

# Media history from the Margins

**CSF Summer Seminar at Monte Verità,  
Switzerland, August 19-24, 2018**

Co-organized by François Vallotton (University of Lausanne) &  
Anne-Katrin Weber (University of Lausanne), Gabriele Balbi  
(Università della Svizzera Italiana) and Andreas Fickers (University of  
Luxembourg)



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Schweizerische Akademie der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaften  
Académie suisse des sciences humaines et sociales  
Accademia svizzera di scienze umane e sociali  
Accademia svizra da ciencias humanas e socialas  
Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences



Congressi  
Stefano Franscini



## ***Sunday, August 19<sup>th</sup>***

18h30: Welcome Cocktail and Presentation of Participants

## ***Monday, August 20<sup>th</sup>***

8h30: Introduction to the Summer Seminar

9h00-10h30: Media History – a week together to think from the Margins (Gabriele Balbi, Andreas Fickers, François Vallotton, Anne-Katrin Weber)

10h30-11h00: Coffee break

11h00-18h00: Graduate Students Symposium in small groups (with lunch@12h30)

*With the participation of:*

Alexander Neta, New York University; An Bo, Yale University; Basaldella Dennis, Hamburg University; Batanchev Dragan, Concordia University; Blaylock Jennifer, University of California, Berkeley; Corthésy Faye, University of Lausanne; Diecke Josephine, University of Zurich; Gray Roxane, University of Lausanne; Keblinska Julia, University of California, Berkeley; Ryan Mitchell, University of New South Wales, Sydney; Nerini Davide, University of Lausanne; Papakonstantis Achilleas, University of Lausanne; Pollien Maud, University of Lausanne; Rikitiaskaia Maria, Università della Svizzera Italiana; Sandoz Marie, University of Lausanne; Seufferling Philipp, Södertörn University; Sproten Vitus, University of Luxemburg; Stark Alexander, Marburg University; Stecher Adrian, University of Lausanne; Zberg Nadine, University of Zurich.

19h30: Dinner

## ***Tuesday, August 21<sup>st</sup>***

### *Objects I*

9h00-10h30: Keynote by Weihong Bao, University of California, Berkeley: *Picture, Shadow, Play: Ontology, Archaeology, Ecology*

10h30-11h00: Coffee break

11h00-13h00:

- Beatriz Escribano, University of Castilla-La Mancha: *The Unknown and Forgotten Role of the Photocopy Machine Transgressed as a Creative Tool*
- Olivier Lugon, University of Lausanne, Switzerland: *“Multivision” and Slide Projection in the 1960s: New Promises of an Old Media*

13h00-14h30: Lunch break

## Objects II

14h30-19h00

- Neta Alexander, New York University & Tali Keren, multi disciplinary artist: *The Invisible Screen: The Hidden History of the Teleprompter* (performance-presentation 1hour)

Coffee Break

- Aleksandra Kaminska, University of Montreal: *Racing Against the Forger: Media History and the Search for Authenticity*
- Tanya Shilina-Conte, University at Buffalo: *"This Video Does Not Exist:" A Remix of Blank Screens in Cinema*
- Marco Bischof, independent scholar: *An Interactive and Active Collective: Media as Relational and Entangled Objects*

19h30: Dinner

### **Wednesday, August 22<sup>nd</sup>**

9h00-10h30: Keynote by Jérôme Bourdon, Tel Aviv University: *Mediated Togetherness. Tele-presence in History, from Correspondence to Computers*

10h30-11h00: Coffee Break

11h00: Yvonne Zimmermann, Marburg University: *Screen Advertising: (Re-) Searching a Non-Marginal Object from the Margins of Cinema and Media Historiography*

12h00: Excursion Day and Dinner in Losone

### **Thursday, August 23<sup>rd</sup>**

#### Spaces

9h00-10h30: Keynote by Haidee Wasson, Concordia University: *Portability and Media History: The Case of Cinema*

10h30-11h00: Coffee break

11h00-13h00:

- Chiara Saez Baeza, Universidad de Chile: *Printed Popular Poetry and Popular Satirical Press at the End of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century in Santiago of Chile: Alternative Communication and Popular Culture beyond the Worker Subject?*

- Adeena Mey, ECAL Ecole cantonale d'art de Lausanne & Maud Pollien, ECAL and University of Lausanne: *Anticipating the Near Future: From Video Art to New Media: the Case of the VideoArt Festival, Locarno (1980-2000)*

13h00-14h30: Lunch break

### *New Perspectives*

14h30-19h00

- John Ellis, Royal Holloway University of London: *What Actually Happens in the Creative Process: the Absent Question in Media Theories*
- Valérie Schafer, University of Luxembourg: *When the Exception Becomes the Rule... When the Margins become the Center...*
- Rada Bieberstein, University of Tübingen & Erwin Feyersinger, University of Tübingen: *Animation History at the Fringes*

Break

- Susan Aasman, University of Groningen, Tim van der Heijden, University of Luxembourg & Tom Sloodweg, University of Groningen (performance-presentation 1 hour): *From the Dustbin of History: Rethinking the History of Amateur Media in a Historical Conversation*

19h30: Dinner

### ***Friday, August 24<sup>th</sup>***

#### *Conclusion: Mapping the Margins of Media History*

8h30-10h00: Drawing the margins (workshop in small groups)

10h30-11h00: Coffee break

11h00-12h30: Conclusion and perspectives: What's next?

12h30: Lunch and/or departure

# **Graduate Students Symposium**

# Chronopower: On Demand Culture and its Disconnects

Neta Alexander — New York University

My dissertation, “Chronopower: On Demand Culture and its Disconnects,” offers a new theorization of the digital viewer. It unpacks the various ways in which digital media reshape temporality by closely studying three new spectatorial modes: buffering, speed-watching, and binge-watching. Pushing against the dominant logic of endless technological progress, this work focuses on what is often described as “on demand culture” — a global, ever-growing, and easily accessible digital utopia that profoundly changes our ideas of consumption, distribution, and production. I approach the cultural fantasy of “on demand” as the most recent development in a long history of non-theatrical spectatorship that dates back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century’s *Kinetoscope*, a peep-show cabinet used by one viewer at a time.

By promising to empower the viewer and provide her with endless choice, digital spectatorship has paradoxically turned into a form of labor. Yet, instead of producing alienation it germinates habits and rituals that serve to sustain affective regimes of intimacy, dependency, and attachment. To fully understand this process, I introduce and develop the concept of “Chronopower” — the study of temporality as a social construct supporting a system of power. This methodology builds on Sarah Sharma’s “power-chronography,” Paul Virilio’s “chrono-politics” and Jonatan Fabian’s “coevalness” (or “shared time”), all of which demonstrate how temporality can be used to control, exclude, and punish.

The first chapter, **Chronopower: Introducing a Theory of Pacing**, critiques the logic of Speed Studies and the Accelerationist movement. The prominent notion that everything, everywhere is gaining speed fails to take into the account a reality of a “global digital divide” consisting of numerous “digital dams” such as state censorship, regulation, lack of infrastructure and other elements that might limit or eliminate access to the Internet. Ignoring the lived experience of multiple temporalities, speed scholars rarely ask who is forced to wait while others enjoy access to the information superhighway, or how can new forms of waiting be monetized?

Instead of adopting the dominant discourse of “space-time compression,” I build on Helga Tawil-Souri’s exploration of “temporal inequality” to make an intervention in the study of digital media. We might think about anxiety, slowness, and uncertainty as the antithesis of on demand culture and its allure of instant gratification. But my goal is to show that there is more in common between these different temporalities than we might imagine. As I argue throughout the dissertation, digital temporality is a system of power invoking particular behaviors and logics while limiting others. It creates an oft-ignored gap between a cultural fantasy of acceleration and a lived experience of latency and helplessness.

In order to move beyond the slow/fast binary dominating much of Speed Studies, I argue that there is a constant negotiation between these two modes rather than a clear showdown in which one eliminates the other. *I propose a theory of pacing and transduction — rather than a theory of speed.* This theory focuses on moments of transition from one speed to another. Within this context, digital media function as “pace-makers:” they control the speed in which we read the news, watch films, communicate with friends, or listen to audiobooks. They shape

both online and offline behaviors — from sleeping habits to eating, exercising, or engaging in other daily activities. Net neutrality, interface design, “false latency,” and algorithmic systems are all highly effective disciplinary tools within the invisible system of chronopower.

To develop this argument, each chapter unpacks a spectatorial mode and the temporal states it produces and sustains. Chapter 2, **Rage against the Machine: Buffering, Waiting, and Preceptual Anxiety**, unpacks the understudied lag caused by the ubiquity of buffering and latency in digital networks. Chapter 3, **On “Speed-Watching” and the Question of Boredom**, explores the affect of efficiency sustained by the ability to “speed-watch” online content. Chapter 4, **Predictive Personalization? Netflix’s Recommendation System and the Quantification of Taste**, analyzes the streaming service in order to offer a new theorization of binge-watching and the temporal logic of algorithmic recommendation systems.

Taken together, these chapters unpack the public and scholarly discourse about digital technologies, as well as their utopian promises of greater civic engagement, agency and interactivity. The new cult of speed and “compactness” further denies the reality of digital noise and disruptions — from buffering to a global digital divide — by practicing new temporalities based on sensory and cognitive endurance. This study can therefore serve to map the contours of consumption, efficiency, and storytelling in a cultural and economic climate in which slowness is often described as the equivalent of death.



# Learning Machines from the Margins: The Chinese Education Computer (1980-?)

Bo An – Yale University



The paper studies the early history of personal computing in China by tracing the development of the first personal computers made in the 1980s for the special purpose of computing education and its later adaptation in the 1990s as multipurpose education, gaming, and entertainment consoles. There is little scholarly attention to the history of personal computing in China, not to mention the important story of the intersection of national technoscience policy, the global digital literacy movement, intellectual history (such as futurology), and the marginal afterlives of the learning machines (学习机) at the origin of personal computers in China. The paper takes the Chinese Educational Computer (CEC-I; 中华学习机) as a starting point. CEC-I was a remodel after the Apple IIe first made in China in 1987 and became a popular domestic home computer due to its lowered cost and comparable functionalities. Even though its shelf-life was short and soon replaced by IBM-PC and other educational computers, CEC-I was at the beginning and heart of the Chinese history of personal computers. In this two-part research project, I first use an STS and media archaeological approach to excavate one specific obsolete machine: the first generation of CEC-I made in the 1980s. I look at the original research & development notes, official documentation, a restored and fully functional CEC-I machine itself (see picture below), and the archival materials on national research project and campaign around it. In doing so, I

present a technical and contextualized history of the development of the first educational computer in China.

From there, I move to the second part of the project to consider the implication of CEC-I and the educational computers both for media historiography. The phrase, “from the margin”, in the title of the abstract is not added ad hoc but was in my original working paper to highlight the most intriguing about the learning machines. Initiated as a national project, the history of learning machines in China is fundamentally marginal in several senses. Firstly, its development in China was part of the global promotion of computing education and yet it has been ignored in historiographies about parallel development in the US, Europe, and the Soviet Union. Secondly, the CEC-I, along with its American, European, and Japanese counterparts, were not proper personal computing machines. They lacked certain high-end functionalities and were quickly abandoned once standard personal computers such as Apple II and IBM-PC series became cheap enough for average people to afford. For this reason, they are often ignored by computer historians. Lastly, and most significantly for me, it was in the marginal area in China that CEC-I and its successors made the most impact. They had high adoption rate in rural areas and lower-income families in China especially after they have become outdated among the initially targeted user groups (students in schools in major cities); for example, when they became cheap and compact (requiring only a television set) enough for peasant families buy for their children in the late 1990s. As of now, the successors of CEC-I are still being made and ported in China and elsewhere like countries in Africa and Southeast Asia to help improving computer literacy. While having global and national backgrounds, the Chinese education computers is an important part of media history whose story needs to be told from the margin.

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# Digitizing Marginal Objects: Amateur Films from the GDR in Color

Dennis Basaldella, Josephine Diecke — Hamburg University / Filmmuseum Potsdam, University of Zurich



## Digitizing Marginal Objects: Amateur Films from the GDR in Color

The *Film Colors* projects of the University of Zurich and the Filmmuseum Potsdam joined forces, in order to digitize selected color films from the [Filmmuseum's holdings](#). This blog post focuses on the results of a cooperation between the [SNSF project \*Film Colors. Technologies, Cultures, Institutions\*](#) located at the University of Zurich (Switzerland) and the [Filmmuseum Potsdam \(Germany\)](#), established by [Josephine Diecke](#) and [Dennis Basaldella](#). The aim is to present an innovative collaboration that brings together specialized knowledge in the realms of film production and film technology with a particular focus on typically marginalized topics, such as amateur filmmaking and film stock manufacturing in selected historical contexts. How can both approaches enrich the debates about the preservation, digitization and circulation of marginal objects?

The film material—with its two-fold significance as a “corpus mysticum” and a “corpus mechanicum” at the same time (Catanese 2013: 19) —is the red thread of the presented cooperation. Both dissertation projects are relying on film and non-film sources from the archival holdings of the Filmmuseum and were selected according to our common research interest in alternative approaches to the film and media histories of the German Democratic Republic (GDR).

### **Research on Independent Film Production in the GDR**

Dennis Basaldella’s PhD project focuses on the neglected, marginal film production modes in the former GDR. This includes such production modes as the *private freie Filmhersteller*, freelance film professionals working during one or more projects for one or several employers, producing contract works within their own production company and production infrastructure, and the amateur studios. But why are these topics marginal? On the one hand, because research on GDR film history has mainly focused on the so-called ‘big players’ such as Deutsche Film Aktiengesellschaft (DEFA), responsible for the film production and the Deutscher Fernsehfunk (DFF), the national television broadcaster, suggesting that those two protagonists were solely in charge of film and television production in the country. On the other hand, the topics of the films produced by freelancers and amateurs made them often uninteresting for current scientific research.

