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Accountability and the Framing Power of Visual Technologies: How Do Visualized Reconstructions of Incidents Influence Public and Political Accountability Discussions?

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In this article visual technologies and their use in three reconstructions after an incident are linked with accountability issues. Conclusions are drawn on the relation between administration, the choice of technology to create and distribute visual occurrences, and society and how visualizations are used to frame accountability issues.

Keywords accountability, visuality, public policymaking, framing, visual technologies, reconstructions

Human experiences have become more visual and visualized than ever before. This is evidenced in the increasing popularity of social network sites such as YouTube and circulation of pictures taken with mobile devices (Mitchell 1994). The emergence of this visual culture does not depend only on the technology. It is rooted in a tendency to picture and visualize human experiences in an essential way. Mirzoeff (1999, 3) views a "visual culture as being concerned with visual events in which information, meaning or pleasure is sought by the consumer in an interface with visual technologies." That images have become increasingly important reflects this growing visual culture (Mitchell 1994). This does not imply that text and the printed media have lost significance, but there is clearly an increased use of pictures.[1] This visual culture is in essence very fragmented and disrupted, which reflects a dynamic and even fluid culture (Mitchell 1994; 2005; Castells 1996; Bauman 2000). It amounts to an endless, often real-time and thus changing, stream of divergent and convergent stream of images dousing people. These competing images succeed or fail to the extent that we can interpret them successfully in nonstructured and predetermined contexts. Images are inherently open to different interpretations (Mirzoeff 1999; Mitchell 2005; Sturken and Cartwright 2001).

Their truth claim is questionable, especially in politics and in court (Mnookin 1998). This claim is based on the assumption that photographic images are merely the product of a registration and identification process enabled by the mechanical operation of the camera (Meskin and Cohen 2008; Porter and Kennedy 2012). In effect, the photographic image is an analogy of reality (Mnookin 1998). Mitchell (1992, 24) talks about "an implicit truth claim": a photography "seem to say of what is that is." This claim is disputed in several ways. Photos, but also images in general, can be seen as a specific interpretation of reality, because all kinds of decisions and assumptions underlie the creation of an image, in terms of what camera angle is chosen, what will be made visible and how it will be made visible, what elements of the context are included and excluded, what is been accentuated in terms of light, or in terms of lens to be used, and so on (Sontag 1977; Gunning 2004; Sturken and Cartwright 2001). In doing so, the producers of images try to influence the meaning that possible viewers may attach to it. But also the viewer has her own interpretation of the "truth" that is being presented. When looking at a picture, she interprets the portrayed version of reality from her own perspective shaped by her personal experiences, values, and interests (Sturken and Cartwright 2001; Crary 1992). Moreover, a viewer does not take into account the specific context that was relevant for the producer of the picture, because she is not always aware of this context, or just does not want

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to acknowledge it. A photo can provide some information about, for instance, a location, but not all information that is relevant to understand this location is present on the photo (Porter and Kennedy 2012). Hence, it is important to acknowledge the subjective and contextual nature of images in terms of viewing and producing (Sturken and Cartwright 2001; Crary 1992).

Images play an important role in politics because citizens experience politics through the way they are visualized in the traditional media (e.g., newspapers, television news) and the new media (e.g., blogs) (Bennett and Entman 2005). The media have increasingly become the platform for politicians to gain political and public support or to discuss political issues such as accountability. This is why the penetration of visual technologies in our society should not be studied as a separate phenomenon; it is an integral part of and embedded in broader societal, economic, social, and cultural developments and practices (Mitchell 1994; Castells 1998; Bauman 2000). One such practice is the process of holding actors (officials, agencies, etc.) politically accountable.

We focus on how visual technologies, in particular visual reconstructions, influence public accountability discussions for incidents that have caused public upheaval. Up till now, systematic attention has not been paid to the creation and use of digitized visual events in accountability processes, although there is large body of literature that addresses public accountability (Bovens 2005). Also, actors engaged in blame games push forward different stories or frames in visual reconstructions to account for what has happened (Stone 1989). Behind a visual reconstruction lie all kinds of assumptions and decisions: What is defined as being relevant and what is not? Who decided to include or exclude specific elements in the reconstruction? Were the images manipulated, which is easy for digital images?

In order to understand the power that visual technologies represent, we have to consider certain features of the visual technologies that are used to produce images and so support the process of visualization. We will find that the functions as listed in the following depend on the technology used to create and distribute the visualization.

First, the classical function of visualization is registration. Through pictures, people can register or record people, movements, or developments in terms of freezing them in time and place (Mirzoeff 1999). This generates "forensic evidence" (Hartely 1992). Since these occurrences are today digitally recorded, they can more easily be edited, duplicated, made accessible, and distributed and exchanged.

Second, visualization can make complicated things more transparent in terms of comprehension since one picture often says more than a thousand words (Hartley 1992; Moody 2010). Here three types of transparency can be distinguished (Snellen 1994). First, there is informational transparency, reflecting the fact that digitized activities generate information about the way and the conditions under which they are deployed, for instance by making use of user graphics. Second, there is analytical transparency: Comprehension can be improved if policymakers are able to use different perspectives on a subject by combining various relevant data. For instance, multiple CCTV (closed-circuit television) cameras located in a single shop will generate images from different angles when registering a robbery. Third, visualization can consequently also increase transparency because it can integrate not only different data but also different perspectives in one "whole" or sequence of images. In so doing, a somewhat holistic view can be gained. For instance, in the development of visualized scenarios, relevant data, sourced from different databases, can be presented and visualized in an integrated way, making things easier to understand. This is called integrative transparency, and a good example is a simulation to show the effects of a river flooding.

Third, visualization facilitates communication. Although "a picture is worth a thousand words," people will often form different interpretations, and this is often an incentive to communicate more fully in order to create a shared understanding, to develop "a common grammar" (Weick 1969). This is the essence of communication. Moreover, images frequently stimulate emotions, and they are often used to convince and persuade people, and this may also trigger communication and other forms of interaction (Baumgarten et al. 2006; Fishman 2003). This helps to facilitate the individual and collective learning process about what has happened, or about how effective specific policy measures and instruments actually are, or might be.

However, these features are not a given, not strictly instrumental, neutral, or objective. They are in essence socially and politically constructed features (Bekkers and Homburg 2007). Two reasons can be given. First, visualization (and the transparency, communication, and registration functions behind it) has a political meaning because it supports the framing process (Kling 1986; Bijker et al. 1987; Orlikowski 1992; Orlikowski 2000). In the framing process, social reality is constructed in such a way that it makes political sense, thereby including or excluding certain elements (Stone 1989; Hajer and Law 2006). In essence, it is a political process in which specific stakeholders try to structure reality in such a way that it serves their purposes. Moreover, the use of visual technologies and the production of visual material tends to evolve alongside specific other technological, sociocultural, political, economic, and also managerial and administrative developments and practices that are seen as relevant (Sturken and Cartwright 2001). For instance, the use of visual material produced by CCTV cameras can be understood in relation to a sociopolitical development in

which the fight against crime in many European cities is high on the political agenda. Second, these visual technologies and their features also represent a resource that the involved stakeholders may use to influence this framing process. These features are flexible so that they can serve specific interests and views. For instance, what is the degree of visual registration that takes place in order to produce specific images and why is this degree being strived for? How is the registration been programmed and why has it been programmed as it has? What are the type and degree of transparency that have been achieved? What images are connected with each other and why (Bekkers and Homburg 2007)? The political significance of visual technologies, as an exploitable powerful resource, shows that it is important to question whether and how specific stakeholders have access to these technologies, how they are able to exploit these technologies (e.g., knowledge and investments that are needed) and how these technologies are used to support strategies that are deployed to safeguard specific interests, positions, and views (Kraemer and King 1986; 2006).

