McIntyre et al. 2023, 393). These 'weekend warriors' as much as a number of what in the creative (eco)system is described as education or manufacturing make significant contributions to mobile innovation and mobile creativity. Mobile Creative Arts research includes community-engaged practices that can be seen as distinctive from industry discourses in the screen industry. The Sightlines issue *Mobile and Smartphone Filmmaking – Past, Present and Future* demonstrates the original creative works that emerge out of the academy. Referring back to *Creativity and Creative Industries in Regional Australia – Interconnected Networks, Shared Knowledge and Choice Making Agents*, the 'manufacturing label' includes various apps (such as FiLMiC Pro, Luma Fusion, Cap Cut, and Adobe Rush amongst others) that are shaping the mobile media and smartphone filmmaking ecology. The development of FiLMiC pro from a

Pro-Am to a professional domain was not necessarily appreciated by the smartphone filmmaking community. While the app developed to a level that Hollywood producers are using the app (i.e. Steven Soderberg) and the apps development team can be seen at NAB, integrating Frame.io speaks to a push to the professional domain. The change to a subscription model by the new app owner Bending Spoons ApS upset the FiLMiC Pro smartphone filmmaking community significantly. This example points to the specificity of the smartphone filmmaking ecosystem. These discussions and discursive arguments around mobile storytelling have an impact on adjacent disciplines and academic fields. This special issue brings these dimensions together through the smartphone and mobile device as a median or compass to navigate aesthetic refinements, innovative practices and the need to update policies.

### Mobile aesthetics, practices & policies

Mobile music as a mobile or in-between approach generates new music production spaces. The authors describe this as a 'mobile *gestalt* performance' (Koszolko and Wilson 2025). As an alternative to an industry-defined discourse, mobile music encourages the development of 'idiosyncratic approaches and to develop their own musical interests'. In a comparable way to mobile filmmaking, mobile music can do some of the work of studio environments, but its innovation and creative capacity are also in a space beyond this, rolling out and picking novel processes.

With the rapid developments of mobile media in China we are reminded that the initial accessibility of mobile media might be challenged in the near future as mobile devices have ubiquitous computing. This development also changes the price point of mobile media and its qualities in terms of availability, accessibility, affordable, engagement, enlightenment and empowerment (Xu 2025), thus a fairness index could regulate and uncrinkle these emerging socioeconomic developments.

In *Smartphone Filmmaking and the Australian Environment – a Creative Research Collaboration* Schleser and Davis (2025) examine the case study of Australian Environments on Screen's (AEoS) showcase of commissioned, non-fiction smartphone films in collaboration with the Mobile Innovation Network and Association (MINA). The case study reflects the culmination and focus of the project's curator-researchers, aimed to explore how the unique affordances of mobile media could foster new understandings and experiences of the Australian environment amid the climate crisis. Their conclusion that how process-driven approaches can enhance inspiration when working with mobile media in immersive natural environments is a welcome insight.

The process also plays an important role in building on the somatic connection between the author and mobile device in the critical practice of taking selfies in Kelly's article *On Queer Selfies: Selfie Filmmaking, 'Scrolling Back', and creative innovation with the liquid aesthetic of smartphones*. Kelly (2025) reveals how process enables a method for reflecting on the production of selfies, and therefore through selfies towards identity and social practices of identity formation, and contends that Queer Selfies offer a 'a way to show how to be queer in the world', which has added relevance at a time when such identities are under attack.

Jouini's *Aesthetics and Practices of Mobility in Mobile Phone Filmmaking* (2025) examines the way smartphone films' mobility opens up new ways of understanding cinematic

realism, by creating an aesthetic bridge between the depiction of place in a globalized context, and the closeness of body and apparatus in representing the experience of migration, in what they call an aesthetic of mobility and uncertainty. The part played by smartphone film apparatus in the bodily act of migration enables 'migrant images' to develop the fundamental theory of movement in (and of) film.

When working with drones, mobile media aesthetics are reaching new altitudes and further developing the ideas of Keitai aesthetics (Baker, Schleser, and Molga 2009). The idea of the drone as an AI camera stylo emphasizes how AI is becoming part of the production process but still requires human agency in the creative decision-making process. The article proposes to unfold the 'mobile-mentary'.

At the 4th Mobile Studies Congress Artist and Independent Filmmaker Florian Thalhofer presented his research into developing a Korsakowian approach for developing a meta-level understanding through a multi-perspectival view. As the inventor of the Korsakow softwares, which creates non-linear and interactive films for the online environment, he proposes a conceptual approach to understanding a more mobile world with all its connections.