Still, reality shows another picture.

One example is freelance film professional is Horst Klein (1920-1993). His case demonstrates that other production groups also had a considerable contribution to the film corpus of the GDR. The legacy of Klein, stored since 1994 at the Filmmuseum Potsdam, shows that he produced approximately 900 nonfiction reportages and documentaries (mostly contract works) between 1946 and 1990. About 729 of them were produced for television. This is not only a considerable amount of films, but it also shows that the production of the ‘big players’ was highly reliable on the works of marginal production groups such as the freelancers. The size of Kleins’ legacy provides a unique source to explore the production mode of these freelancers since it contains not only 71 complete films but also other sources, such as production documents and Klein’s work diaries.

The second neglected group is the amateurs. Even though they were controlled by the state, amateur films have been a central part of cultural life in the GDR from the beginning. As the studios were part of the factories and the companies in the socialist state, the films documented working life, other related topics such as safety at work or political subjects, but also the amateurs themselves during the shooting. By doing so, the films became unique documents of everyday life. For example, the films of the studio of the Wohnungsbaukombinat Berlin – the biggest housing society in the country – document the construction works of various socialist buildings in East Berlin such as the Fernsehturm at the Alexanderplatz or the big housing complexes in Marzahn. However, the proximity to their institutions and factories made it possible that amateurs could not only work with semi-professional 16mm film stocks, but also with professional film equipment.

### **Research on Development and Diffusion of Chromogenic Color Films**

The SNSF project *Film Colors. Technologies, Cultures, Institutions* seeks to position historical color film technologies in their cultural and sociopolitical contexts. Color film processes

based on chromogenic development dominated the second half of the 20th century, while their further development and dissemination was characterized by international and transnational exchanges. In the framework of her PhD project, Josephine investigates successful as well as less popular players who have shaped the production of chromogenic color film stocks and the materials' subsequent professional and amateur uses during the so-called 'Cold War'.

Agfa and its East German successor ORWO were one of the biggest raw film manufacturers, whose extensive role for the global distribution of color films is mostly minimized in historiographical overviews. Its headquarter in Wolfen was built in 1909 and continued film stock production almost immediately after World War II for the Socialist nations. From 1945 until 1964, the newly constructed film production plant in Leverkusen (West Germany) and the old one in Wolfen (East Germany) coexisted under the same name "Agfa". In 1964, Wolfen sold all the rights for the Agfa brand to Leverkusen and changed the company's name to ORWO, which is an acronym for 'ORiginal WOlfen'. Throughout their existence, their products constantly fell behind the international standards, set by the US-American Eastman Kodak. The biggest challenge for the film manufacturer was to keep up with the customers' demands and needs for a stable supply of qualitatively reasonable film materials.

Besides the successful implementation of the first negative-positive process for color films, Agfa also provided the first reversal film stock seriously competing with Kodachrome. The small gauge Agfacolor and its successors Orwocolor reversal and Orwochrom negative and positive film stocks, covered a great share of the consumer market that amateur as well as freelancing filmmakers were dependent on. The "State-socialist Mode of Production" (Szczepanik 2013) especially differed from other Western ones and was shaped by material shortages and centralized supplies. To keep in mind these aspects of film production and its interdependency with the accessible media technologies puts artistic and economic choices into equally respected perspectives.

With the help of a diversified corpus of film and non-film sources, Josephine Diecke seeks to decipher the ways in which the chromogenic color film processes such as those of Agfa and ORWO have evolved and spread over time. Her research is therefore based on a multifaceted approach, including theoretical concepts and models from the field of Media Archaeology, Cultural Studies and especially the vocabulary and methodology of the Social Construction of Technology (SCOT). With regard to the interactive relationship between technological artefacts and social actors, Wiebe Bijker and Trevor Pinch (1987) introduced their own theoretical and practical mindset. By applying their principles to the study of color film developments, different social actors and groups such as freelancing filmmakers and amateurs are equally represented as professional filmmakers, and with this, also their respective needs and problems. How well regarded or disregarded have they been during the innovation and distribution process, especially in comparison with other social actors? How did they adapt to technological shortcomings and restrictions?

The *Timeline of Historical Film Colors* is a platform where all sorts of film gauges are exhibited alongside each other. Highly successful inventions as well as forgotten failures are part of the history of modern (mass) societies, and with this also the age of proliferated (color) images. The goal is to foster a profound research into the traditionally marginalized areas of private and vernacular uses of the same technological principles that more popular products stem from. Since technology never evolved in a societal vacuum, the current research must be informed by discursive practices and processes of identity formation through technology, too.



## Cooperation: Digitizing Amateur and Independent Films in Color

In digitizing six more or less unknown films from the collection of the Filmmuseum, the two PhD projects joined forces to support a change of perspective towards the writing of (non-)canonical film history. The color films that have been digitized in this cooperation are mostly documents of daily life in the GDR. The earliest reel is a sort of ‘behind the scenes’ compilation of the DEFA movie *Maibowle*, shot in 1959 by the director Günter Reisch himself. The edge markings of the 8mm print indicate the original negative material as Agfacolor. All the other films were shot after 1964 and therefore show a variation of ORWO signatures. The unknown animated accident prevention movie *[Unfallschutz-Zeichentrickfilm]* from the ČSSR, showing the accidents that can occur due to unsafe work in the factory, is preserved as a 16mm Orwocolor positive in the Filmmuseum’s holdings. The footage *[Pfingsten 1981]*, showing an event organized by the GDR youth movement Free German Youth (FDJ) in Cottbus, as well as the uncut footage *[Berlin Nikolaiviertel]* of the restoration process of the historic city center of Berlin, the Nikolaiviertel, were both recorded on Orwochrom UT 15 film stock, optimized for outdoor shootings, and in the case of *[Pfingsten 1981]* also on UK 17 film stock for the indoor scenes. The last two films in contrast were both shot on 16mm Orwochrom UK 3, a low contrast film stock for color television. Whereas *[Neue Turmspitze auf Oberkirche Cottbus]* (GDR 1988) features rare footage of the restoration of the new spire of the Oberkirche in Cottbus, *Maschinisten der Kohleveredelung* (GDR 1988, Horst Klein) was a contract work for the Schwarze Pumpe power station near Hoyerswerda (Saxony), shot as a professional film and focusing on the professions of the power plant. All films have been scanned at the University of Zurich in 5k.

Since color film stock was not common among non-professional filmmakers due to the high costs, the preserved color films are unique documents of their time. The substandard 16mm and 8mm film formats and the corresponding color film stocks from the East German Filmfabrik Wolfen also represent marginal objects because, even if they were mass produced and widespread, their meaning for film production is still often ignored. The same is true for their adaptation in the marginally observed production contexts of commercials, home movies and television. Therefore, the digitized films serve as a good starting point for further investigations into these numerous directions.

## Selected Bibliography

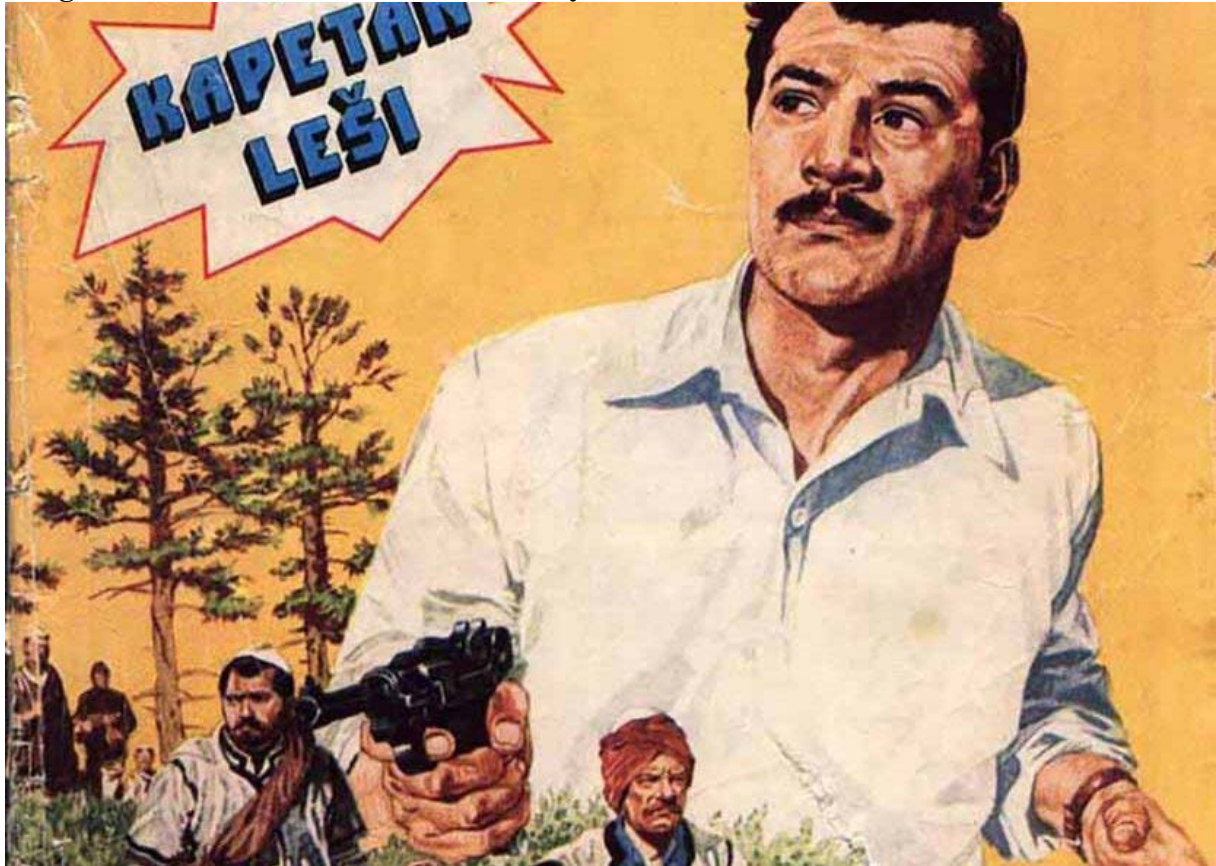
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# Neither East, nor West: The Borderless Yugoslav War Cinema

Dragan Batančev — Concordia University



My project considers the supra- and trans-national trajectories of socialist Yugoslav cinema as attempting to construct Yugoslav national identity and connecting the Cold War blocs and the Non-Aligned Movement. I focus on Partisan Westerns, a generic hybrid of films about WWII and Hollywood and Western European Westerns. Unlike their Eastern European counterparts, Partisan Westerns, reflecting Yugoslav “third way” politics balancing between socialism and capitalism were not critical of Western culture *per se*, but infused the foundational myth of WWII as a freedom fight with spectacular entertainment. Relatively speaking, Yugoslavia had the largest victorious resistance movement in occupied Europe, larger than, for the instance, the French. While significantly outnumbered until the closing stage of the war when the Red Army provided the crucial contribution in liberating Yugoslavia, the country’s partisan movement – consisting of fighters affiliated with the Yugoslav Communist Party as well as other ideological orientations – did prove the strength of its grassroots resistance which, in turn, helped legitimize the Yugoslav position in the wake of the 1948 Tito-Stalin split when Yugoslavia started balancing between the capitalist West and the socialist East. Furthermore, the postwar Yugoslav historical narrative has outlined the threefold nature of WWII struggle as a resistance to the Axis Powers occupation, civil war against the collaborationists, and a socialist revolution, the second of its kind after the October Revolution. It should therefore come as no surprise that the war film genre, alongside monuments and literature, had become a cornerstone of postwar Yugoslav cultural identity. In fact, the war film (sometimes referred to as the partisan film) became the most emblematic Yugoslav cinematic genre, by and large



promoting the state ideology of *brotherhood and unity* whereby numerous Yugoslav nations (Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, etc.) were kept together in the socialist federation.

My case study is a Partisan Western *Kapetan Leši* (*Captain Leshi*, 1960), directed by a Serbian director Živorad Mitrović, one of the most prolific Yugoslav directors. Produced by a Belgrade studio, *Captain Leshi* tells the story about the titular officer, a partisan fighter of Kosovar Albanian origin struggling against the Kosovar Albanian collaborationists, the ballists, including his own brother, in the southern Serbian province of Kosovo and Metohija. The long history of conflicts between Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo, as well as the fact that the predominantly Serbian, if non-nationalist crew, produced a film about the sensitive topic of WWII Kosovar Albanian nationalism, makes *Captain Leshi* a curious transnational artifact. Particularly because Mitrović directed a few more of the Partisan Westerns situated in Kosovo and Metohija: *Ešalon doktora M.* (*Doctor M.'s Echelon*, 1955), *Obračun* (*The Showdown*, 1962) and *Brat doktora Homera* (*Doctor Homer's Brother*, 1968), all of which gained a lot of popularity among moviegoers and the TV audience.

First of all, these films (as well as many others produced in socialist Yugoslavia) destabilize a (still) very common notion of national cinema. Already in 1968/9, a group of film critics from various Yugoslav republics started a debate on whether there is a Yugoslav national cinema, or whether it was actually a collection of distinctive national cinemas in each Yugoslav republic. This question is significant not only because it seems that in the case of *Captain Leshi* the Belgrade-based filmmakers had a superior position in terms of creating the cinematic image of Kosovo and integrating Kosovar Albanians into the Yugoslav state project, but also because it has larger implications for the issue of Yugoslav identity in general, as demonstrated by the recent wave of revisionist history seeking to re-nationalize Yugoslav culture and make it Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian, etc.