Given the fact that images play an important role in politics, we also have to address the issue of how we are going to study these images (Barnhurst et al. 2004). In this article, we do not view images as having a predetermined meaning, nor do we consider images in the way that linguists look at text. That is, we do not concentrate on the internal structure within the image's design to discover a grammar, syntax, or logic that leads to a specific meaning. Essentially, we regard images from a pragmatic perspective in which the visual is viewed as a "social practice" (Barnhurst et al. 2004; Sturken and Cartwright 2001; Mitchell 1994). This implies that the meaning of a visual event is based on the interaction between various actors who bring in different features and contexts, and thus interpretations. It will be interesting to see whether these actors can create a shared understanding of what the image is telling. As such, visual practices include the process and the qualities that emerge in the production of images, as well as the qualities of sensemaking that occur during their reception.

The rest of our article is organized as follows. We next discuss the notion of public and political accountability and the role of visual reconstructions. We then describe our research strategy. Thereafter we discuss two Dutch instances where visual technologies played an important role in the public accountability process. Finally, we do a comparative analysis of the two case studies and draw conclusions.

FRAMING ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability has been defined as a social relationship in which an actor feels an obligation to explain and justify his or her conduct to some significant other (Bovens 2005). It is more often than not employed for routine issues, like the periodical evaluation of implementation risks and their management in a policy program. However, it can also be linked to non-routine-like issues, like political risks that went sour and affected the reputation and the legitimacy of government (Heath and Palenchar 2009; Hood 2011). Here both the incident itself and the accountability questions that are raised can be seen as a focusing event (Birkland 1998; Sulitzeanu-Kena 2006).

Six elements are important in an accountability process (Day and Klein 1987; Meijer 2001). First, there is a trigger that starts the accountability process. Second, there is an actor who is the "accounter" (an individual or agency) who is accountable or held accountable for what happened (Bovens 2005). Third, there is a situation or an action for which the accounter is held accountable. Here the critical question is whether there was a causal relationship between the occurrence of a situation and the action/nonaction (negligence) of the accounter that contributed to this situation. Fourth, there is an accountability forum where the accounter is held accountable. Fifth, there are criteria that are applied to assess whether the accounter is truly accountable, which vary with the forum. Sixth, there are sanctions.

Reconstructions are primarily directed at understanding the causal relationship between the occurrence of a situation and the possible causes, and between the actions that were taken in dealing with this situation and their outcomes in terms of bringing the situation under control (achieving finality). These causal and final relationships can be viewed in terms of framing: making sense of what has occurred through a specific ordering of elements or a scheme of interpretation that links facts, values, actions, and interpretations in such a way that ambiguity is reduced and a specific meaning created (Stone 1989; Hajer and Law 2006). Snow et al. (1986) distinguish three types of frames: (1) diagnostic framing—identification of a problem and the allocation of blame or causality, (2) prognostic framing—proposal of solutions together with the necessary strategies, tactics, and targets to implement them, and (3) motivational framing—the process of convincing followers in order to entice them to act.

A reconstruction based on the collection and combination of relevant information in order to reenact by looking back at a chain of events is not neutral. This is particularly evident when we consider that many such events, especially when they relate to a disaster, have a rather chaotic nature (Stone 1989; Heath and Palenchar 2009). A visual reconstruction can be seen as the telling of a story in which specific elements are included and visualized, while other elements are excluded. Moreover, given that some information is absent, incomplete, or ambiguous, gaps have to be filled—so what story is actually being told? Three story

forms, in which framing plays an important role, can be distinguished.

The first type is the so-called forensic visual story that purports to make a hidden or unknown reality transparent and thereby accessible (Hartley 1992). Diagnostic framing dominates in this type of story, wherein the creators claim to present a diagnostic "truth": the visual material in the reconstruction presented as an analogy of what happened (Mnookin 1998). As such, the material that is used is given the status of a "silent witness" (Mnookin 1998). As we have argued before, we should be aware that this claim is a false one, given the choices and assumptions that the maker and users of these images had when they produced, selected, and edited them (Sturken and Cartwright 2001, 17; Crary 1992; Lister et al. 2003). That is why American courts define visual representations only as "demonstrative evidence"—that is, it is just one source of evidence that together with other sources creates a degree of certainty of what happened (Mnookin 1998). Visual material is too often used to support the truths by bringing an artificial level of credibility to unreliable evidence (Mnookin 1998; Porter and Kennedy 2012). Therefore, Mitchell (1992, 40–41) argues that the credibility of visual material that is used as being "forensic evidence" can only be safeguarded if "the caption can be plausibly reconciled with the facts as we know them and [such] that the claim that is made can be cross-checked against what we know of a situation or a location, how trustworthy or authoritative the originator is and how the image was presented to other." Consistency and provenance seem therefore important conditions to be taken into consideration, when presenting visual material as being the "diagnostic truth." These remarks become even more important if we take into account that the visual material is becoming increasingly digital, which offers all kinds of possibilities for manipulation and reconfiguration (Mitchell 1992). That is why Postman (1993) argues that we should be skeptical about accepting that the truth is in what we see, because visual material, especially photographic material, tends to suppress logical thinking and contextual knowledge (see also Meskin and Cohen 2008).

The second type is the "persuasive visual story." Here visual events are created in order to appeal to our emotions because the creators want to convince people about a particular point of view. Visual events are used to dramatize, thereby articulating some elements more than others, albeit without telling lies. In so doing, the creators want to exercise control over how people think or act as they become inspired by the images presented (Sturken and Cartwright 2001). Motivational framing is the dominant form in this story.

The third type is the imagined visual story where an imaginary view of reality is presented through the creation of visual events (Moody 2010). The most powerful form is the use of virtual reality and other forms of simulation technologies to portray possible future scenarios that are based on the manipulation of specific parameters based on "what if . . ." reasoning. In these stories, prognostic framing dominates, and specific frames are advanced in order to create an understanding of what has happened.

Even though in literature it is shown that these three types of stories are separate stories, in our analysis we demonstrate that this distinction is empirically difficult to hold. Additionally, it must be noted that these three types of stories refer to the story someone aims to tell, not what the story actually is. In other words, if someone wants to tell a forensic story it does not mean that presented images are unbiased or forensic, only that they are portrayed to be such.