This special issue includes a report of the Mobile Studies Congress 2022 and 2023. As mobile media is interacting with a number of developments, it is not surprising to see that AI and GenAI were discussed very broadly in the 5th edition of the Mobile Studies Congress (Xu and Schleser 2024). An example of these developments that were initiated during the previous year is reflected in the paper *Filming with Drones: Is AI the new filmmaker?*

## Unfolding creativity

The techno-historical context of smartphone filmmaking places these kinds of devices clearly on, or across, the divide between and a narrative of technological development as democratization, and technological development as a form of corporatised commodification. In terms of a discussion of mobiles' impact, this dichotomy can be a little paralyzing and indeed miss the point with mobiles and their use in filmmaking; not that there is more or less democratic elements to filmmaking because of mobiles, but there is a more creative element because of their use. That of course raises the question of creativity, and its definition, rising in turn the temptation to apply a model such as Csikszentmihalyi's systems theory of creativity, which emphasizes the interaction between the individual, the domain, and the field, to offer a way to talk about in contemporary mobile media making. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1996), creativity emerges not just from individual talent or genius, but from a system where the individual's creative contributions are recognized and validated by the domain (a set of symbolic rules and procedures) and the field (the social institutions and individuals who judge the quality and novelty of the contributions).

we need to abandon the Ptolemaic view of creativity, in which the person is at the centre of everything, for a more Copernican model in which the person is part of a system of mutual influences and information. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988: 336)

In the context of mobile media making, this could support the argument that the individual is now able to bring new and valuable variations into the domain through their use of

an available, accessible, affordable, engaged, enlightened and empowered (Xu 2025) mobile technology; the use of mobile devices enable a more spontaneous and pervasive form of creativity. The domain of mobile media can then evolve the body of knowledge, techniques, and conventions associated with media creation generally, also then expanding the possibilities of the mobile form in turn. This encompasses not only technical skills but also the cultural and aesthetic sensibilities that define what is considered valuable or innovative within the media landscape.

Applying Csikszentmihalyi's systems theory to mobile media making thus highlights the integrated and systemic nature of creativity. It underscores how technological advancements, domain-specific knowledge, and social validation mechanisms collectively shape and drive creative expression in the digital age. This holistic perspective is crucial for understanding how mobile media making is not merely an individual artistic pursuit but a complex interplay of multiple factors that together foster innovation and creativity.

An individual, such as a smartphone filmmaker, is an active agent in a social and cultural system. Smartphone filmmaking here contributes to culture as much as the commercial environment through creativity in the form of storytelling. The domain has rules and conventions that are established through industry conventions as much as new developments at festivals, conventions, meet-ups and networking events or screenings. The individual, i.e. the mobile storyteller, should learn these conventions and norms to make contributions, i.e. screening a smartphone film at a festival or on their social media channels. These contributions are then presented to and validated by other members of the field, all of those who understand the domain, and who accept the creative contribution into the domain for others to draw on or reject it. Examples could be the judges at smartphone film festivals or the comments or views (which drive the algorithms) that frame contributions in the online space. Here it is important to note that multiple fields are emerging, that create systems in systems.

However, there is room to argue that such a view of creativity is somewhat anachronistic – the model emanating from a pre-mobile and pre-AI are – and that the feedback loops and circuits of meaning elaborated in such a model are now so complex, and from the viewpoint of an author and audience member, so fragmented, that such an analysis fails to identify one of the main concerns with mobile filmmaking's specific kind of creativity; that is as a tool for understanding and unfolding the complexity of media production at today's high-speed, high-pitch setting.

### ***Unfolding media and screen production: 'rolling out', 'uncrinkling' and 'picking process'***

Unfolding, as a conceptual framework, offers a valuable lens through which to investigate the complex interplay between digital technologies, mobility (Barry et al. 2023), screen and media production. The concept of 'Unfolding Media' was developed through a media practice and education project at AUT University in Aotearoa/New Zealand (Sills-Jones, McEwan, and Jackson 2022). Dafydd Sills-Jones presented this approach at the Mobile Studies Congress in Ningbo in 2024 and then refined it with Schleser for this article as a creative arts methodology for working with mobile media and smartphone filmmaking.

This concept allows for a nuanced exploration of how digital natives navigate the rapidly evolving landscape of media, marked by significant advancements and the

persistent influence of legacy media and methods. By applying unfolding, researchers can delve into the overlapping and often contradictory realms of 'maker', 'craft', and 'brand' (Caldwell 2016), illuminating how these domains coexist and influence one another.