Along similar lines, *Captain Leshi* points to the comparison between the written history and history on screen. In this context, Mitrović's film joins the echelon of Yugoslav war films showcasing the pluralism of historical views uncharacteristic of the written history of the same period. For example, while Yugoslav written history made a pretty clear-cut division between the "good" guys (the partisans) and the "bad" guys (their opponents), a lot of war films feature partisan anti-heroes. By exposing the constructedness of the mainstream history, *Captain Leshi* shows that film as a medium can be not only a source of written cultural and social histories, but also a legitimate, if distinctive, form of historical account which does not have to suffer from the lack of scientific apparatus typical of the written history.

Going back to film as a historical source, my research draws upon Radina Vučetić's monograph *Coca-Cola Socialism: Americanization of Yugoslav Culture in the Sixties*. Vučetić demonstrates that Yugoslavia was a meeting point of Cold War cultural influences, rather than a stereotypical gray socialist country, by excavating interwar comics drawn by Mitrović and postwar magazine articles about the fan clubs and amateur filmmakers of the Westerns in Yugoslavia, not to mention international co-productions shot around the country. To this I would add interesting temporal intersections of the idealistic 1930s Hollywood Westerns shaping a Technicolor spectacle in *Captain Leshi*, while *Doctor Homer's Brother* evidently refers to Sergio Leone's spaghetti Westerns. In addition, unlike its Eastern European counterparts, Mitrović's Westerns utilize the idealism of Hollywood Westerns without necessarily openly criticizing American imperialism, opting instead for advancing integral Yugoslavism.

In this context, I am also interested in breaking the Cold War historical paradigm according to which the omnipresent communist State was opposed by the liberal “dissident” Artist, in this case represented by the Black Wave filmmakers. Without any desire to abolish Yugoslav communists for their crimes and mistakes, I argue that the case of *Captain Leshi* reveals the shortsightedness of this dichotomy. Doing research at the Archives of Yugoslavia in Belgrade, in the archival fund of the Federal Committee for the Review of Films, the central film censorship body of socialist Yugoslavia, I found the evidence of censoring *Captain Leshi* for the obvious fear that the film would irritate Kosovar Albanian nationalists which in the end did not happen. This is interesting because other historians have investigated this fund before me – for the most part, to confirm their doubts about the totalitarian control – and, also, because Mitrović himself gave an interview in 1992 claiming the film censored. It is possible that nobody bothered to verify Mitrović’s claims simply because he was widely perceived as a “regime director,” a label he earned by being a high ranking Party official and director of a state-sponsored war spectacle *Užička republika (The Guns of War, 1974)*. The censoring of *Captain Leshi* actually shows that in Yugoslavia the censors could easily become the censored, which comes as little surprise when thinking about the real socialist states; however, I did not expect that Mitrović and his production company would push back against the censors, not so much because of their political stances, but because they had already signed a lucrative export contract with West Germany and many other countries, and did not want to endanger their profits. In short, rather than a top-down mechanism, Yugoslav film censorship appears to be a negotiation process, and not a negative one at that as the censors of *Captain Leshi* actually helped clarify certain aspects of the film.

For our symposium I propose discussing three general topics:

**1) Scarcity of archival sources and how to overcome it.** The common feature of many Yugoslav archival sources is their incompleteness as a result of the poor archival culture; simply put, a lot of the sources have been lost due to negligence or even thrown into the garbage. On the other hand, many institutions, such as the aforementioned Federal Committee for Review of Films, were less than eager to leave too many traces of their inner workings. Granted, each historical context is a story for itself, but I think it would be interesting to see how the absence or incompleteness of sources may be overcome by deduction, looking at other, seemingly unrelated sources, and so on.

**2) How to investigate the transnational impact of such objects of study.** For instance, Živorad Mitrović’s films were exported and gained traction across the world. Anecdotally, Croatian historian Hrvoje Klasić once told me that the first thing he saw on Algerian hotel TV upon arriving for a conference was *Captain Leshi*. Another classic Partisan Western *Valter brani Sarajevo (Valter Defends Sarajevo, 1972)*, became one of the most popular foreign films in China, thanks to the multidecade TV reruns. However, these findings remain on the level of verbal testimonies and it would be useful to discuss how different barriers (linguistic, financial, institutional) could be fruitfully overcome.

**3) Questioning and re-evaluating the notions of the “center” and “periphery.”** I am interested in historicizing transnational cinema from the vantage point of the seemingly “minor” cinema which is, particularly in the English-speaking academia, studied almost exclusively in terms of textual representation of post-Yugoslav nationalism. Here I am thinking of comparative historiography or, more precisely, asymmetrical comparisons highlighting cultural production and transfer originating from virtually invisible centers (also known as “periphery”) and creating historically marginalized spaces such as the Non-Aligned

Movement. In other words, should the export of *Captain Leshi* into the Third World be perceived as the victory of the American or Yugoslav cultural and ideological model?

# Media Machines: A Postcolonial Archaeology of New Media and Africa

Jennifer Blaylock — University of California, Berkeley



“First world problems,” a thriving meme and a popular hash tag on twitter, is used to qualify complaints about the small inconveniences that sometimes come with the consumption of high status goods, especially the latest media technologies. Nigerian-American author Teju Cole has written a biting critique of “first world problems” on twitter pointing out that “first world problems” works on the assumption that the third world is too occupied with serious problems like famine, disease, and corruption to have time to engage in the pleasurable technological indulgences of the first world. He writes, “All the silly stuff of life doesn’t disappear just because you’re black and live in a poorer country...Here’s a First World problem: the inability to see that others are as fully complex and as keen on technology and pleasure as you are.” Cole’s statement is an example of how media machines become the means for claiming exclusionary “first world” status, but also points to how the ownership of

consumer products becomes a method to appeal for recognition as equal participants in the globalized world.

The role that media technology play in demarcating the globe into “first” and “third,” and “modern” and “developing” worlds becomes clear when we critically look at the intersection of discourse about new media and Africa. What appears to be a hyper-connected world in which the remote village has become global is actually structured by hegemonic perceptions about what counts as *new* media technology, who has access to it, and where it is invented. But how and why have media technologies in the twenty-first century come to be such powerful taxonomic symbols in Africa and abroad? In other words, in what political and economic contexts was discourse about the “newness” of media technology activated to represent a deterritorialized globe? And how has the emphasis on the new simultaneously also entrenched geographic difference?

My dissertation project, *Media Machines: A Postcolonial Archaeology of New Media and Africa* approaches these questions by analyzing the history of new media technology in Ghana from the 1900s to the early 2000s. Each of the four chapters considers a different media technology—gramophones, cinema, television, and smart phones—within changing economic, political, and social discourse. *Media Machines* challenges the notion that media technologies are transferred from the West to the technology-poor Global South in two ways. First, by examining the origin of this myth and its many retellings in discourse about new media and Africa. Second, by bringing to the fore media histories of African innovation that have been hitherto untold.

In the first chapter, *Initial Contacts in the Digital Age, or When the Visual Record Skips*, I demonstrate that contemporary photographs of African mobile phone users often draw on themes and formal conventions found in photographic practices from the early to mid 1900s. Anthropologists, advertisers, and adventurers would stage scenes of what Lisa Gitelman has called “initial contacts” between indigenous peoples and technology. Like early contact photographs, the most popular of the mobile phone images juxtapose Africans in pastoral settings wearing traditional clothing with the new media technology. As scholars have noted, these depictions, like the gramophone scene in *Nanook of the North* (1922), were a way to co-produce ideas of the modern and the primitive.

Based on archival research, I trace the staging of indigenous initial contacts with gramophones from Martin Johnson’s 1907 trip to the South Seas with Jack London to a scene in his Africa travelogue film *Congorilla* (1932). By looking at Johnson’s use of the contact trope we see that not only do these images repeat over time like a needle stuck on a record, but their repetition was often sponsored by media companies like Victor. By comparing Johnson’s oeuvre and other travel photography in the early twentieth-century to contemporary mobile phones images, I argue that new media in global visual rhetoric continues to draw on a tendency to define Africans as part of an unchanging landscape in order to celebrate the ability of media technologies to transform and develop Africa. The blurred relationship between corporate sponsorship, education, and spectacle in the historic use of contact images points to the ways that contemporary media industries continue to capitalize on the perpetuation of racialized narratives of progress.

Spectacular demonstrations of state-sponsored cinema continued the justification for European rule that images of Africans posed next to gramophones had begun. By the 1940s mobile cinema vans exhibited informational films for rural African audiences across the

British colonies. Drawing on cinema technology to sustain British technological superiority, the colonial government worked diligently to promote and develop educational content that would promise Africans the possibility of becoming equally modern in the near future. These films—on health and medicine, agriculture, community development, and citizenship—exposed African audiences to the same types of information being deployed to Africans today through mobile phone applications.

In my second chapter, *Mobile Utility: The Infrastructural Absences of Mobile Cinema*, I draw on British colonial discourse about cinema to demonstrate how new media in the context of Africa have historically been produced by international actors as primarily useful devices for African education, salvation, and development, rather than seen as instruments for entertainment or self-expression. I compare colonial era mobile cinema with contemporary international development discourse about mobile phones to consider how the emphasis on the increasing mobility of information continues to focus social and political change on the transformation of the individual rather than the development of public infrastructure.

In the third chapter, *New Media, Neo-Media: The Brief Life of Socialist Television in Ghana*, I describe the inauguration of television in Ghana. Unlike the origins of cinema, television was born without the baggage of paternalistic colonial ancestry. The first broadcast on July 31, 1965 came out of a radical time when Africans across the continent were boldly and creatively inventing systems of governance resistant to imperialism and racial inequality. Alongside the formation of the new state, the new medium was designed to help realize the vision of African socialism promoted by the first prime minister of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah. Yet with the February 24, 1966 coup d'état, only seven months after programming began, Nkrumah was overthrown, and Ghanaian socialist television came to an end.

During this early period, the television division was headed by African-American political activist, Shirley Graham Du Bois, the second wife of W.E.B. Du Bois. Du Bois was instrumental in innovating existing television systems to fit the needs of the new African nation. Based on archival research and interviews with key Ghanaian television pioneers, I argue that despite Canadian expertise and British and Japanese equipment, the inauguration of Ghana television resulted in the invention of a new television system. This Afro-futurist segment of Ghana's media past provides a counter narrative to new media discourse from the colonial era that positioned Africa as the passive receiver of media machines that were invented in the West, and instead details how Ghanaians negotiated and adapted new technologies from abroad into local media systems to empower Ghanaians and Africans and those of African descent across the world.

In the last chapter, "Who wants a BlackBerry these days?" *Serialized New Media and its Trash*, I use the popular Nigerian video series *BlackBerry Babes* (2011–12), which follows a clique of trend-setting college girls who deny friendship to anyone who does not own a BlackBerry, to analyze how international enthusiasm for the development potential of mobile phones is contested in West African popular culture. While technology reports in the early 2010s announced the death of BlackBerry in the USA, headlines across the blogosphere cited *BlackBerry Babes* as evidence that, "BlackBerry is doing incredibly well—in Africa" and is still a status symbol for Africans. However, contrary to global headlines, *BlackBerry Babes* offers a critical take on BlackBerry. Like typical Nigerian melodramatic serials that reveal moral resolution through punishment and redemption, not only are the Babes eventually punished for their lewd actions, but the absurdity of the Babes' laughable exploits to obtain what is ultimately an empty signifier of class is the joke that fuels this serial comedy across

six parts. Like the new models of BlackBerry phones the girls fetishize, the *BlackBerry Babes* serial becomes a means to reinforce both the phones and the Nigerian video-industry as markers of membership within global capitalism, while also expressing disillusionment with the promise of social and economic mobility that screen technologies seem to offer.

Rather than being ancillary to the history of media technology, discussions about new media use in Africa are central to understanding how new media have contributed to the maintenance of racialized global capitalism, and how they have also offered the hopeful means to its undoing. At a moment far removed from the fall of the Berlin Wall, at the “end of history,” the analysis of new media discourse in Africa untangles the lasting impacts of imperial capitalism on global theories of media. Conversely, an evocative look at mid-twentieth century Afro-futuristic media discourse reminds us of a time before the end of possibility, when African intellectuals invented media technology anew through imaginative forms of resistance. Media may spectacularly organize the world into “first” and “thirds,” but as *Media Machines* exhibits, that order is subject to change.

# Marginal Circulation of Marginal Films? The “Travelling Exhibitions” of New American Cinema in the 1960s

Faye Corthésy — University of Lausanne



A banner promoting the “*nuovo cinema americano*” film series in Spoleto in 1961. © Jerome Hill Papers, Minnesota Historical Society.

My dissertation research project focuses on the history of the New American Cinema Group (NACG), a collective founded in New York in 1960 by Shirley Clarke, Robert Frank, Gregory Markopoulos, Jonas and Adolfas Mekas, and Lionel Rogosin, among others, and its transnational connections. While some scholars have researched the history of the NACG on a national, or even local scale, in New York, little attention has been paid to the participation of



the Group in the shaping of a transnational “independent” film culture in the 1960s. It is this broader scope that my dissertation embraces, focusing on phenomena of displacements, with two main goals. First, it aims to shed light on the understudied networks of filmmakers, critics, programmers, and institutions that fostered the circulation of “independent” films and related discourses outside strictly national contexts in the 1960s. Second, and more broadly, it argues that the transnational circulation of “new” and “avant-garde” cinema before the so-called “global era” was of crucial importance in constructing the various film movements.