RESEARCH STRATEGY

In order to describe, analyze, and explain how visual technologies can be used to create reconstructions of events that shape public and political accountability discussions, we formulate a number of expectations, based on the theoretical exploration in the previous sections. We do not analyze the image itself in a semiotic manner, but we look at the influence it has on the shaping of accountability discussions.

First, we expect that the visual reconstruction of an event is influenced by the strategic framing of actors involved in the visual construction. We expect such actors to tell a story in a visual reconstruction, which presents a specific kind of "truth." This story could be classified as a forensic, a persuasive, or an imaginative one. We also expect frames to be advanced as possible explanations in order to create an understanding of what caused the situation to occur, as well as of the outcomes of the actions taken to deal with the situation, especially when a persuasive or imaginary story is to be told. Further, we expect a forensic story to be the dominant choice when the emphasis is on the production of frames to make sense of what has happened. We believe that the stakeholders involved in telling a specific story will use visual technologies as a powerful resource. Hence, the access they have to specific visual technologies, which produce the images, also influences the story that is told.

Second, we expect a relationship between the story being told in the reconstruction and the use of specific features of visual technologies by the actors involved. We expect that registration and transparency features are more important when actors want to tell a forensic story, thereby appealing to the idea of "photographic truth." When actors want to tell a persuasive and imaginative story, transparency and communicative features will be the most important.

Third, we expect a relationship between the content of the accountability discussions in the political and public realms and the dominant story being told in the reconstruction. If the dominant story being told in the visual reconstruction influences the public debate, we expect to see a match between the dominant story being portrayed in the reconstruction and the content of the accountability discussions in the media. Given the dominant role that the media play in society, and their influence in setting the public agenda, we expect that an analysis of the media coverage would provide a relatively good indicator of the discussion in the public realm (Walgrave and Van Aelst 2006).

Having established these potential relationships, the next step is to see whether these expectations are confirmed in empirical research. Here, we use a comparative case study strategy.

Since it is not possible to recreate the same occurrence in a case study and see what would happen if no visual reconstruction had been made, we advance our argument on the basis of plausibility, which we substantiate in three ways. First, we show that the content of the discourse in politics and media changed after the broadcasting of the reconstruction toward the same frame as held by the reconstruction. Second, we show that respondents in interviews and also in newspapers and online forums claimed that they undertook actions or changed their opinion because of the power of the images in reconstructions. Third, we look at the chronology of events to show that actions were taken on the basis of previous events, including the broadcasting of the reconstruction.

In order to study the public accountability discussion, we use three types of empirical data. First, we analyze two national papers and the news coverage by the eight o'clock television news. The two national papers that we analyze are the progressive left-leaning *Volkskrant* and the more conservative and populist *Algemeen Dagblad* (AD). The eight o'clock news on television we analyze is the *NOS Journaal*, which has the most viewers and is considered by the public to be the most trustworthy source of information in comparison to the other news magazines of RTL4 and 5 and SBS6.[2]

Second, we analyze the written proceedings of the involved political bodies, like the parliament and municipality councils. In these proceedings we look at differences in frames before and after the broadcasting of the reconstruction. Also, if the dominant story told in the visual reconstruction influences the public and political debate, we expect to see a match between the dominant story being portrayed in the reconstruction and the content of the accountability discussions in the media and the involved political bodies. Additionally, we see whether in the reporting of the involved political bodies there is explicit reference to the framing power of the reconstruction itself and the visual material that is used.

Finally, we conduct semistructured in-depth interviews with 13 relevant stakeholders, for example, senior civil officers, investigators, and producers of the reconstructions. Given their close involvement, they were able to give us relevant information about the making and editing of the reconstruction.

The combination of these three data sources enabled us to triangulate and enhance the reliability of our findings (Yin 2003).

The selection of cases for our study, in which two cases are compared, is based on the following criteria. The cases should have caused significant political and public upheaval. Questions should have been raised regarding the accountability for these events occurring, and the issues should have been debated in a political and public forum. Moreover, in both cases a visual reconstruction should have been made. Given that our case study design seeks similar cases, some generalization is possible. However, we are not aiming at a statistical generalization but only at an analytical generalization (Yin 2003) where a convincing and coherent line of reasoning is presented based on plausible research outcomes. The first case relates to a fire in a Dutch penitentiary at Schiphol, where a number of immigrants awaiting deportation died in the fire. The second case addresses "riots" during a music event—Sunset Grooves—on the beach near Hoek van Holland.

We recognize that both cases are located within a specific institutional and sociopolitical context, which may limit generalization to other contexts. However, we argue that analytical generalization about frame changes because of visual reconstructions remains possible because the change itself does not depend on the context. Only the nature of the change and possibly the gravity of the change might be different. For example, in countries with different institutional settings or a different media culture (e.g., large sensational "yellow" press) the content and the gravity of the frame change might differ.

In order to systematically describe, analyze, and then compare these two cases, the analytical model shown in Table 1 is used. The analytical model indicates on the basis of our theory-derived expectations that we need to first look at the event itself. We then need to see why and how a reconstruction was created. Thereafter we need to look at the technological choices available to the actors and understand the value they sought from the technology they chose for the reconstruction. We then need to turn to which kind of story the actors sought to tell, which images they used to tell this story, and which technology was best suited for telling the story. We can then view the reconstruction and not only find what the dominant frame of the creator was, but also find whether and how this frame was adopted by other media, such as newspapers, broadcasting media, and the actors involved in the cases.

TABLE 1
Analytical model

Concepts and relationships	Indicator
Nature of triggering event, and the call for accountability.	What triggered the incident? Which actors were involved? Which preliminary accountability questions were raised? What was the accountability forum? Who was the leading investigating actor in informing the accountability forum?
The relationship between the use of technologies, and the production of a reconstruction.	Which actors were involved in the development and use of what kinds of visual technologies? How did they define the added value of the technological features for creating a specific frame for the reconstruction? How did they use visual technologies as a powerful resource?
The relationship between framing and the nature of the reconstruction.	What story dominated the reconstruction? What frames were dominant in the reconstruction and which actors advanced them? What elements were included and excluded in the story being told? How can the photographic evidence be considered truth?
The relationship between the dominant frame in the reconstruction and the content of the accountability discussion.	Is there a similarity between the content of the political discussion regarding accountability norms and the story told in the reconstruction? Why is this the case? Is there a link with the reconstruction? Is there a similarity between the content of the news coverage by the newspapers and television news regarding accountability norms and the story presented in the reconstruction? Why is this the case? Is there a link with the reconstruction?

EMPIRICAL STUDY

Based on the relationships that we have discerned in the analytical model, we describe, analyze, and compare two selected cases.