There are a few ways in which a discussion of unfolding mirrors other traditions in the discussion of creativity, especially in terms of how mobile filmmakers can be thought of as adapting to ever-changing (and ever increasingly fast-paced changes) production workflows and audience distributions. One might examine how the concept of 'unfolding' aligns with Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which highlights the gradual acquisition of new skills and knowledge (Vygotsky 1978). One might also consider 'unfolding' to be analogous with the gradual cognitive development and learning progression described in Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development, outlined in (Piaget 1970). Piaget's theory of cognitive development outlines a gradual progression through distinct stages – sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational – where children develop increasingly complex ways of thinking, reasoning, and understanding the world through active interaction with their environment.

This, of course, is quite an old idea, and when applied to the problems of defining tracing creativity in such a fluctuating system as the one mobile filmmakers find themselves in, its work breaking the unfolding idea down into three sub-areas; rolling out, uncrinkling and picking processes can develop novel understandings about mobile innovation and mobile creativity.

### *Rolling out*

Rolling out can be thought of as a type of creativity that is akin to critical thinking. It is a practise where the implications of actions and processes are carefully laid out in all their detail in order to create a kind of map or general picture of how a complex situation works. Unfolding can be a way of aligning creative practice research with critical thinking. In other contexts, unfolding can refer to how mobile filmmaker actively construct their understanding through interaction with their environment (Fosnot and Perry 2005), or through interactions with cultural tools and practices, aligning with the idea of knowledge development over time (Rogoff 2003).

### *Uncrinkling*

Was rolling out can be equated with a more or less usual process of critical thinking, on the development of knowledge based on the reflection on the process, this doesn't always cover how mobile media makers react, and how mobile needed devices position their authors and audiences. In order to be truly reflective in such a complex situation, merely rolling out will just cause for collection and assembly of the vast amount of data, which then has to be reflected upon, creating another set of data. Mobile media makers need to, and do, zoom in on specific areas of concern and uncrinkle a small area on the general map produced by rolling out. In other words, mobile media making allows for creativity that zooms in on specific elements of mobile media making that come on their full of a connection with the world, through the oversupply of parallel and over-layered processes and tools. This zoom-in may not give the whole picture but does enable the mobile media maker to work as a

media maker and as an agent with more creative efficacy in a small, localized area. Again when thinking of mobile media makers as learners, uncrinkling produces clear comparisons with Brookfields' discussion of the importance of critical reflection (Brookfield 2005). Brookfield (2005) emphasizes the importance of critical reflection as a means for individuals to examine and challenge their own assumptions, beliefs, and practices, leading to deeper learning, personal growth, and the ability to engage more effectively with others in diverse contexts.

### **Picking processes**

There is a certain utopian and aspirational element to the thinking behind rolling out and uncrinkling, which presupposes mobile media makers visibility to challenge and supersede the ontological limits placed upon them by the often highly corporatised media technologies that they or we are using. As mentioned before mobile devices and smartphones can be both democratizing and commodifying, and at times either zoomed out or zoomed in reflection cannot but critique the very basis of mobile and smartphone filmmaking, involving as it does a directed personal engagement with the technologies of companies such as Apple, Samsung Adobe, Google, Huawei, Xiaomi, Baidu, ByteDance and so on. In this instance, mobile media makers and smartphone filmmakers have to pick processes that both use and redefine the application and our understanding of what the hardware is and can do as much as exploring novel processes for using softwares in the cultural production of artefacts and/or NTROs, which demonstrate creative innovation in the screen industry and the context of communities alike.

### **Mobile creativity & mobile innovation**

Mobile Creative Arts is closely aligned with Film, Media and Screen Production research, but its specificity requires an original approach. This article hopes to start a conversation about this unique mobile method, which might need some refinement with ongoing technological developments that will provide novel ways of engaging with mobile filmmaking and smart storytelling. The triptych of rolling out, uncrickling and picking processes provides a pathway for these investigations. Rolling out engages in a broader socio-cultural outlook such as the creative ecosystem and continues to investigate the complexity surrounding the particular project. Uncrickling furthers this development through understanding the complexity of hidden patterns, configurations and agenda(s), beyond the frame. And picking processes with reference to mobile media can be described as a decentralized attitude in a hierarchical system. Writing in *Material media-making in the digital age*, Binn emphasizes the contributions of personal media-making in the contemporary mediascape. He draws upon a Creative Practice Research approach in shaping our understanding and 'thinking about media and its place in the world' (Binns 2024). He believes that 'practice can make theory' (Binns 2024, 3), which is framing the conceptual and methodological underpinning of this special issue. Binn's recognition of the avant-garde is a great starting point for shaping an experimental discourse. In his exercises, he suggests using a smartphone for movie-image arts, which is the first step to unfolding media and screen production through 'rolling out', 'uncrickling' and 'picking process'.