For the Seminar, I would like to introduce a specific case study that plays a major role in my dissertation: a series of “travelling exhibitions”<sup>[1]</sup> of films organized by the NACG during the 1960s in Europe (January – May 1964, in eight countries; May 1967 – June 1968, in thirteen countries) and South America (summer 1965, in Buenos Aires only, due to organizational deficiencies). Different kinds of institutions such as cinemathèques, film societies, film schools, art centers, and occasionally even private spaces such as hotel rooms, hosted the film programs that were accompanied on each occasion by P. Adams Sitney, a very young film critic acquainted with Jonas Mekas.<sup>[2]</sup> As I hope to show, this case study can prove productive to discuss the positional variability of the concept of “marginality” in relation to my workgroup’s sub-theme, the transnational.

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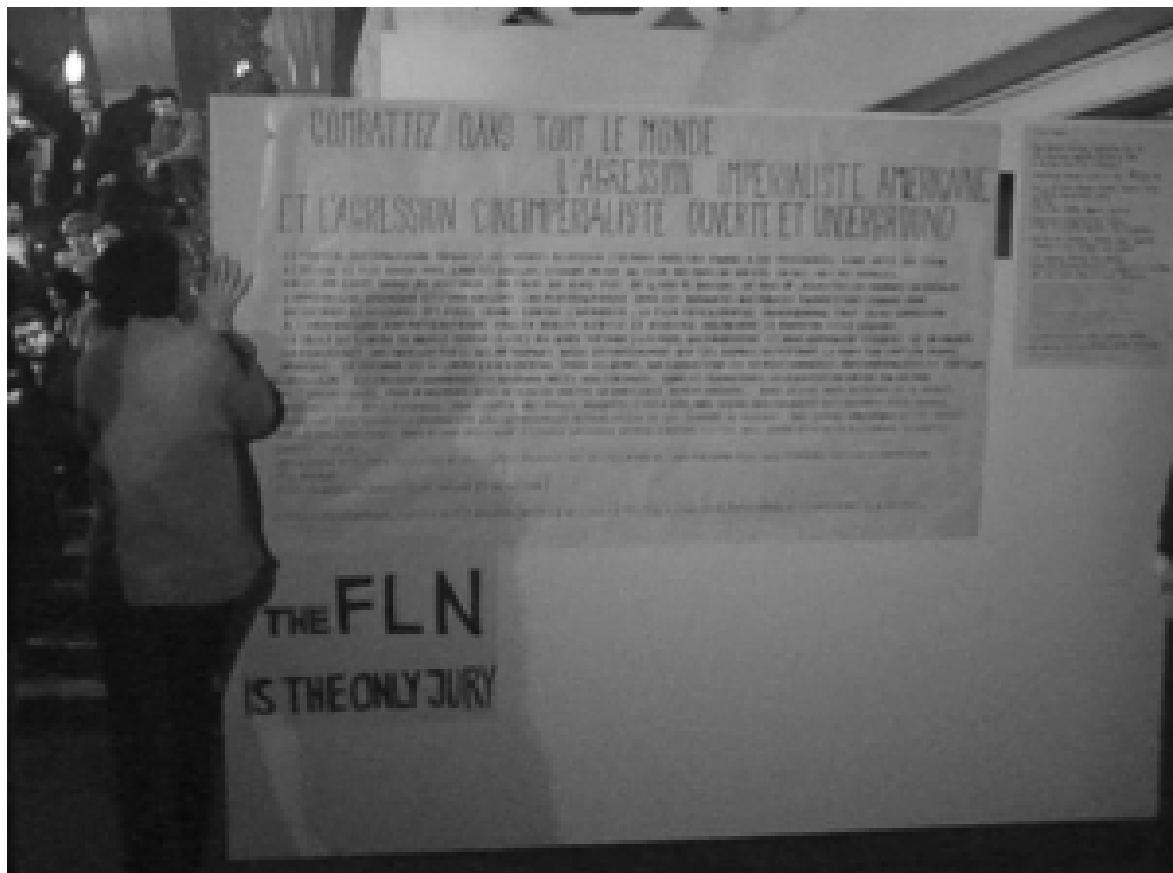
If the manifesto of the NACG written in 1960—when members of the Group still hoped to make feature films that would get wide distribution—stated that “[i]t is a sad fact that our films first have to open in London, Paris or Tokyo before they can reach our own theatres,”<sup>[3]</sup> the transnational circulation of films associated with “New American Cinema” (NAC) was later recognized as tactically important to gain recognition and initiate a dialogue with filmmakers and film communities in foreign contexts.

The magazine *Film Culture*, founded by Jonas and Adolfas Mekas in 1955 in New York, already brought together a small network of people interested in film art not only in New York and the United States, but also across countries and continents. The magazine that became the main discursive space establishing NAC in the 1960s took part in the transnational network of film journals promoting and discussing “new cinemas,” and published articles written by its “foreign correspondents.” Moreover, the first large program of films gathered under the umbrella of NAC took place not in the United States, but in Europe, in the Italian city of Spoleto. It was part of the summer 1961 Festival of Two Worlds, an event dedicated to classical music and living arts from the United States and the European continent.<sup>[4]</sup> Jonas Mekas and David Stone put the program together, that was prominently advertised on the back cover of the *Film Culture* issue in which the “First Statement” of the NACG was published. Thus, even if an account of the festival written in Spoleto by Gregory Markopoulos uses the word “fiasco” to describe the progress of the film program, it would still be mentioned as a valuable antecedent in a letter sent in 1963 to different people and institutions around the globe to ask about their interest in hosting a touring program of NAC films.

At that time, the Group had founded the Filmmakers’ Cooperative (1962), whose distribution catalog contained mainly short and non-narrative 16 mm films, like those of Marie Menken, Stan Brakhage or Stan Vanderbeek. In the United States, the films were then mainly circulating in universities and film societies, as their formal qualities and format were not fitting the commercial theaters’ circuit. In the same way as the Cooperative was created as an

alternative to the existing distribution channels, the “travelling exhibitions” project proved best to acquire some visibility abroad as a movement than to try to enter films individually to international festivals or find occasional, individual distribution. Repeatedly during the 1960s, film festivals—some of which were still selecting films as representing their nation—would be targeted in the discourses from the Group: they are, for instance, “*almost exclusively business ventures [and...] not the most potent vehicles for the presentation of a new aesthetic abroad.*” [5] Hence, on the one hand, the “travelling exhibitions” can be read as activist interventions in the field of film distribution: a way to make “marginal films among the margins,” fitting neither the commercial world nor (or almost not) the official film festival circuit, and before the massive presence of moving images in the art context, be seen and discussed. On the other hand, though, the “American” origin claimed by the Group returns *a priori* more to “centrality” than to “marginality.”

Along the 1960s, especially with the return to Europe for a second time in 1967-68, some protest began to emerge against what was seen as the “dominance” of the American avant-garde cinema. In Knokke-le-Zoute, where the only experimental film festival of that time was taking place [6], German students, among them Harun Farocki and Holger Meins, protested against what they viewed as an “American cineimperialist aggression.” The agitators related this “aggression” to the political unfolding of the decade, and in particular the escalation of the U.S. implication in the Viet Nâm war. These criticisms finally lead to the decision to put an end to the travelling programs: “*with the United States using all kinds of ‘power’ to influence other countries,*” wrote Mekas in 1968, the NAC exhibitions could be seen “*as America’s long fingers to manipulate the film avantgardes [sic] of other countries.*” [7]



Harun Farocki holding a protest sign at Knokke-le-Zoute Experimental Film Festival in December 1967. The beginning of the text reads: “Combatez dans tout le monde l’agression impérialiste américaine et l’agression cinéimpérialiste ouverte et underground.” Screenshot of the film *Exprmntl 4 Knokke* (C. von Alemann and R. E. Thiel, RFA, 1967-68) “quoted” in *EXPRMNTL* (Brecht Debackere, Belgium, 2016).

My research does not aim to take a position on whether or not the travelling exhibitions were projects of cultural imperialism. Rather, I tackle this issue with archival documents that help me reconstruct and contrast, on the one hand, how the Group (or members thereof) conceptualized, organized and talked about the project, and, on the other hand, the local receptions of the travelling exhibitions in the different countries and cities where they stopped.<sup>[8]</sup>

Such a concrete case study allows us to recognize the plurality of actors and discourses, and the cross-cultural exchanges that are at the core of transnational circulation. At the same time, it brings forth questions of power in the historical narrative of “experimental,” “avant-garde,” or “independent” cinema—a narrative that is still often conceptualized only in terms of “resistance,” “subversion,” or, indeed, “marginality,” in a sometimes romantic view of an actually rather complex field. In other words, it adds a vertical dimension to the sometimes criticized emphasis on “horizontality” in transnational studies.

<sup>[1]</sup>The words “exhibition” and “exposition” are used although there wasn’t any attempt to install the films in space.

<sup>[2]</sup>Barbara Rubin, Barbara Stone, David Stone and Jonas Mekas all joined Sitney at one time or another.

<sup>[3]</sup>“The First Statement of the New American Cinema Group,” *Film Culture*, no. 22-23 (summer 1961): 132. The text was first written in fall 1960.

<sup>[4]</sup>The presence of a program of films associated with NAC in this festival that never before organized a film section may seem rather odd. It is in fact due to Jerome Hill, one of the most important—though unpublicized—sponsor of the NACG, who was part of the board of directors of the foundation of the Italian festival and asked Jonas Mekas if he would be interested in putting up a film series.

<sup>[5]</sup>Letter from P. Adams Sitney to the filmmakers, New York, July 1st, 1965, Jonas Mekas private collection.

<sup>[6]</sup>It is also one of the only festivals to which Sitney went when he was touring Europe with the films.

<sup>[7]</sup>Letter from Jonas Mekas to the filmmakers, New York, July 15, 1968, collection Anthology Film Archives.

<sup>[8]</sup>One of the main methodological model for my research is art historian Hiroko Ikegami’s study of the travels and collaborations of American artist Robert Rauschenberg around 1964. *The Great Migrator: Robert Rauschenberg and the Global Rise of American Art* (MIT Press, 2010).

# Television Directors in French-speaking Switzerland (1954-1990s). Birth and Construction of a Professional Group

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Even though the field of television history has developed different approaches to the medium, researchers have shown less interest for the analysis of television production and its professions.<sup>[1]</sup> In Switzerland, television professionals have significantly contributed to the writing of the history of television production. Through testimonial websites<sup>[2]</sup>, anniversary books<sup>[3]</sup> or autobiographical writings,<sup>[4]</sup> they share stories, thoughts and memories of their own television history. These publications are valuable sources for reconstructing some aspects of Swiss television history. Nonetheless, they reproduce an institutional and regional history of Swiss television, and focus on its key figures and moments without deeper problematization and without national or international contextualization.

Part of the FNS project “Beyond Public Service: Towards an Expanded History of Television in Switzerland, 1960 to 2000”, my doctoral thesis revises a history of television considered too linear and proposes a less schematic definition of the medium. The thesis will re-examine the Télévision Suisse Romande’s (TSR)<sup>[5]</sup> history by paying particular attention to its production processes. I argue that analysing the professional trajectories helps to look beyond the television medium and reveals the porous boundaries between media. This approach also shifts the focus away from the institutional framework of television in order to understand the diversity of practices at its margins.

My doctoral thesis focuses on the professional group formed by television directors in the French speaking part of Switzerland. The regional framework of my subject fits into a broader analysis beyond institutional television and at different spatial scales. Indeed, my research examines the diversity of professional practices within the public service and the private

sector and pays attention to the transnational and transmedia collaborations. Because of its geographical, cultural and linguistic proximity to French-speaking Switzerland, France is a privileged partner of Swiss television professionals. This study also considers the circulations between Swiss television and independent cinema. The contiguity between both spheres is historically marked by the foundation of the association of Swiss film directors in 1962, and by the development of co-production platforms like the creation of the Groupe 5 in 1968. These different events are integral part of a national process of negotiations between the Swiss public broadcasting organization (SSR) and independent cinema.

My research retraces the professionalization of Swiss television directors from 1954 – the official launch date of the Télévision Suisse Romande (TSR) – to the late 1990s. This decade has seen a reconfiguration of television's modes of production due to the generalization of digital technologies. The expansion of cable television and the creation of the TSR 2 channel in 1997 have marked the entry of the TSR into the era of the diversification of offers. In 1996 was also signed the Audiovisual Pact, which officially established the conditions for co-production between the SSR and Swiss independent cinema.

The history of television directors is, throughout this period, generally told as the decline of the profession.<sup>[6]</sup> This particular professional group has allegedly been the most affected by organizational and management strategies put in place by national television institutions from the 1970s on. However, the diversity of the areas of activity of the profession, and its constitution in different forms of organizations suggest that the identities and professional practices of television directors in Switzerland are multiple. They are (re)configuring according to the different networks and instances in which they evolve. To address this issue, different resources will be consulted, among others the Swiss Television Archives, the Swiss Film Archives, the Swiss Social Archives as well as press and professional publications. Interviews with television professionals will be conducted as well.

In line with the scholarship in the field of media industry studies, this thesis first of all aims at studying the reconfigurations of the profession inside institutional television. How did the group renegotiate its positions within the TSR and with the other professions? The definition of “television director” will be deconstructed and taken in its broadest sense. The profession will be understood as a ‘professional configuration’<sup>[7]</sup> characterized by exchanges, conflicts and negotiations between a multiplicity of actors competing for a field of skills, techniques and knowledge. This approach will pay attention to the attempts by groups or individuals to delimit and define a professional space.

My study will also take into account aspects of television directors' paths outside the TSR and the connections between the group and other networks. To what extent has TSR been a central player in the history of the profession, and in the construction of this latter culture and collective identity? A first observation of the group shows that television directors belonged to groups and associations of varied natures: they met at professional associations and trade unions in both television and cinema spheres, through intermedia collaborations, at international meetings and festivals, or thanks to transnational exchange of programmes and technical cooperations. Television directors have also imported or exported knowledge and skills acquired during training abroad.