Fire at a Detention Center

The call for accountability. On October 27, 2005, a fire broke out in the detention center in the Dutch city of Schiphol. The center was built to house asylum seekers who had not been granted a residence permit by the Dutch authorities and were to be deported. In the fire 11 people died and 15 people, including some guards, were injured. Immediately after the fire, questions were raised in the media regarding the safety afforded to these people, given the problems the fire brigade encountered when trying to enter the premises. In the discussion it was emphasized that these people were not really prisoners, as they were not there because of criminal activity. They were being detained to prevent them from going into hiding. The government asked the Dutch Safety Board (Onderzoeksraad), which had recently been established in February 2005, to examine the situation. This board is an independent organization whose main purpose is to investigate such incidents. The actors most involved in the enquiry were two agencies falling under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Justice—the Immigrant and Naturalization Agency and the Penitentiary Agency; one agency that deals with the construction and maintenance of government buildings and falls under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Urban and Rural Planning, Housing, Environmental Affairs; the municipality of Amstelveen in which the building was located and which was responsible for the issuance and control of fire safety permits; and the emergency services (fire brigade, ambulance) within the Schiphol region.

Visual technology and reconstruction. Given that the board was asked to independently investigate the incident, it had freedom in how it reported on the incident. In addition to its report, the board opted to make a 15-minute-long reconstruction based on film images and animation sequences that showed a building burning down.[3] Both the report and the reconstruction were presented on September 21, 2006. The animations were used to show how the fire spread, and how the emergency services arrived and then proceeded with their rescue efforts. These

animations tried to imagine what had happened in order to gain a better understanding of the chain of events. The film images were a compilation of images filmed immediately after the fire—showing perceived forensic evidence such as the remains of what were once cells, a blackened phone dangling in the air, and a burned bed standing alone in a burned-out cell. Moreover, a voice and music in a menacing tone accompanied the images. When the reconstruction starts, a voiceover introduces the disaster with the following words: "A cell block at Schiphol-East, distorted steel, blackened walls and burnt cells. Silent witnesses of a disaster, in which 11 people were killed without having a chance, locked in their cells, suffocated by the smoke. Could this disastrous fire that started in one cell have been prevented? Did these people have a chance to live? Did the emergency services work well? Did the building meet all the requirements? Did the responsible officials properly use the recommendations and reports that were available and that discussed the fire safety of the building?"

Framing and reconstruction. The board was aiming to create a documentary-like reconstruction through which it could try and understand what had happened, and also to determine whether the actions taken in dealing with the disaster had been appropriate. The producer of the reconstruction and the board both claimed that they wanted not only to show what happened but also to give the victims a voice. The board, introducing itself in the reconstruction as "a vital agency to protect the interests of citizens," wanted to frame the incident in terms of "a failing government unable to care properly for those it was responsible for." This was the dominant line in the story, and it received a lot of criticism, as the makers were trying to persuade the audience that these people had been "trapped like rats." Several respondents from the accused organizations felt that the reconstruction, however correct in its facts, which could also be cross checked with the written report of the board, portrayed the incident in a very emotional way—zooming in on personal belongings of the residents and highlighting the situation of the people who had to hazard the fire. They felt that the film was not aimed at reconstructing what happened but was trying to make a point—to take a stand. The critics argued that the reconstruction was made to give the newly established Dutch Safety Board some standing, as its predecessor had limited tasks such as investigating traffic incidents. The makers of the reconstruction framed the political opinion in a specific way: "that the prisoners were treated badly" and "that the government had been negligent." In sum, the reconstruction was considered by most of the involved actors as nonobjective, going beyond the hard facts. The Dutch Safety Board was accused of acting as a public prosecutor rather than as an independent research institute. The reconstruction was defined as being "dramatized," "an overreaction," and "unfair," thereby suggesting a motivational framing by the board.

The Dutch Safety Board responded to this criticism by stating that it was its job to show the Dutch public what had happened by presenting the facts. It also wanted to show the personal and emotional impact of the fire. It claimed that "the prisoners could not speak for themselves since they had died, and that their next of kin could not speak to the Dutch public since all the prisoners were foreigners." The Dutch Safety Board feared that the victims would stay "invisible" because of their status as detained asylum seekers. According to several respondents, an important driver for the board's political claim was the need to legitimize its own independent position because it was new. According to the critique, some elements were also left out of the story as it was told. The heroic behavior of the guards, many also injured in helping the prisoners, was neither shown nor mentioned. Although the visual reconstruction had only been intended to support the written findings of the board, the visual reconstruction became seen as "the" report, because so much of the attention was drawn to it. Some respondents referred to it as "leading a life of its own."

Framing and accountability. The board's research pointed to an overwhelming set of mistakes that had been made, including various fire, safety and building norms that were not taken into account. Since compliance with these norms may have prevented the death of many people, the question became who was responsible? Shortly after the presentation of the report and the visual reconstruction, political turmoil emerged, and the minister (Mrs. Dekker) responsible for the safety of government buildings, including prisons, stepped down. Due to the rapidly emerging political and public pressure, Mrs. Dekker's emotional outburst when watching the reconstruction, and conclusions of the board, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Donner), who was responsible for immigration issues, also resigned. In interviews it was stressed that the visual power of the reconstruction was so overwhelming that a snowball effect was set in motion. Respondents claim that it was the visual reconstruction causing the public and political turmoil, not the report behind it. A respondent claimed: "The film was the source of energy of the debate, not the report, and this led to turmoil. One can try to get to the core of the events, but you can't, not with such a film." Media coverage played an important role in building this pressure, thereby setting the tone in the public accountability discussion. The *Volkskrant* reported: "Van Vollenhoven (chairman of the board) does not hide his anger. Besides his fearless presentation, he astonishes everybody with a reconstruction of the disaster. With the help of animation, existing video pictures and even music, the deaths, the mistakes, and the failures transcended the

sober tone of the report, and for the general public the drama came alive. For anybody watching the images of the fire brigade stuck in one of the entrance corridors of the prison, it was obvious that you did not need to finish film academy to understand what the impact would be on the maneuvers in The Hague."[4] In its reporting, the *Volkskrant* adopted not only the diagnostic frame of the safety board but also its motivational frame. One day later the newspaper added: "It is especially the video of the fire that is very impressive. No arguments can cope with these pictures. Donner at that moment writes his farewell speech at the ministry."[5] The more conservative *Algemeen Dagblad* primarily focused on the mistakes made. In a small article it also referred to "a flashy DVD" with animations and film material that shows how the fire occurred. The newspaper interviewed the maker of the DVD, who referred to its importance: "Such an audiovisual production helps to make things comprehensible"; a professor in mass psychology who was also interviewed referred to the "persuasiveness of the film in showing what had happened."[6] In so doing, the ability of visual technology to make this event transparent is being stressed, while at the same time questions are being raised regarding the motivational framing of the Board. NOS Journaal also stressed the importance of the visual reconstruction in illustrating the number of mistakes that had occurred:[7] "A sinking feeling took possession of the public (who was present at the presentation of the report) when the film showed how little chance the victims had." Here, NOS Journaal was adopting the diagnostic frame set by the Board. However, it also highlighted strong and weak points of the presentation. "The film has the advantage that it offers an accessible account. However, in order to get attention, a thrilling video was made: music, sound effects, and rhetoric." *NOS Journaal* continued by noting "that one could gain the impression that the Board has been guided by their emotions." Here *NOS Journaal* was questioning whether the conclusions of the board were based on facts or on emotions, but the anchorman carried on: "However, the facts are so convincing. What the video has achieved is that the conclusions have hit faster and harder." As such, the diagnostic frame of the board was so powerful that the possible negative effects of its motivational framing were not seen as unjust.