The accessibility and intimacy of the smartphone make it a perfect tool for experimentation. The Mobile Innovation Network and Association provides a rich resource for inspiration in this field. In the context of creative innovation as an approach to reframe the world and work without constraints and preconceptions, his quote of Peter Gidal ('there is no ontology') (Gidal in Binns 2024, 13) is a visionary approach. As an emerging discipline Mobile Creative Practice (Schleser 2021a, 2021b) this special issue combines Media and Communication as well as Creative Practice Research approaches.

From a Sociological perspective, mobile paradigms and mobile methods can be used to study '(im)mobilities that make social and material realities' through theory, observation and engagement (Büscher, Urry, and Witchger 2010, 4). In particular, its transformative nature, 'generating an alternative theoretical and methodo – logical landscape' is reflected in the Creative Arts. In a similar vein the experimental quality is recognized in mobilities research, 'Mobile methods are intrinsically experimental' (Büscher, Urry, and Witchger 2010, 120). One can now recognize an intersection of both fields emerging (Barry et al. 2023). The Creative Arts provide sophisticated methodologies that provide new insights and innovations. Creativity as a driver for experimentation speaks to mobilities and creative practice research alike.

there are art and design interventions concerned with imagining mobile alternatives and futures and experimenting with them. This involves playful appropriation of prototypes of mobile technologies, for example, mobile content- generation technologies. (Büscher, Urry, and Witchger 2010)

Over the last years, mobile media grew exponentially and the integration into professional as well as artistic practices is now well demonstrated. Next to the case of smartphone filmmaking (Schleser 2021d) this can also be recognized in mobile music or latest developments such as drone filmmaking, properly on the the most mobile forms of filmmaking so far.

## Conclusion: towards mobile creative methods

'Mobilities are embodied, involving fragile, aged, gendered, racialised bodies' (Büscher, Urry, and Witchger 2010, 6). While sociology studies space or rather place, the mobile creativity and mobile innovation approach is an exploration of how mobile media and mobile storytelling can shape our representations and understandings of the world and our position in it.

The personalized algorithms employed by social media platforms made possible by ubiquitous mobile device use, such as Facebook and X, have led to what Pariser called 'filter bubbles' (2011), whose isolating algorithmic curation, added to the proliferation of mobile devices. It is on this ground that the mobile filmmaker treads. Mobile devices with cameras and smartphones are arguably an extension of these traditions of 'democratization', in which emancipation from earlier limiting systems of representation and production is balanced by a set of problems and drawbacks. In this historical continuum, mobile phone filmmaking and now smartphone filmmaking, both represent a significant leap forward in lowering the barriers to entry for filmmaking, it is essential to consider the persisting issues of the digital divide and unequal access to technology (Ragnedda & Muschert, 2013). The quality and reach of mobile phone films can still be constrained

by factors such as network infrastructure and platform algorithms that privilege certain types of content over others (Hesmondhalgh, 2013). These limitations underscore the complexities of smartphone filmmaking as an emancipatory practice.

Mobile storytelling and smartphone filmmaking resonate with the medium technology movement's historical ideals of accessibility and empowerment, but they also reflect the high-tech tradition of integrating sophisticated technologies into user-friendly devices. However, critically examining the extent and nature of this alignment reveals a nuanced and contested terrain. While mobile devices and smartphones hold the promise of democratizing filmmaking, the realization of this promise depends on addressing ongoing disparities in access and infrastructure. Thus, the interplay between democratization and technological advancement in smartphone filmmaking continues to evolve within the broader historical trajectory of the medium technology movement. Therefore, it is key to refine our methods and Unfold Media and Screen Production through 'rolling out', 'uncrinkling' and 'picking processes'. Mobility, spontaneity and a contemporary understanding of the world are reflected in the practice and conceptualization. Thus, this methodology, unfolding media, addresses parallel mobility in the practice and the artefact.

The difference is thus expressed in the text (theory and practice). The mobile specificity reflects the movement of the world, which brings mobile storytelling to an original production, distribution and exhibition domain.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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