These professional meetings can finally be understood as many opportunities for these television directors to define and to highlight certain specificities of their profession at different times and in different geographic, institutional and media contexts. These multiple

frameworks will make it possible to approach the variety of designations of the profession according to the contexts in which they are produced.

[1] Jérôme Bourdon, *Histoire de la télévision sous de Gaulle*, (Paris, 2014), p. 18.

[2] 'TSR Notre histoire', online at [www.notrehistoire.ch/pages/about](http://www.notrehistoire.ch/pages/about) (last accessed 27 January 2018).

[3] Boris Acquadro and Raymond Vouillamoz, *La TSR a 50 ans: un album de famille 1954-2004* (Genève, 2004); Nicolas Bouvier, *Télévision suisse romande 1954-1979: 25 ans TV ensemble* (Lausanne, 1979).

[4] François Bardet, *Témoins de la Terre, Continents sans Visa (1959-1969)*, TSR Archives, Geneva; Robert Gerbex, *En balayant devant ma porte et devant celles de la Télévision Suisse romande et de quelques cinéastes* (Lausanne, 1997); Pierre Matteuzzi, 'Passion TV', *Culture Enjeu*, 50 (Genève, 2016); Raymond Vouillamoz, *Zapping intime* (Lausanne, 2015).

[6] Jérôme Bourdon, 'Les réalisateurs de télévision : le déclin d'un groupe professionnel', *Sociologie du travail*, 4 (1993), pp. 431-445; Pierre Corset, Philippe Mallein, Joëlle Périllat, Monique Sauvage, 'Éléments pour l'histoire d'un corps professionnel: les réalisateurs de télévision', *Bulletin du Comité d'Histoire de la Télévision*, 4 (1982), pp. 59-76.

[7] Andrew Abbott, *The system of professions: an essay on the division of expert labor* (Chicago and London, 1988).



# New Era, New Media? Liánhuánhuà and the Hand-drawn “Cinema” of the 1980s

Julia M Koblinska — UC Berkeley



In my dissertation project, I examine the media landscape of early postsocialist China (also known as the “New Era,” roughly 1978-1989). Following the official end of the Cultural Revolution and Maoism, the socialist mediascape changed dramatically. Everyday media products like film, comics, newly available television, and early digital culture presented Reform Era consumers with an array of new options: narratives, objects, costumes, genres, etc. from which to produce a cultural life-world that anchored their identity in the new historical moment. In this transitional period, new media or new imaginations of old media like film produced new modes of experiencing space and time. They created new mediated sensoriums at a moment when changes in the textures of commercialized everyday life, synthetic fabrics, plastics, as well as the vertiginous surfaces of skyscraper glass and reinforced concrete, transformed everyday life. The diversification of media products created new rhythms of postsocialist life that interlaced old fantasies and temporalities with global capitalist time as China reintegrated with the world economy. Media consumers faced a new and uncertain future as they experienced pleasure, ennui, or anxiety in the play of repressed histories of Chinese pre-revolutionary cultural imagery, the iconography of socialist modernity, and foreign films, screens, and technologies from sites as diverse as Japan, Eastern Europe, and the United States.

I began thinking about my dissertation through cinema, and the question of what happens to the medium that had been so crucial in imagining the socialist dreamworld of the Maoist years in the decades of dramatic media change that followed. To inform my understanding of film culture in the 1980s, I turned to film press where I found plenty of wonderful sources. For example, a comic strip from the January 1981 issue of *Popular Cinema* (*Dazhong*

*dianying*), a popular film magazine with a circulation of eight million in the early 80s, offers a telling history of the continuities and ruptures of media in modern Chinese history.<sup>[1]</sup> The comic is titled: “Jiang Qing’s Career.” In the strip, Jiang Qing, the infamous wife of Chairman Mao, is pictured in a succession of film stills that trace her remediation as an image across several media formats. In the first still, labeled “1930s narrative film” (*gùshì piàn*), she appears in a dressed in form-fitting cheongsam. This is the Shanghai film culture of the pre-liberation China, known both for its left-wing products and indulgences in technologies of modern urban life. In the second frame, she appears as a model communist, holding the Little Red Book and dressed in a square Mao suit, this time in a “1960s documentary” (*jìlù piàn*). Now, in 1981, film records the “reality” of socialism. In the last frame, Jiang Qing appears as “the accused” in court, now featured in a “1980s television film” (*diànshì piàn*). The history of modern China is traced here in the shift of medium from celluloid fantasy, to socialist realist film, to the live stream of broadcast television. But, despite the dramatic shift of medium from film to television, the comic strip is framed by film and pictured as successive shots in a reel. Even the broadcast of Jiang Qing’s trial is labeled a “TV film.” Film here is not as a foreclosed medium, but a master media trope that can contain and introduce not only new types of media and media practice, but new narratives of Chinese history as a history of media transition.



And yet, looking back to this close reading of the satirical comic, an excerpt from a text that I wrote in the early stages of thinking through my prospectus, I am struck by a glaring oversight. In my rush to interpret film as a master trope for understanding media history, a prejudice likely stemming from my academic background, I have failed to notice the material and aesthetic foundation of this image. While it may represent film as a unifying trope, the comic strip that brings all the Jiang Qings together is literally unified by the material base of the medium of paper and the style of illustrator’s drawing. Indeed, the more time I spent in the archives, perusing popular press from the 1980s in China to get a sense of the historical



background against which I was going to write about film and television, the more I interacted with print media and comic art. Instead of serving as a background or secondary source, print itself as an object and aesthetic form thus became a crucial part of the history of 1980s media culture that I want to tell.

I came to the particular print media object of *liánhuánhuà*, the primarily hand-drawn comic book format I will be discussing at the seminar, almost by accident. I did not read about it in an academic book or moth-bitten journal, but in a rather different archive. I first came across *liánhuánhuà* in the blog of a comic book enthusiast, [Nick Stember](#). Stember, having stumbled upon another blog, that of historian [Maggie Greene](#), in which she writes about discovering a 1980 Chinese adaptation of the 1977 *Star Wars* film at a flea market, used Greene's serendipitous find as a starting point for his own post as post about the former popularity of *liánhuánhuà* in China. I was also fascinated by a lengthy Weibo post detailing the various versions of *Star Wars liánhuánhuà* published in the 1980s. The work of a mysterious Chinese Weibo comic artist who goes by the name of Magic Mountain (Mòshān), the post, "[Star Wars Liánhuánhuà Encyclopedia: An Archaeology of Extraterrestrial Publishing.](#)" is wonderfully illustrated, including with original gifs, and really worth a look even for those who do not read Chinese. It only seems fitting that I am now writing about this unorthodox research process in yet another blog post.



Myself a childhood enthusiast of *Star Wars*, *Star Wars* comics, and comics more generally, I was quite taken with the post and wanted to know more about the ubiquity of this cultural product that was so strangely absent from Chinese cultural history texts produced by the Western academy. Likewise, I was intrigued by Stember's having framed *liánhuánhuà* as the pirated VCD of the pre-digital age. My MA thesis at Berkeley, "Discarded Technology and Pirated Copies: The VCD, Mimicry & Postsocialist Chinese Media," details how the VCD, or video CD, an early, cheap, and easily-copied digital video format with a resolution slightly

lower than that of a videocassette played a huge role in the dissemination of film and video in millennial China. This “substandard” medium allowed for the quick and easy dissemination of digital pirated images that became ubiquitous in urban daily life. Furthermore, VCD images resonate with the aesthetics of independent Chinese cinema which is usually only considered in terms of the freedom afforded by digital cameras and not the possibilities of censorship-subverting cinephilia afforded by VCDs. The film/not film dialectic was a productive approach in writing a short history of the marginal digital technology of the VCD and it attuned me questions of resolution and the coexistence of uneven technological temporalities in one media landscape that now inform my work.

As suggested by Stember’s metaphors, I find that many *liánhuánhuà* that adapt films, like the *Star Wars* comic Greene found, likewise turn the “high resolution” of cinema, or television, into a “low resolution” image. Of course, in the case of *liánhuánhuà*, it is for the most part, an image rendered by hand, not a computer. In some cases, I later found, *liánhuánhuà* are also assembled from photographs (of films, television programs, and stage performances). At even a cursory glance, *liánhuánhuà* seemed to be a promising media object for further research.



Having run into writer’s block with the “master trope of cinema” approach, I decided to turn to *liánhuánhuà*. Perhaps unsurprisingly, much of my experience with *liánhuánhuà* was initially mediated by digital technology. As *liánhuánhuà* are today primarily the objects of nostalgic appreciation and collection, I found that there are many enthusiast websites on which one can read digital scans. While I was also able to buy some interesting *liánhuánhuà* at flea markets in China, and through them to experience the materiality of the medium first hand, I found that when it came to finding particular texts, I had to go back to the internet. To get my hands on all the *Star Wars* adaptations I could find, for example, I had to learn how to circumvent digital payment policies in China to purchase *liánhuánhuà* on what is probably the world’s largest used book store, kongfz.cn. After considerable frustration, I was happily

able to buy most of what I wanted for a few dollars. Materials in hand, I could finally sit down to start my work.

My dissertation is currently divided into chapters that each deal primarily with the problems faced by and the changing significance of one medium. Roughly, I will deal with the ways in which *liánhuánhuà*, television, and film compete with each other to best represent the material change of the decade and to best entertain 1980s audiences. I am attentive to what limitations and affordances each medium offers, and how each medium reshapes the time and space of its audiences.

I begin with a chapter on the new role of the old medium of *liánhuánhuà* in the early 1980s. I recognize the format as a transitional media object with a complex relationship to modern Chinese aesthetic and media culture in general and the media situation of the early to mid 1980s in particular. For decades, *liánhuánhuà* could, to a degree, provide for viewers an approximation of what the more technologically advanced medium of film looked and felt like. Although significant in the media landscape of Republican and Maoist China, it was in the 1980s that *liánhuánhuà* skyrocketed in popularity and readership. In terms of picturing futurity, hand-drawn *liánhuánhuà* could in some senses do more than both film and television could accomplish in the early years of the decade. Furthermore, they were part of a larger industry of hand-drawn images, including advertising copy and various kinds of illustrations and marginalia, that filled Chinese periodicals in the early 1980s. As such, they are part of a larger representational space that rendered images of modernity and futurity with one of the most rudimentary imaging technologies: the hand.

I take up the question of how the “low-resolution” of *liánhuánhuà* fares during the dramatic technological and material reorganization China undergoes in the 1980s. While film and television competed to spectacularize the material reorientation of domestic and urban life in post-Cultural Revolution China on colorful screens boasting the most up-to-date visual technologies and aesthetic styles, *liánhuánhuà* remained cheap, painfully low-tech, and materially and formally almost unchanged since their earliest iteration. Although the aesthetics of the images featured in each panel did change dramatically, *liánhuánhuà* were still the same small booklets right until their demise. The limitation of such a medium are clear. *Liánhuánhuà* offer one static image per page, accompanied by a caption, and are circulated to readers on pulp paper. They are cheap. By operating on a “low budget,” however, *liánhuánhuà* could produce by hand the fantastical visual narratives that Chinese filmmakers and television studios could not afford to record on film or tape. Likewise, thousands of stories of different genres could easily be produced at a time when film and television production at such a scale was impossible. And finally, small and cheap as *liánhuánhuà* were, they could become visual fetish objects that allowed readers to possess stories in a way that the fleeting images of film and television did not. They could be consumed at any time, in any place, even outside the reach of the still growing electronic network of television. To give a sense of the scope of their popularity, in 1985, the 860,000,000 million *liánhuánhuà* in circulation accounted for one third of all print media in China.

I frame my analysis of *liánhuánhuà* in a short history of the medium. I introduce its origin in 1920s Shanghai urban culture. There, it was denigrated as a regressive “bad object” devoted to the ideologically suspect mystical and strange martial arts genres (*shénguài wǔxiá*), but flourished in concert with the development of modern printing technologies and cinema. I briefly note *liánhuánhuà*'s important role in Maoist media culture, then read the phenomenal

rise of *liánhuánhuà* in early years of New Era China and its decline later in the decade through a *liánhuánhuà* adaptation of the novel *Real or Fake Celestial Palace*, the aforementioned adaptations of the 1977 American film *Star Wars*, and the short lived career of the television-adaptation *liánhuánhuà* magazine *Television Lianhuahua* (*Diànshì liánhuánhuà*, 1985-1990).

I am including several images. The first is the comic strip of Jiang Qing. The second and third are images of the *Star Wars liánhuánhuà* published in the 1980s that I have acquired. The third image shows how three of the texts illustrate Luke Skywalker’s encounter with Princess Leia’s “My only hope” hologram. The last image features two panels of mid 1930s *liánhuánhuà* that show the variety of content available to readers when the medium was still relatively young. On the left, an image of Edison demonstrating a film camera. On the right, a scene from the historical epic, *The Romance of Three Kingdoms*.

陈广生 董福生 连环画 1935 上海泰兴书局出版



朱润斋 三国志演义 连环画 约1937 宏泰书局出版



[1] Circulation reported in: “Increased Circulation of *Popular Cinema*,” *Chinese Literature* 6 (1981), 130.



# White Collar Photography: Paper machines and the labor practices of knowledge organization

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This note ensues from my experience with photo archives during a research stay in the United States in 2017. The principal object of my inquiries was the idea of the photo archive itself, the way it came into being within the institutionalized space of public libraries, and the practices of knowledge organization—the collecting, processing, storing and transmission of pictures as visual information—that it has crystallized during its formative years, from the late 1930s until the post-World War II era.