Before the report was presented, the parliament discussed this issue several times with the two ministers responsible. In its first meetings, the emphasis was on the possible shortcomings of the building's fire safety and the appropriateness of the help that was provided by the rescue services. Later, the emphasis shifted and questions were raised regarding the way in which survivors were threatened and the lack of care provided. Then the report and reconstruction were presented. The Members of Parliament (MPs) then regretted that due to the sudden resignation of the two ministers, no proper debate was possible about the accountability issue, although they did understand why the ministers had resigned, given the mistakes that were made. The resignation of the two ministers took the sting out of the debate. However, the issue was debated with their successors. This debate focused primarily on two questions: what caused the fire, and could it have been prevented? In dealing with these two questions, the reconstruction played an important role, according to respondents a much larger role than the report. Some MPs emphasized the accusatory nature of the sound elements within the film, which had created "too much emotion."[8] The new Minister of Housing, Pieter Winsemius, also referred to the piano music and the cheerful voiceover at the beginning of the film, which he considered as "an insult to the people on the frontline."[9] However, other MPs stressed the added value of the reconstruction. "The film shows . . . extremely well what has happened. Also for the general public it has become clear what caused the fire and how this drama could take place."[10] The new minister added: "You can say a lot about this film, but it has been extraordinarily instructive. You can actually understand how the fire moved through the shaft."[11]

Here we see that in the political debate the reconstruction also played an important role. While it helped in understanding what had happened (in terms of transparency), the persuasive nature of the reconstruction was disputed. In the political debate, this element did not play a significant role, whereas it had in the public debate immediately after the report was presented, creating pressure for the ministers' resignations.

Sunset Grooves

The call for accountability. The "Sunset Grooves Riots" took place in Hoek van Holland, a town that politically falls under the City of Rotterdam, where on August 22, 2009, a large dance event was organized on the beach. It attracted 30,000 people, which was more than anticipated. Throughout the festival, there were minor violent incidents, but the riots only started when a group of visitors recognized two undercover police officers. The public attacked the two officers and other officers who came to help them. The police were forced to pull back and retreat through an emergency exit, but the rioters broke the fences and followed them, driving them toward the ocean. The police shot in the air but were unable to control the situation; eventually, they shot at the public coming after them. One person died and a number of people were wounded. Several accountability issues were raised. Most attention focused on the quality of the festival's organization, especially in terms of security and emergency measures taken, given the large number of people attending. Another area of concern was the efficacy of the police organization. It was suggested that the police misread the nature of the

festival and underestimated the number of people expected. Questions were raised about the effectiveness of the chain of command during the riots and the absence of backup riot police. Attention was also focused on the abuse of alcohol and drugs by the involved rioters. Also it was suggested that, some days before the festival, the police had received intelligence that potential rioters would attend the festival in order to create a disturbance. As in the previous case, investigations were ordered. In particular, the actions of the Rotterdam-Rijnmond police force and the mayor of the municipality of Rotterdam, who is responsible for public safety, became subjects of the investigation. The Institute for Safety, Security and Crisis Management (COT) investigated the policy measures: the quality of the preparation, the risk analysis, and the briefing. The National Police Internal Investigations Department (Rijksrecherche) investigated the actions of the police officers who had used their guns. These officers were formally charged, but it was ruled that they acted in self-defense. A special police team investigated the public present at the time of the riots and identified 40 people suspected of public disturbance, violence, and threatening the police.

Visual technologies and reconstruction. Soon after the incident all kinds of images were put on YouTube. Using this information, the Rijksrecherche made a reconstruction, partly to support the work of the COT. This reconstruction consisted of a number of different types of images. First, there were animations of the event site showing where and when the police and rioters were. Second, images shot by a Dutch television company that broadcast the event were used. Third, images were used that were filmed by people using their mobile telephones. Some of these images had been uploaded in real time onto YouTube, and others were provided later to the police. These images were later used to identify suspects. Finally, images from "bodycams" (a camera device connected to the collar of a police officer's uniform) were used. The camera sees what the officer sees, and this was the first time such images were used for this type of analysis. All these pictures and short films recorded individualistic, real, but scattered accounts of what was happening. The Rijksrecherche was able to cluster these individual images such that a more integrated account was created. Moreover, the quality of the account enhanced because the Rijksrecherche was able to show the specific course of events from different perspectives, referring to specific sounds that could be heard and also making use of the digital time recording of the cameras and phones used.

Framing and reconstruction. According to all the respondents, the reconstruction offered a realistic view of what had happened. With the "live" images, emotion could be seen: panic among the people present and also the police officers as they were driven into the sea. The reconstruction in fact showed a very frightening image of a trapped group of police officers. According to the COT, the images that were used in the reconstruction "have a verifying function," because "witnesses tell a lot but for them the events on the beach were traumatic events . . . these pictures show you exactly what have happened." At the same the police admitted that the "quality of the pictures that were taken, varied . . . especially the pictures and videos that were put on YouTube" did not have very good quality. The pictures of the special hooligan unit that was also present during the riots did have better quality: "They have a high resolution and you can use them to zoom in." The quality of the bodycam pictures of the police, which were also used, depended on "the features of the surroundings. In the dunes it is very dark, so the view is very limited. If you have much light, then the pictures are fine. Also the sounds to [be] recorded, disappear when shots are fired." Also, pictures that showed the killing were not inserted in the reconstruction, while the faces of the involved police offers were deliberately vague in order to prevent possible reprisals.

On the basis of the images within the reconstruction, many adopted a frame that "there was nothing else the police could have done." Moreover, it seemed clear that the police were confronted with a crowd that was completely out of control. A quote of one of the respondents illustrates the content of the frame that was put forward. "The reconstruction shows how the events did take place . . . You can see this, also because they are in line with the statements that were made . . . And of course, with these mobile phone recordings, you are living in a glass house. Recordings which are completely context loose, but by linking these recordings you can show the real story . . . It was good to see how these images relieved us and how they incriminated the offenders, everybody could see that."

Framing and accountability. Initially, the public and political discussion regarding the incident focused on possible mistakes by the police. After the presentation of the report and the reconstruction, we see that another frame became more important. If we look at the public discussion, as it was voiced by the media, we see that the *Volkskrant*'s emphasis in its reporting was that the police had no other choice but to shoot. Referring to the reconstruction,[12] the line was that the police had the right to do so. The pictures and sound fragments that were shown when the report was presented on September 12, 2009, were qualified as "bloodcurdling" and "telling the truth." "Somebody who would dare to argue that the 21 police officers should not have used their guns during the riots, he or she is 'a loud mouth.' The pictures show that the 45 police officers were not able to control a crowd consisting

of 200-300 people."[13] A day later, the *Volkskrant* reported that "the reconstruction strengthens the impression that it was a miracle that only one person died." "How did the police officers get placed in such a life-threatening situation?" "Everything went wrong."[14] In another article, the newspaper referred to the neutrality of the reconstruction, thereby implying that is was an accurate description of what had happened. "Back they go, through the dunes. Warning shots do not help. In 7 seconds, 13 shots are fired, leading to one death. The crowd is still attacking."[15] The *Volkskrant* then considers who is to blame. "The report is devastating for the police commissioner, Ad Meijboom, and his organization. His position is at stake."[16]

Prior to the presentation of the report, the *NOS Journaal* had given much attention to the Sunset Grooves riots, showing that too many people were present at the festival, the lack of security measures, and the unpreparedness of the police.[17] Also visual material that had been uploaded on to YouTube was being included, showing the chaotic and threatening nature of events on the beach.[18] However, once the reconstruction was presented, the frame of *NOS Journaal* changed drastically, now using fragments of the visualized reconstruction and adding comments such as "a crowd of hooligans completely out of all control," "police officers with no chance against this overwhelming power, which explains why they took out their pistols," and "officers felt they were trapped like rats, because they were in a minority. They called for the riot police but no help was available. Warning shots did not help."[19] Some days later, questions were raised concerning who was to blame. The police commissioner acknowledged in an interview that he was responsible. *NOS Journaal* commented that his position was at stake.[20]

Hence, we see that, in the public media discussion, a new diagnostic frame was adopted stressing that, given the amount of violence, the police could not have acted differently. This put the original diagnostic frame, in which the organization of the police was discussed, in a new perspective. However, this new frame did not fully suppress the original diagnostic frame, which stressed that the police had made mistakes. This explains why, in the public accountability discussion, the position of the police commissioner, as being primarily responsible, remained an issue.

In terms of the influence of the framing on political accountability, we can reflect on two meetings of the Rotterdam municipality council that were dedicated to the riots. Just after the riots, on September 3, 2009, the council discussed the issue, referring to the first pictures that were to be seen on the Internet.[21] The emphasis by the mayor, taken up by the other council members, was on the role of rioters. "The police were attacked by a bunch of lawless people," "a new generation of criminals who were fuddled with drugs and alcohol, and capable of terrible deeds," also described as "crazy lunatics" and "hyenas." Questions were also asked about whether the mayor and the police had taken all the relevant information about possible risks into account when granting a permit for the festival. Thus, in the political discussion the behavior of the rioters dominated, while in the public media discussion, at least until the reconstruction, this was just one of the aspects under discussion. Following the COT report, another council meeting was organized for December 17, 2009. Taking into account the visual reconstruction of the riots, the discussion this time focused on the "heroic behavior of the police officers" who "deserve respect." The influence of the pictures was also mentioned several times: "I have seen the pictures many times, and each time again they go for my throat," "pictures that make my flesh creep," and "a bunch of hyenas that are out of control."[22] We can see that the dominant frame from the first council meeting was reproduced in the discussion at this second meeting, although the police were now perceived as not only trapped but also heroic. However, another frame was emerging: Who was responsible for the chain of events, especially given the safety measures that were taken in preparation for the event and the effects on society? It was being argued that the event illustrated that "the general public had lost confidence in the police as being able to restore public safety." The mayor was not being viewed as responsible, in contrast to the police commissioner. Some political parties asked the mayor to take personal measures against the police commissioner. Despite the criticism, the police commissioner was not dismissed. However, some months later, on February 8, 2010, the police commissioner resigned, arguing that he was not able to implement the measures that had been imposed on the police in order to improve effectiveness.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

In this section, we compare the two cases by analyzing the case study descriptions in terms of our analytical framework. Given our expectations, what are the striking similarities and differences, and how can they be explained? In both cases, we see that incidents gave rise to a set of related accountability issues, and two major questions. What caused the incident, and were the responsible agencies or organizations capable of dealing with this emergency—in terms of their planning as well as in terms of their handling? Reconstructions were made to assist in answering these questions.

If we look at the specific features of the visual technologies used to create these reconstructions we see that two features are important. In both cases, registration was very important in collecting evidence. However, they differ in how this registration took place and how it was used.

In the Schiphol fire, the evidence was "recorded" afterward, while in the Sunset Grooves case the evidence was collected in real time: A television crew was present. Also, people present at the event recorded what was happening using their digital cameras and mobile telephones. Moreover, if we look at the power of the actors involved in the shaping of the reconstructions, some differences are noticeable. In the Schiphol case, the reconstruction was dominated by two collaborating parties that had access to the technologies used: the creators of the reconstruction and the safety board. As such, they were able to write their own story, determining what visual material would be shown, and in what sequence, and they also had a monopoly over the content of the material shown. Moreover, this monopoly (in terms of resource politics) was also used by the newly established safety board to demonstrate its value. In so doing it deliberately left out the heroic actions of the guards. In the Sunset Grooves situation, there was no such strict monopoly. Admittedly, there was a single actor who decided what would be, and in what sequence, shown. However, there was no monopoly in the production of the visual material used. This production was in the hands of many parties (television crews, police officers, and visitors) who had (in terms of resource politics) access to the technologies required to produce and distribute pictures and films. The content of the reconstruction was a result of a process of co-production or co-creation, although this did not extend to the ordering of the sequence of visual material and scripting for the reconstruction. The police wrote the script but their freedom was limited, as the visuals were directed at tracing the chain of events. The makers of the reconstruction were only able to exercise influence by determining what material from what angle would be included, how it was presented, and how specific elements would be stressed in the presentation. Further, given that much of the visual material that was being used was on YouTube, the public could cross check the material being presented.

Another technological feature that should be noted was prominent in the Sunset Grooves coproduction process. The combination of visual material, recorded from different angles and positions, enabled the producers of the reconstruction to show how a single incident could be understood from different perspectives. In the Sunset Grooves case this was the perspective of the police officers and that of the festival visitors. In effect, the spread of visual technologies among people and the use of the material so generated facilitated analytical transparency. However, these different perspectives can also come together in fruitful ways. Combining of visual material facilitated a more holistic view on what had happened, contributing to a form of integrated transparency.

The two cases show that the transparency achieved is unlikely to be disputed if two conditions are met. One, it is based on real-time information, coming from various public and freely accessible sources that can be checked. In the Sunset Grooves case, visual material was accessible on YouTube. However, the transparency in the Schiphol case could be disputed because the imagery was gathered after the event by a single actor and that raised suspicions of possible manipulation. Here it is important to note the resource monopoly of the organization involved in the production of the images as well as in the technologies used to collect and distribute them. Two, the type of story being told and the frames that shape it influence how the presented transparency is received. We see that in our cases the creators of the reconstruction tried to pass their reconstruction off as a forensic story. In the case of the Sunset Grooves riots we find that the public for the large part accepted this as a forensic story, but in the Schiphol fire case the public perceived the reconstruction as a persuasive story. This demonstrates that even though a creator has actual, factual images, this does not mean that the public will perceive a story as being forensic evidence. The perception of what the story actually is (forensic, persuasive, imaginary) therefore determines whether transparency is disputed, not the actual quality of forensic material.

This brings us to another set of observations. If we look at the relationship between the production of the reconstruction and the framing of the events in the reconstruction, some interesting similarities and differences can be found in the types of story told.