At the starting point of my research project was an American librarian, Paul Vanderbilt (1905-1995), and an iconic photo archive, the Farm Security Administration (FSA, 1935-1942) photograph collection, for which the librarian was asked in 1940 to address the “problem of filing visual materials” and to set new routine operations for the maintaining of a fast-growing photo file (it had already accumulated some 70,000 pictures then). Fascinated by the scale of the undertaking and deeply interested in working with photographs—the class of documents which, in his view, “had received the least technical and thorough attention for filing and preservation”—Vanderbilt drew up an ambitious plan for the reorganization of the entire archival system, which he eventually executed between 1943 and 1945 as Visual Information Specialist.

The resulting collection, today at the Library of Congress, has since been recognized as a “prime cultural artifact of the New Deal”, and its custodian granted the authorship of “one of the most literate, self-conscious, and elegant solutions” in the history of photo archives.<sup>[1]</sup> However, as I will argue, a highly intricate system of knowledge organization as the one designed by Paul Vanderbilt for the FSA project considerably exceeds the competence of a single individual. A “chained mechanism” and a “mass operation”, the archival process was conceived as a human-powered production line, with the work divided into a long sequence of operations that 20 white-collar workers could perform harmoniously, at an increased pace. Vanderbilt was thus applying to the management of a photo archive what he called “modern techniques” derived chiefly from the “worlds of science and business”—that is, “duplicating machinery [i.e. photography], numerical controls, proper separation of function, anticipation of changes, and sound office administration practice”<sup>[2]</sup>.

The idea was to detach what a visual document amalgamates, to reduce all that is complex in a photograph to its simplest elements and to devote a specific operation to each—from the accession analysis to the assignment of the subject class numbers, including the editing of captions, the typing of index cards or the stamping of serial numbers on mounted pictures. At the heart of the archival process was the index card. As carriers, cards enabled the mounted pictures to move as standardized and material pieces of information from workstation to workstation and thus to be engaged in the labor practices of knowledge organization. By referring to the photo file as a “machine”—an analogy used some 70 years later by media historian Markus Krajewski as core hypothesis for his seminal book on the card indexing system<sup>[3]</sup>—Vanderbilt allocated to the index card a second, crucial function. They operated as controllers of the chain work, allowing the staff to records special cases, inconsistent decisions or, more generally, to integrate explanatory annotations at a specific step of the process line. Through index cards, Vanderbilt was able to supply the archival “machine” with the necessary interface control and feedback loop that made the whole system work.<sup>[4]</sup>

Although the system had been devised to be as highly standardized and automatized as possible, the amount of thought and energy that was expended on questions of human labor and the material practices of meaning production, which combine to make the editing of photographs a subjective and embodied experience<sup>[5]</sup>, is extraordinary. Because of the visual nature of the processed documents, Vanderbilt claimed that the making of a photo file necessarily involves human exercises in arbitrary judgment and interpretation: “the file procedure is not free from arbitrary or subjective interpretation. It is assumed that this is impossible.” Critical links in the chain, some operations were considered by Vanderbilt as “precision work” that not only “must be performed by individuals and not by machines”, but even required “more than a couple of Junior Clerks.”<sup>[6]</sup> Yet scholars still haven’t fully acknowledged those skilled professionals who, through their work on the file, shaped the way material has been made available to patrons. Such shortcomings seem to follow on the idea that as the labor is subdivided into routine operations under increased mechanization and centralized management, white-collars “[are] estranged from the intellectual potentialities and aspect of [their] work”, pushing historians to overlook those individuals as meaningless units whose skills and personality had been “routinized in the name of increased and cheaper productivity” <sup>[7]</sup>.

Preliminary investigations into the life of those who worked under Vanderbilt’s direction, however, revealed a significant diversity and richness of profiles. Take Marion Lambert, for instance. Graduated with a MA in anthropology from Radcliffe College in 1940, she joined the staff of the FSA project in 1944 as caption editor and assistant for classification

operations. Between September 1945 and March 1946, she eventually served as acting chief during Vanderbilt's absence in Germany. Her presence might have significantly shaped the FSA collection, knowing that Vanderbilt adopted the scheme devised by the Cross Cultural Survey at the Institute of Human Relations at Yale University, where she worked as a research anthropologist from 1942 to 1944. Take Edgar Breitenbach as well. An art historian from the "Hamburg School" and early member of the circle around the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg, he participated in Aby Warburg's seminars, assisted Fritz Saxl in preparing image series for the well-known atlas *Mnemosyne* and completed his PhD under Erwin Panofsky at the University of Hamburg in 1927. As he told years later, Vanderbilt hired him in July 1944 as technical supervisor with special emphasis on classification "when he heard that [Breitenbach] was an iconographer."<sup>[8]</sup> His work on the file deserves to be investigated, in my opinion, knowing that this assignment eventually led him to serve as chief of the Prints and Photographs Division at the Library of Congress – which became the definite home of the FSA collection in 1946 –between 1956 and 1973.

However, actual identification of these individualities among the FSA archive is proving to be extremely difficult, due to the idea of transparency with which record-management work has been traditionally associated. "Obliged by extolling their own professional myth of impartiality, neutrality, and objectivity", as the archival theorists Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook put it, archivists and librarians took care not to leave slightest trace of their routine work behind, carefully hiding what the two authors have called "the power of archives."<sup>[9]</sup> In the case of the FSA file, such denial led to a lack of documentation or any intelligible trace that might help to establish the individual responsibilities in the way Marion Lambert, Edgar Breitenbach, or other marginalized members of the staff wielded power over the photo archive through their labor practices of knowledge organization. How can one write about the archive as an intellectual and collective construct, when all the individual qualities or personal contributions have been carefully removed—that is, when white-collars' signatures on the chain products are no more readable?

<sup>[1]</sup> Alan Trachtenberg, "From Image to Story: Reading the File," in *Documenting America, 1935-1943* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 43–73.

<sup>[2]</sup> Vanderbilt, "Résumé of professional experience", Washington D.C., February 1942, 2.

<sup>[3]</sup> Markus Krajewski, *Paper Machines: About Cards & Catalogs, 1548-1929*, History and Foundations of Information Science (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2011).

<sup>[4]</sup> Vanderbilt, "Illustrated proposal to introduce scientific procedure in the maintenance of a photograph file", Washington D.C., December 1942, 6.

<sup>[5]</sup> Anthropologist Elizabeth Edwards has summarized similar arguments in respect to the photo collection of the Surrey Survey in Elizabeth Edwards, "Photographs, Mounts, and the Tactile Archive," *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, no. 19 (2014): 4.

<sup>[6]</sup> Vanderbilt, "Uncorrected draft [Notes on classification for the Stryker project]", December 1950:18.

<sup>[7]</sup> C. Wright Mills, *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* (Oxford University Press, 1969), 227.

<sup>[8]</sup> Oral history interview with Edgar Breitenbach, interview by Paul Cummings, February 18, 1975, 44, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

<sup>[9]</sup> Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook, "Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory," *Archival Science* 2, no. 1–2 (March 1, 2002): 1–19.

# The Ciné-tract, from May '68 to Nuit Debout. The Construction of a Counter-Power Dispositive

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Part and parcel of the inventiveness that typified French militant cinema of the sixties and the seventies, the *Ciné-tracts*' project that was conceived and developed during the workers and students' insurrection of May 1968, reflects a specific moment in the history of France's political Left, marked by a generalized will to break down barriers and give voice to the "excluded" and the "unprivileged". In addition to this tumultuous political climate, the introduction and the commercialization of lightweight portable cameras of a significantly lower cost contributed to the creation of a particular context out of which emerged new possibilities – technically and conceptually speaking – for a politically engaged cinema. Beyond the invention of a new film genre, the *Ciné-tracts*' project – led by such prominent figures of French political cinema as Chris Marker, Jean-Luc Godard, Alain Resnais and William Klein – aspired to the creation of a new means of visual expression, a free-access platform facilitating the exchange of images, texts, knowledge, roles, hence encouraging a personalized form of direct political action.



Dominant historiography identifies the expression “ciné-tract” with this May ‘68 project that, nevertheless, proved to be short-lived. The production of these militant films seemed to cease abruptly during the summer of 1968; therefore, the ciné-tract is nowadays regularly dismissed as a failed experiment or, at best, regarded as a curious object of a long-forgotten past. However, this postulate fails to acknowledge the fact that from 1968 to today, a non-negligible amount of short, politically-engaged films adopted this denomination and embraced the heritage that it entails. Moreover, during the 1970s, as militant filmmakers turned to video technology, the expression “vidéo-tract” started to circulate, qualifying short movies made by militant and mostly feminist groups. Since the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the so-called digital turn, the form of the ciné-tract has resurfaced powerfully, endorsed by well-known professional filmmakers (see for example Jean-Marie Straub’s and Danièle Huillet’s *Europe 2005-27 octobre, Cinétract*), political parties or labor unions (the latest example being the *Vidéo-tract pour la grève générale du 17 mai 2016* made by the anarchist union CNT – Confédération Nationale du Travail), militant student groups (like the one formed at the Paris 8 University in 2016), or even “anonymous” amateurs aspiring to produce a personalized political discourse.

These few examples (the list is far from exhaustive) stand as proof that the ciné-tract did not really disappear back in 1968; it continues to exist today as a particular form of visual expression and political action. Therefore, my doctoral thesis’ objective is twofold. First, it aims to provide, for the first time in academic literature, a history of the ciné-tract, conceived as a denomination, a discursive construction encompassing a variety of objects and practices throughout the decades. Second, by studying the ciné-tract as a visual dispositive producing counter-power effects, it seeks to construct a new theoretical model capable of highlighting neglected aspects of militant cinema and of other alternative, politically engaged media practices.

Assembling a complete corpus of all of the ciné-tracts and vidéo-tracts made from the 1960s to the present has proved to be an impossible task, given the ephemeral nature of these films that are meant to be of an immediate service to a specific social struggle or a particular political movement. Therefore, I plan to study a number of relevant case examples from specific moments in the history of France, that are linked to political events that triggered the production of militant films (May 68, the Woman’s Liberation Movement in the 1970s, *Nuit Debout*, and others). Furthermore, because it covers a period of almost fifty years, my research is inevitably intertwined with questions of technology. By providing assessments of past and current technological developments, I aim to examine the impact of changing media forms (film, video, digital technologies, Internet) on both the form and content of the resulting political interventions.

While appraising the plurality of the ciné-tract’s different forms and embodiments, my analysis of these films, as well as of their production and distribution tactics, provided convincing evidence that a general scheme remains constant through the years: an operating model actualizing itself as a relational disposition of technical and representational elements that determines, in accordance with a particular strategic end, a specific type of relation to the spectator. Crucial to studying all of the aspects of this disposition together is the adoption of a dynamic methodology and a theoretical framework that would allow us to distance ourselves from traditional approaches to film history and film analysis (such as the analysis of the ciné-tract as a distinct film “genre”). Inspired by the methodology developed by François Albera and Maria Tortajada in the early 2000s, my thesis attempts, through a detailed film analysis as well as a meticulous recounting of all the practices involved in the films’ production and

distribution (by means of oral history and discourse analysis), to reconstruct the ciné-tract as a visual dispositive, that is a “network of relations between a spectator, the representation, and the ‘machinery’ that allows the spectator to have access to the representation”[\[1\]](#). This type of approach reveals the *de-subjugation of the spectator* as the ultimate goal of all ciné-tracts; the viewer is urged to engage immediately with a concrete form of political action, that is, the creation of his or her own ciné-tract(s), offering alternative and subjective accounts of political reality and thus challenging the myths of authority and objectivity as compelling social narratives.

### **Studying the original *Ciné-tracts*’ project from an epistemological point of view**

The ciné-tracts made during the spring and summer of 1968 were anonymous short silent movies shot in 16mm, composed of one reel of a maximum length of thirty meters which, projected in the standardized rate of twenty-four frames per second, resulted in films of two to five minutes each. In most cases, they were black and white films consisting exclusively of still images (photographs, magazine covers, publicity posters, film stills, etc.) and handwritten intertitles. Most significantly, they were edited “in-camera”; *montage* in its canonical form as a post-production process was “prohibited”. Each film was supposed to be ready to be screened upon its departure from the laboratory.

An undefined number of ciné-tracts were actually produced in Paris from May to July 1968. The main ambition of this now forgotten film project was the creation of a new communication tool aspiring to materialize the idea of making a direct political intervention accessible to the masses. The formal characteristics of the ciné-tracts – no sound, no editing, the use of “ready-made” still images – were meant to simplify the filmmaking process, thus inviting amateurs to participate in their making. Moreover, a team of volunteers, recruited mostly from Marker’s and Godard’s friends and acquaintances, took on organizing the logistics of the production and the distribution of these films; they started by distributing leaflets both in the streets of Paris during demonstrations, as well as in occupied factories and universities, inviting everybody to make ciné-tracts (“*Ciné-tractez!*”), explaining in detail the process of their fabrication, and explicitly stating that they would provide all the necessary equipment (the 16mm camera, the studio, even a fair amount of photographs and documents) to anyone interested in trying his or her hand at this entirely new form of filmmaking. More importantly, this informal collective[\[2\]](#) assured the development and the printing of 16mm copies for free, thanks to workers in several Parisian laboratories who shared the political values of the May 68 revolt.

In reality, however, the *Ciné-tracts*’ project did not achieve the goals of restructuring the media reality from below and questioning existing hierarchies in the construction of visual discourses and representations. In the end, the vast majority of these films were made by well-known and well-established directors whose reputation monopolized the symbolic capital of the ciné-tract as a distinct media practice. Today, when consulting the private archives of SLON, one finds that – from the autumn of 1968 onwards – individuals, unions, and other institutions interested in buying or renting some of those ciné-tracts would explicitly ask for a Godard or a Resnais film (even though the ciné-tracts themselves were unsigned and, therefore, technically anonymous).