First, we find that in the case of the Sunset Grooves riots case the perception of a forensic story dominated, supporting the dominant frame that the reconstruction makers wanted to put forward. It is a frame in which allegedly the facts are being told, trying to understand in a cool and clinical way what happened; it is the recording and presentation of a sequence of facts that appeals. When comparing this to the Schiphol case, we find that the producers of the Schiphol film wanted to mix two stories: a story of forensic evidence as well as a story to persuade viewers to interpret the event in a specific way—that the government was unable to care for those under its responsibility. This demonstrates that two stories can be told, a persuasive story wrapped into a forensic story, in which motivational framing was very explicit, next to diagnostic and prognostic framing, which would be likened more to a forensic story. We see that the deliberate attempt to insert elements of motivational framing in the Schiphol reconstruction gave rise to a lot of political and public debate due to the political point that the board was making. However, the reconstruction was not that successful because it was overdramatized. The dramatizing in the Sunset Grooves case is one of a different nature, as the real-time footage shown was so convincing that the original frame (police's poor organization) faded toward a new frame (threatening situation for the police). This was not

done as in the Schiphol case by motivational framing, but more with diagnostic framing because of the live images. Here we see that an important design issue in these reconstructions is the extent to which the makers, besides showing the forensic evidence, set out to persuade the audience by excluding or inserting implicit (participants shouting) or explicit (voiceovers, music) persuasive elements in creating an appealing story. This is an important design issue because the composition of a reconstruction influences the accountability discussions that emerge once the reconstruction is shown.

In both our cases, the use of visual material influenced the public and political discussion regarding who was responsible for the fact that several norms were not applied in an appropriate way. In both cases, the diagnostic frames that were presented were adopted in the discussions. Similarly, the motivational frames were also largely adopted, although in Parliament and in the media the deliberate manipulative nature of the board's motivational framing in the Schiphol case was disputed and criticized for "going over the top." In the Sunset Grooves case, the visualized forensic material was so overwhelming and impressive that no additional manipulation was necessary to make a political statement. The fact that these frames were adopted can be explained by the visual power of the reconstructions. The visual technology used offered sophisticated forms of analytical and integrated transparency to help in understanding what had happened. Moreover, the use of these visual reconstructions made it possible to involve a wider public in a more comprehensive and involving way than would otherwise have been possible.

Second, given that a forensic story is told in both cases, it is interesting how the visual material that is presented "as photographic truth" in them is considered. In both cases the visual material is used to evoke the notion of the "silent witness." In the detention center case the voiceover actually refers to the material as being "a silent witness" that "reveals a hidden truth." In both cases the producers and viewers consider the visual reconstruction as an analogy for what really happened, although the reconstruction in the detention center case did get criticized for overdramatizing. In the Sunset Grooves case the presentation of visual material and the quality of the "photographic truth" are not disputed by both the producers and the viewers, even though the reconstruction was based on heavy editing. This did not attract attention because it was not edited as a documentary. Furthermore, in both cases we see that the reconstruction did not stand on its own. It was supported by well-researched reports and therefore the presented facts could be checked and doublechecked. Here the visual reconstructions were consistent with the facts that were obtained from other sources (in terms of provenance). In both cases the investigators wanted to make use of the visual reconstruction as "illustrative evidence," while at the same time the imaginative power of this "illustrative evidence" suppressed the influence of the written report, the logical reasoning that lay behind the report, and the other sources of (contextual) information that were taken into account. The visual reconstructions took on a life of their own.

Furthermore, we see that the visual power of reconstructions can be so convincing that when it comes to accountability debates, there is hardly any discussion about what actually happened. While one can argue that these visual reconstructions contribute to a process of collective learning, one could also note the lack of a real debate. Moreover, in the Sunset Grooves case, we see that the visual power of the reconstruction was such that a process of reframing took place, changing the original frames that were present immediately after the incidents occurred. In both cases, that story that was presented in the reconstruction dominated the political and public accountability debates.

CONCLUSIONS

The overall conclusion of this article is that the features of the visual technologies used in the reconstructions strongly influence the nature and form of subsequent public and political accountability discussions. In both reconstructions the presented visual material was pushed forward as "photographic truth." However, the transparency achieved was not neutral: It was used to tell a specific story in which the events that had taken place were framed in a certain way, given the selection and editing process that took place when making the reconstruction.

The composition of the presented story and the diagnostic and motivational framing adopted strongly influence the public and public discussion regarding what has happened, what rules and norms were violated, and who was responsible. At the same time, the production of these reconstructions was open to both intentional and unplanned forms of manipulation, which undermined the claim that they as analogies of what happened revealed a hidden "truth." Here it is important to critically follow the assumptions and design issues that lay behind the production of the reconstruction and the elements that have been included or left out. Moreover, it is important to know which stakeholders had access to two vital resources: the technologies that are used to produce, synthesize, and distribute the relevant visual materials, and the visual materials themselves. Accusations of manipulation are easier if specific stakeholders acquire a monopoly on the visual material and the production and distribution of the reconstructions. The likelihood of such accusations diminishes if the reconstruction is based on a process of coproduction, especially when real-time visual material is used, and if facts that are presented in the

reconstruction can be checked and doublechecked for consistency and provenance. However, this requires the presence of a well-researched report; one written by an independent organization is particularly helpful. However, images that are presented in the reconstructions suppress the influence of the written report and the logical reasoning that underlies it; thereby the contextual information that is taken into account in the report is not made visible by the reconstruction. The reconstruction is seen as "illustrative evidence" in the political and public debate, given the importance that is attached to "seeing is believing" (Postman 1993) and in the same vein as the voice of the "silent witness" that attests to the "truth" (Mnookin 1998).

In putting this conclusion into perspective, and considering the theoretical insights drawn upon, we see that the increased use of citizen-produced visual material in reconstructions mirrors the sociocultural changes in our society due to the growing use of and reliance on images. The makers of reconstructions can nowadays exploit the fact that our society is in many ways an endless, very often real-time, stream of multiple, sometimes convergent and sometimes divergent, visual events that are not only consumed by citizens but also increasingly produced by them. This convergence and divergence in the multiple images being produced helps to reconstruct incidents from different angles, thereby adding to the ability to create "the whole picture." The presentation of this whole truth is based on the presentation of an analogy between the "facts" of reconstruction and the "facts" that have really occurred. Here the key questions are: Is the presented "whole picture" in the reconstruction revealing "the truth"? Does the analogy that is presented really represent the facts? We have argued that the diagnostic claim that traditionally is related to the use of photos and videos to present "forensic evidence" and that is now being transferred to using visual reconstructions should be handled with skepticism. We need to interrogate whether the producers of a visual reconstruction or the principals that commissioned a reconstruction are benevolent makers and users, given the fact the that these reconstructions play an important role in blame games: blame games that through the use of visual and digital technologies become mediated blame games. We have shown how socially and politically constructed this "photographic truth" is. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that power can be exercised when these endless streams of convergent and divergent visual events are ordered in such a way as to make a certain sense. That is why it is important to address issues that underlie the creation of reconstruction: What are the design choices behind the story being told, and how transparent are these choices? The design (selection and editing) choices are especially critical, if the producers and/or the principal responsible actor for the reconstruction have the intention to "reveal a hidden truth," thereby presenting photographic and video material as forensic evidence. Whose truth is being presented? Therefore, we need to question the visual material that is being used and to understand how relevant actors use visual material to influence the content and course of accountability discussion. Visual reconstructions should not be taken at face value. That is why it is important to decompose these blamed games and to decompose the story that is told by the visual reconstructions that are used.