Nonetheless, the ciné-tracts project of May 1968 gave birth to a variety of models of political action and media practice. The task of reconstructing and shedding new light on models that have been previously ignored or explicitly marginalized by official historiographical

discourse is incumbent upon researchers who are looking to challenge teleological conceptions of media history. Driven by this particular concern, in my thesis I plan to examine the ciné-tract not as a type of film or a “genre”, nor as a medium, but as a dispositive: a network of relations (between a spectator, the representation and the ‘machinery’) flexible and amendable to adaptation according to the political, socio-cultural, and technological context of any given era. This methodology allows me to circumvent the requirement to define the ciné-tract in a fixed and universal way, and thus to avoid the essentialist trap in my analytical approach. In this respect, my theoretical construction will knowingly raise epistemological questions regarding the ways that our societies capture and transmit images, discourses, and ideologies in a given historical moment. For instance, understanding the ciné-tract as a dispositive invites us to study and analyze the original project (i.e. as it was conceived and, for a brief moment, developed in May and June 1968), as the founding of a free image-sharing platform – a sort of a database for creating political discourses, while at the same time not falling back on a teleological reading of History that would attribute to this project a prophetic force or a precursory role with regards to the evolution of new media practices in the 2000s; instead, we can interpret it by relating it to an epistemic schema which continues, from 1968 to the present, to organize the way that we conceive and use visual media. In this way, the May ‘68 ciné-tracts emerge as a case study for a “pre-history” of current social networks in terms of participation, sharing, platforms, and the reconceptualization of both the “author” and the “spectator” as “users” of a dispositive.

### **The Paris 8 ciné-tracts: new media, digital culture and the archive**

For the Seminar, I would like to introduce a specific case study: the *Ciné-tracts*’ project initiated by a group of insurgent students from the Paris 8 Vincennes-Saint-Denis University that left its mark during the *Nuit Debout* movement in the spring of 2016. The way this particular project was conceived and developed is a testament to the fact that, far from being a failure, the original May ‘68 project is of relevance today, a half a century later, as a model of political action. Similar to the professional filmmakers in the 1960s who conceived of the idea of this new type of film and provided amateurs with access to filmmaking by accompanying them throughout all steps of the creative process, a Professor at Paris 8 Vincennes-Saint-Denis University, Hélène Fleckinger, who is a specialist in French militant video production of the 1970s, was the person who initially set the new ciné-tracts’ project in motion. In early March 2016, with the help of some of her students, she distributed in the buildings of their campus – at the time occupied by the students in reaction to the El Khomri bill (or “loi travail”) and in support to the *Nuit Debout* movement – the same two-paged leaflet that had formerly circulated in the streets of Paris in May 1968 (“*Ciné-tractez!*” – found in the archives of Iskra, a production company that grew out of the Slon cooperative). A few days later, she organized screenings of the original 1968 ciné-tracts and workshops, which took place in the classrooms of the occupied buildings, with the goal of inspiring students to begin producing their own ciné-tracts. During the next two months, the Paris 8 students produced fourteen ciné-tracts that were screened inside of the campus and during the *Nuit Debout* assemblies before being uploaded on YouTube and other web-based platforms. Some of these films aimed to promote a manifestation or other political actions, inviting the public to join the protestors; others offered a brief explanation of the students’ objections to the El Khomri bill, whereas a few of them performed what is known as *détournement*, a practice advocated by the Lettrists and the Situationists and also used by the original May ‘68 ciné-tracts that could be defined as the setting up of subversive political pranks by giving new meaning to recognizable archival images through montage.

However, History repeated itself. The students' initial response to Fleckinger's invitation was enthusiastic, but two months later their participation waned; before the end of May 2016, the production of ciné-tracts ceased completely. Furthermore, judging from the total number of views that they generated on their YouTube page from March 2016 to July 2018, these films were in the end rarely seen. Obviously, one could attribute this disenchantment to the evolution of the sociopolitical context from which the idea for a new series of ciné-tracts had emerged in the first place. Much like the May '68 revolt, the *Nuit Debout* movement did not last more than a few months; the revolutionary euphoria seemed to vanish once the El Khomri bill was adopted into law on 8 August 2016.

Nevertheless, I believe that the project's apparent failure to establish a new alternative media practice is also the result of a complex array of sociocultural and ideological developments that are specific to our age of digital technology. At first sight, this hypothesis might seem rather paradoxical, given the evolution of our mediascape and its technological foundations during the last fifty years. Back in 1968, producing and distributing 16mm films was a demanding task –technically and financially speaking, and this despite the ciné-tract's simplified form and creative process. Indeed, it proved to be impossible for a small, informal collective of volunteers to assure a constant production and distribution of ciné-tracts made by active, engaged citizens and thus to impose a new cultural practice that would challenge established media hierarchies. It would seem however that in our days, when anyone with access to a digital camera, a smartphone, or a computer can produce their own film and upload it to an instant audience, conditions are more favorable for such a project. After all, over the last decade, popular discourse has been hailing the advent of a long-awaited democratization of media thanks to the Internet with its free-sharing platforms and the so-called social networks. But a new question seems to arise out of this digital context: why do some videos (and some practices) have an extraordinary impact while others end up being completely overlooked? And more importantly, how could a militant media practice such as the ciné-tracts' project reach a wider audience while still remaining faithful to the radical political ambitions that gave rise to it?

The emergence of these new, pressing questions requires the mobilization or even the invention of novel interpretative frameworks allowing us to examine the conditions of possibility for the foundation of a long-term context of meaning in which such militant media practices could carry weight and become effective in terms of their goals. These methodologies should specifically allow us to study altogether the technological, social, ideological, but also legal factors that coordinate in order to encourage (or, in our case study, discourage) the production, the circulation and, finally, the visibility of militant movies today. Thus, they should firstly draw the attention to algorithms (such as PageRank) and other video classification or content regulatory systems at work on web-based platforms. After all, the much-acclaimed accessibility of digital technology truly concerns only a “moment of the dispositive”<sup>[3]</sup>, specific stages in the “life” of audiovisual discourses (for example the actual creation and online sharing of videos), while others (like those guaranteeing the visibility of those videos) stay relatively obscure for the wider public, mystified, and controlled by established financial, political, and media elites. Then, these new methodologies should reveal a series of micro-strategies (like reflexivity or media convergence) that could be of use to militant filmmakers today wishing to reach the largest possible audience. In this regard, the concept of the archive as well as its evolution within digital cultures needs to be addressed; the case of the ciné-tracts offers an example of cultural and political texts that should never be considered as passive objects locked away in repositories, but should be considered as active agents that could still play a role in society and that should therefore be reinvigorated within

new contexts of presentation. As Nick Couldry puts it, “in a time of mass self-broadcasting, when everyone in principle has the capacity to express *something* in what is formally a public domain (through being online), the questions of *how* every voice can be ‘heard in the context of life’ becomes an institutional question of great complexity”<sup>[4]</sup>.

<sup>[1]</sup> François Albera and Maria Tortajada, « Introduction to an Epistemology of Viewing and Listening Dispositives », in: *Cinema Beyond Film. Media Epistemology in the Modern Era*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010, p. 11. However, “[i]t is important to stress firstly that ‘machinery’ does not simply boil down to the machine, secondly that the problematics of the theory of representation are included in ‘representation’, and thirdly that ‘spectator’ includes the various psychological, sociological and cognitive approaches to the notions. Moreover, the three levels have to be redefined each time.”, François Albera and Maria Tortajada, “The 1900 Episteme” in: *Cinema Beyond Film. Media Epistemology in the Modern Era*, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

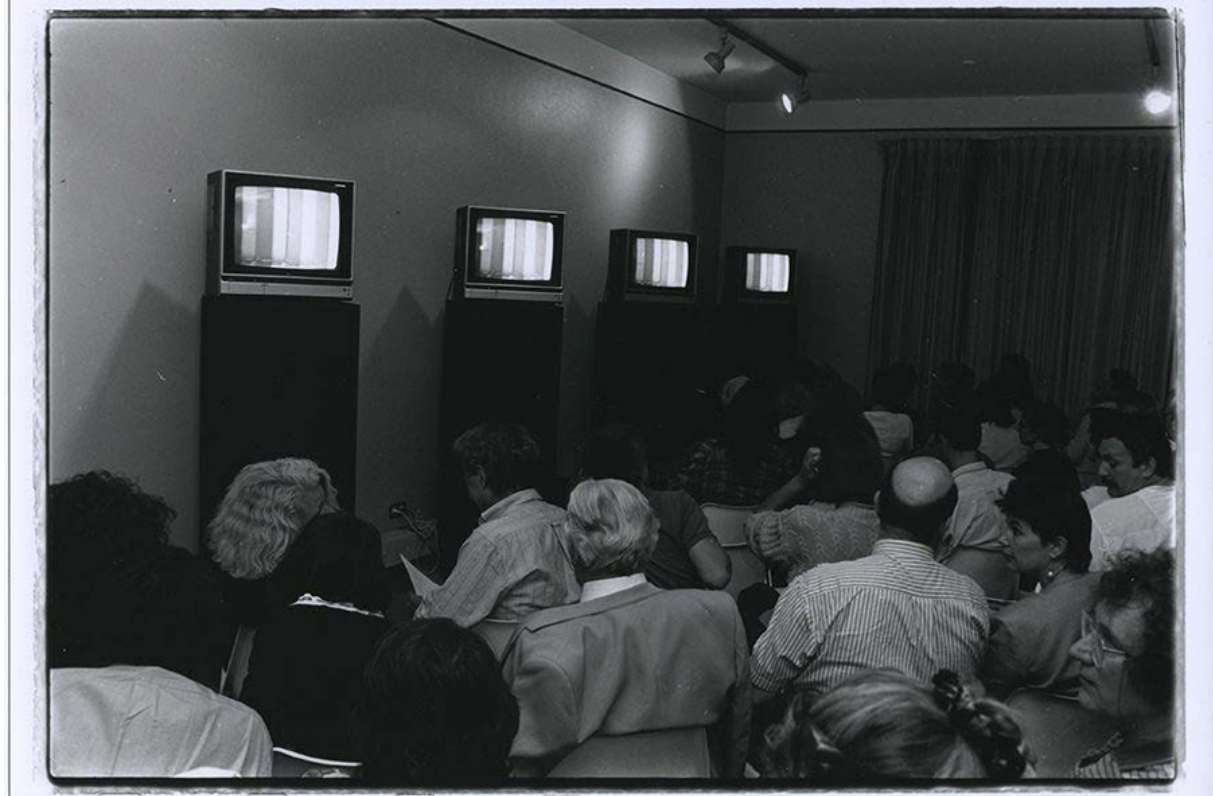
<sup>[2]</sup> During the events of May and June 1968, this team of volunteers did not adopt a legal form. However, a number of those who were actively involved in the Ciné-tracts’ project (including Marker himself) would eventually form, on November 1968, the cooperative SLON that eventually took in charge the distribution of those ciné-tracts in the following years.

<sup>[3]</sup> Benoît Turquety, *Inventer le cinéma. Épistémologie, problèmes, machines*, Lausanne, L’Âge d’homme, 2014.

<sup>[4]</sup> Nick Couldry, « Alternative media and voice », in Chris Atton (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Alternative and Community Media* », New York ; London, Routledge, 2015, p. 48.

# Video Art, New Media, Digital Arts : Thinking and exhibiting the moving image

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Video, as an inherently heterogeneous medium and as per its supports and its technical evolution is part of the intermedia field (Dick Higgins, 1966). In that sense, it escapes the compartmentalisation into rigid medium-related categories. Furthermore, its temporal dimension makes its exhibition mode problematic, while positioning it closer to the performative logic. The difficulty to give a consistent definition of video art is even stronger when one takes into consideration the multiplicity of “art and technology” and media categories – which cross, exceed or embrace the video medium. Video art is in that sense at the same time technologically over-defined during its first two decades (one inch, two inch, half-inch, three-quarter inch, U-Matic, VHS, Pal, Secam, NTSC...) and more loosely defined after its institutionalisation and homogenisation through the digital (“moving image”, “artist films”). Halfway between the art world, the expanded cinema and communication, video, despite its ambiguous and ever-changing nature, can be approached by considering the different contexts in which it is displayed and distributed.

My implication as a PhD researcher in the project “From video art to new media : the case of the VideoArt Festival Locarno (1980-2001)”, directed by François Bovier, gives me the opportunity to work on the VAF archives, which have never been taken into consideration as a whole before (video works / performances / workshops programs, as well as symposia and conferences reports).

In line with this project, my PhD thesis « *Video Art, New Media, Digital Arts : Thinking and exhibiting the moving image* » intends to contribute to a renewed history of video art, from its

emergence, to its institutionalisation, and to the shift brought about by digitalisation. It will systematically take into consideration modes of circulation, discursive networks, critical reception and ways of exhibiting video artworks, on the line of the “Minor History” (Joseph, 2008 ; Bovier, 2017) which aims to shed new light on a corpus of artistic practices by considering neglected archives and events that haven’t been retained by “dominant” history.

Therefore, I wish to focus on four different modes of exhibiting video art : the exhibition, the festival, the performance and the television.

In this perspective I intend to proceed through three steps. Firstly, a systematic redefinition and a delimitation of terms, categories, discourses and concepts such as Video Art, Electronic Art, Computer Art, Audiovisual Art, Media and Performance Art, Artist films. Secondly, a periodisation of the different video technologies. Thirdly, a mapping of events (festivals, exhibitions, performances) as an evolving network determined by its actors (curators, art dealers, artists) and its institutions (museums, galleries, artists’ spaces, festivals, television channels).

On that basis, I will focus on different case studies with distinct specificities on the level of their production mode, their distribution network or their specific exhibition display.