There is another issue related to the emergence of these mediated blame games, which also influences the way in which modern democracies deal with these accountability issues. Typically in today's democracy, citizens experience politics and political issues through the way they are visualized by the media. The interesting thing is that these visual reconstructions invite the audience to join a story with which they can identify. On the one hand, complex accountability discussions, in terms of what has happened, can be made more understandable in a comprehensive and involved way. They can be experienced, which also stimulates a process of emotional identification with for instance the victims. On the other hand, this can lead to a one-sided approach. In our case studies, although the reconstructions were presented in terms of "illustrative evidence," the visual power of the reconstruction and what underlay it took on a life of its own. In doing so, the logical reasoning and the contextual knowledge that were presented in the written research report were not seriously taken into account. In mediated democracies, media logic typically plays an important role in reporting of political issues (Luhmann 1990). The media are more likely to report on surprising and unexpected occurrences with simple, clear, dramatized and personalized occurrences. This process of selective imaging is enforced by the tendency of the media to refer to themselves—creating an echo chamber that amplifies the logic of the underlying frame. Our research shows that visual reconstructions reinforce this media logic. The discussion is fueled by the reconstruction and not researched facts, which can be seen as a threat for a genuine political and public debate. That increases the chance that the political agenda is shaped by only accountability issues that can be visualized.

Furthermore, we see an interesting shift in the making of the reconstructions studied. In the Sunset Grooves case, in contrast to the earlier Schiphol one, citizens were actively invited to take part in the reconstruction. This mirrors another change in our society, which has to do with the increased use of social media facilitating taking and circulation of pictures and videos. As such, the content of a reconstruction becomes the result of a process of co-creation. However, this is not an entirely free and open process because there remains an important and powerful gatekeeper: the maker and principals of the reconstruc-

tion, who decide what pictures are to be used to fit the storyline they have in mind. Nevertheless, the fact that there is no monopoly on the shooting and sharing of these pictures and films enables citizens to create their own stories of what has happened. In so doing, alternative stories are generated. The possibility to do so has the potential to create a system of "checks and balances" in which different frames and stories can be told to understand what has happened, thereby challenging the "diagnostic truth claim" that is put forward by the official reconstruction.

NOTES

1. In fact, persuasiveness of images increases if they are combined with verbal or written text, or even with sounds (Marcum 2002).

2. http://radio.nl/4331/nos-journaal-meest-betrouwbare-nieuwsbron-van-nederland (accessed August 7, 2012).

3. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N2z-mx43d_A (accessed August 7, 2012).

4. http://www.volkskrant.nl/vk/nl/2686/Binnenland/article/detail/781644/2006/09/22/Van-Vollenhoven-verscherpte-oordeel.dhtml (accessed August 9, 2012).

5. http://www.volkskrant.nl/vk/nl/2686/Binnenland/article/detail/781642/2006/09/22/Donner-besefte-snel-dit-red-ik-niet.dhtml (accessed August 15, 2012).

6. http://www.ad.nl/ad/nl/1012/Binnenland/article/detail/2359553/2006/09/22/Flitsende-dvd-toont-hoe-brand-verliep.dhtml (accessed August 15, 2012).

7. http://nos.nl/koningshuis/video/22332-pieter-van-vollenhoven-presenteert-rapport-over-brand-schipholoost-2006.html 21/09/06 (accessed August 15, 2012).

8. https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/h-tk-20062007-1117-1144.html? (accessed October 24, 2006)

9. https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/h-tk-20062007-1190-1233.html? (accessed October 25, 2006)

10. https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/h-tk-20062007-1117-1144.html? (accessed October 24, 2006)

11. https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/h-tk-20062007-1190-1233.html? (accessed October 25, 2006)

12. http://www.volkskrant.nl/vk/nl/2844/Archief/archief/article/detail/373507/2009/12/09/Politieoptreden-dancefeest-terecht.dhtml (accessed August 15, 2012).

13. http://www.volkskrant.nl/vk/nl/2664/Nieuws/archief/article/detail/373490/2009/12/09/Het-loopt-hier-he-le-maal-uit-de-klauwen.dhtml (accessed August 21, 2012).

14. http://www.volkskrant.nl/vk/nl/2664/Nieuws/archief/article/detail/369459/2009/12/10/Vernietigend-oordeel.dhtml (accessed August 21, 2012).

15. http://www.volkskrant.nl/vk/nl/2664/Nieuws/archief/article/detail/368599/2009/12/10/Het-aantal-hooligans-groeit-en-groeit.dhtml (accessed August 21, 2012).

16. http://www.goldies.nl/portal/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=525, originally in the *Volkskrant*;http://www.ad.nl/ad/nl/1012/Binnenland/article/detail/2059100/2009/12/09/Probleem-rond-strandfeest-niet-alleen-schuld-politie.dhtml; http://www.ad.nl/ad/nl/1038/Rotterdam/article/detail/2056657/2009/12/09/Politie-justitie-en-gemeente-faalden-bij-strandfeest-Hoek.dhtml (accessed August 21, 2012).

17. http://nos.nl/video/41588-dode-bij-schietpartij-strandfeest-hoek-van-holland.html (accessed August 9, 2012);http://nos.nl/video/41600-onderzoek-hoek-van-holland-in-volle-gang.html (accessed August 23, 2009).

18. http://nos.nl/video/41678-henrikwillem-hofs-over-sunset-grooves.html (accessed August 12, 2012);http://nos.nl/video/41686-getuigen-alleen-politie-schoot.html (accessed August 15, 2012);http://nos.nl/video/41685-verslaggever-lidwien-gevers-in-hoek-van-holland.html (accessed August 15, 2012);http://nos.nl/video/41783-hooligans-extreem-gewelddadig.html (accessed August 15, 2012).

19. http://nos.nl/video/113762-aboutaleb-tijdens-persconferentie.html (accessed August 12, 2012);http://nos.nl/video/113754-overzicht-rellen-strandfeest-hoek-van-holland.html (accessed August 7, 2012);http://nos.nl/video/113761-reconstructie-rellen-hoek-van-holland.html (accessed August 21, 2012);http://nos.nl/video/113789-verslaggever-bink-over-rellen-hoek-van-holland.html (accessed August 21, 2012); http://nos.nl/video/113787-cot-autoriteiten-faalden-bij-rellen-hoek-van-holland.html (accessed August 23, 2012);http://nos.nl/video/114445-cot-alles-ging-fout-bij-rellen-hoek-van-holland.html (accessed August 7, 2012).

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