The video section of the exhibition *Projekt 74* conceived by Wulf Herzogenrath at the Kölnischer Kunstverein and the Kunsthalle offers a rich example of one of the first ambitious and extended initiative that questioned and contextualised time-based media, including video tapes and video installations, through a vast selection of European and American artists, such as Nam June Paik, Peter Campus, Dan Graham, Michael Hayden, Frank Gillette and Douglas Davis. Furthermore, this case allows us to explore the sources of inspiration before and after the event and how the works were respectively presented in other contexts.

Gerry Schum, on another hand, pioneered the potential of television as a production and exhibition space on its own. With the Fernsehalerie (1969-1972, Germany), he curated an authentic exhibition of contemporary artworks, consisting in an audiovisual broadcast at given schedules on the German TV channels Deutschen Fernsehen and Südwestfunk Baden-Baden, contributing in establishing the “Land Art” (term pinned by one of the broadcast) in the contemporary art scene.

The experimental collective art space The Kitchen was inaugurated on June 15 1971 on the initiative of the artists Steina and Woody Vasulka, who initially intended to create a place to present video works by artists, which quickly extended to include performance art, dance and music as well. This space represented an important place in the avant-garde scene by offering many artists, now internationally-recognised by cultural institutions, a rich framework for experimenting with the moving image, through its curated programmes and exhibitions.

Finally, the VideoArt Festival Locarno, founded in 1980 by the art dealer Rinaldo Bianda (1931-2000), which ended one year after his death, presents an exemplary case of a festival dedicated to video, both through its longevity and the diversity of its different approaches to the field. The program consisted, on the one hand, in the diffusion and exhibition of video and electronic works (on monitors or as installations), and on the other hand, in the organisation of symposiums and round tables in Monte Verita (Ascona), curated by René Berger (president of the AICA – International Association of Art Critics), where researchers coming from a

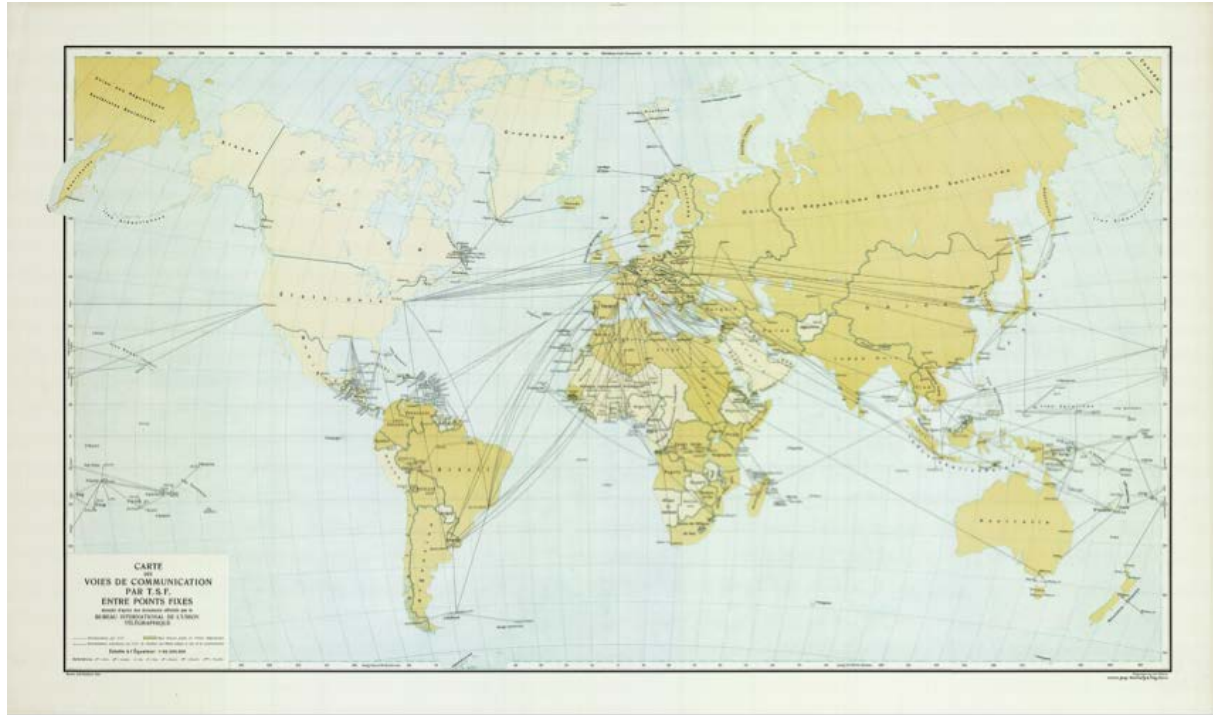
wide diversity of disciplines addressed such topics as video art, cybernetics, or new technologies.

Engaging with these case studies will allow us to address the following issues : what are the historical boundaries of video art ? When does it start and when does it end ? How could we articulate different moving image and art and technology typologies across the shift from analogue to digital ? To which extent do new media break apart from video art, or simply reshape its main features ?



# Mapping European Radiotelegraphy, 1912-1927

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My dissertation studies the transformation of European radiotelegraphy from 1912 to 1927. In that period, the development of radio experienced a drastic turn that led to the birth of radio broadcasting. The scholars frequently explain this transformation with the political, social and technological consequences of World War I (Barnard, 2000; Hilmes, 2012; Hugill, 1999; Volmar, 2014). However, the scholarship still lacks the comprehensive study on the transformations of radio in Europe, as most of the studies are based upon the American case (e.g., Körner, 1963; Lommers, 2012).

The important difference between this research and others written on radio history constitutes in approaching the subject of the study from a transnational perspective. This research focuses on transnational networks, interactions, flows, and actors in radio development following many scholars that have acknowledged the necessity of looking beyond the national frameworks when researching media (Badenoch & Fickers, 2010b; Christensen, 2013; Fickers & Johnson, 2010; Ribeiro & Seul, 2017; Van der Vleuten & Feys, 2016). Technologically, the radio waves could hardly be restricted to national boundaries as they naturally transcend national spaces. The World War I was a transnational event that accelerated processes beyond national frameworks and reinforced collaborations and conflicts between nations. The research limits itself to the radio development around the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), which is considered a key transnational actor in the arena of telecommunications on the European level (Aznavour, 2014; Badenoch & Fickers, 2010a; Balbi, Fari, Richeri, & Calvo, 2014). Therefore, this thesis forms a transnational perspective by looking at an inherently transnational subject (radio) in a transnational setting (war) with the particular focus on the negotiations and regulations developed around the key transnational actor (ITU).

In order to capture the war period with its premises and aftermath, the research centres on the period from the 1912 international conference on radiotelegraphy in London (which established the major rules of the international use of this medium) to the Washington conference of 1927 (that dealt with the consequences of the war and regulated radio broadcasting). The archival research focused on the interaction of the ITU with the networks of experts and users of radio through the regulations, correspondence, and publications. This approach determined the collection of a combination of different sources on an international and national level. It included four main categories of archival sources: the documents of the ITU Library and Archives in Geneva, national sources preserved in numerous national archives and libraries, documents of other international organisations that dealt with direct and indirect regulation of radio, and, finally, notes, letters, and articles published in radio amateurs' journals.

On this seminar, I would like to present a particular historical source: a map of radio communication. The critical research on maps, primarily based on the work of J.B. Harley, has rethought maps as a politically engaged document (Harley, 1989). As historians of technologies showed, the maps represent a crucial source of information, as they form the part of the infrastructural network (Plaiss, 2012). As Badenoch noted, "the network maps act as important mediators within and between the material, institutional and discursive frames of European infrastructures" (Badenoch, 2010, p. 49). Maps maintain the *status quo* of the network because they imply the idea of its sustainability (Harley, 1988, p. 282). In media studies, however, maps are most often used as an illustration of the collected data (Björnsson, 1981), with rare exceptions of in-depth analysis (Parks, 2013; Plantin, 2018). This thesis seeks to explore the maps as a social construction of knowledge; in particular, the analysis of this source combines research into the creation of the map with the interpretation of the visual information.

The radiotelegraphic maps began to appear from the very beginning of radio development, but remained courtesy of particular companies, institutions, and states, until the 1910s. In 1911, France, Germany, Russia, and Italy approached the ITU to provide the maps of radiotelegraphic stations (ITU Archives, 1911, D. 23. N. 1, N.3, N.9, N. 18). However, the ITU did not have any maps, even though it published and regularly distributed the list of the radio stations. On the following London 1912 conference it was decided to oblige the ITU to produce and publish the radio communication maps. The first draft was ready on 13<sup>th</sup> January of 1914. However, because of the war and the continuous change of the political landscape, the publication of the map was deferred. The first maps of radio communication were published only after World War I: in 1922/1923, with the second edition following in 1925/1926. Those were a result of long-lasting negotiations and modifications that had to be incorporated into the 1910s drafts. Some information did not even fit the existing template, so the first two maps came with the supplement of all the modifications in textual format. They quickly became subject to critique and necessitated to redraw the map entirely, which have not happened up until 1927. The third map of the ITU, issued in 1927, differed quite significantly from any previous maps (see **Figure 1**).

In contrast to previous maps that were composed of four or five sheets plus textual comments, the map of 1927 became the first internationally approved map that fitted all radiotelegraphic network on one sheet only. This meant, that in order to capture this developed network, it had to omit some information. In this visual image, the ITU made the understanding of radio more simple and accessible, by connecting it to the physical reality. There are three most important issues for this map: the design, the connections, and the nations.

Firstly, the design of the map addresses an essential question of depicting the invisibility of radio waves. As any visualisation, such as cartoons or illustrations, maps had to depict the radio waves on the flat surface of the paper, taking into account their absolute invisibility and intangibility. The wireless nature of radio and its invisibility made it problematic to imagine the radio waves in their relation to the physical space. One choice was to depict radiotelegraphic stations as simple small dots on the map, such as was already done by other companies and in the 1922 and 1925 ITU maps. This method reflected the physical reality accurately, as the radiotelegraphic stations were indeed seen only the small dots from a bird's eye view, but the downside was that it did not give any sense of the magnitude of the radio station. The 1927 map presented radio differently: it depicted all radiotelegraphic connections with lines. In fact, the name of the map – Map of communication channels via radiotelegraphy – already shows that it depicted the invisible flows rather the visible radio transmitters. That was an important shift in understanding radiotelegraphy: from a map of visible stations to the map of invisible communication channels. It revealed the invisible infrastructure, as any infrastructure, as Paul Edwards argued, tends to be concealed (Edwards, 2017).

Secondly, the 1927 map emphasised the connections between the land stations, rather than between them and sea vessels. This represents an essential turn for radiotelegraphy after the war period: from the sea to the land. Previously, radiotelegraphy was seen as a tool for the sea navigation, and the maps of radiotelegraphy featured the most of the regular maritime routes around the globe. The 1912 Convention even obliged the ITU to put on the map the principal lines of sea navigation (ITU Archives, 1912, p. 577). The 1927 map, on the contrary, shows the connection between the cities and the towns that were not necessarily harbours, but rather important national centres.

Furthermore, the map also emphasized the nations. The scholars have noted that the history of the cartography is linked to the rise of the nation-state in the modern world, and a map, historically, always depicted world through the national perspective, and shaped the idea of a national community (e.g., Sparke, 2005; Wintle, 1999). Even global and seemingly “neutral” maps intended for the international audience have their national preferences and accents. Because of its international status, the International Telecommunication Union had to provide with the international “neutral” vision on the radio, but this general character was determined by the state-members, and was mostly European. The map featured many European capitals, such as London, Berlin, and Paris. Those represented a centre of communication, as they were a starting point for most of the lines of radiotelegraphy. Moreover, some of the lines were depicted with arrows, coming from European empires to their colonies, such as one from Paris to Dakar. As J.B. Harley noted, “cartography deploys its vocabulary accordingly so that it embodies a systematic social inequality” (Harley, 1989, p. 6). Through the maps, elite and powerful groups promoted a particular vision of the world to the weaker (Harley, 1988), emphasising the power of Europe. In fact, the 1927 map emphasised only long communication channels, not even paying attention to the close cross-border exchange. As Badenoch suggested, this could be interpreted in both ways: not only Europe was presented as a centre of the space of uniform and interconnected communication network, but Europe is “where the network is” (Badenoch, 2010, p. 53)

Overall, this 1927 map envisioned the world through the lens of a global connectivity and asserted the coherence and centralized character of the infrastructural network. It embedded ideas of radiotelegraphic networks as a global communication system, and asserted coherence and unity of all connections even where it was not present. Harley asserted that maps create

myths (Harley, 1988, p. 300). Combining scattered fragments of the radiotelegraphic networks, the ITU sustained a myth of a transnational network of radiotelegraphy, in its uniformity and global spread with Europe as a central hub.

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# Leaking Margins: William S. Burroughs and the Cut-Up

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I cut up an article written by John Paul Getty and got: “It’s a bad thing to sue your own father” – this was a rearrangement and wasn’t in the original text. And a year later one of his sons did sue him... We had no explanation for this at the time; just suggesting that when you cut into the present, the future leaks out.<sup>[i]</sup>

Addressing a class at Colorado’s Naropa University in the summer of 1976, the American writer, artist and theorist, William S. Burroughs instructed students on the history of the cut-up and his recent explorations of the occult uses of audiotape media. By this time, Burroughs had firmly cemented an infamous niche within underground arts circles as the author of the classic countercultural novel *Naked Lunch*, a known opioid addict, who had mentored Beat writers Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac, accidentally shot his wife in Mexico, and at the age of sixty-three only recently returned to the United States after decades of living abroad in Tangiers, Paris and London. On the one hand, the caricature was largely a construct of his friends, who wrote Burroughs’ character into their novels and poems.<sup>[ii]</sup> But the biography also leaked into the mass media as his notoriety in the post-Beat counterculture continued to grow throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s. This tension between mass culture and counterculture can be further drawn out through a close look at the cut-up techniques that Burroughs was instructing his students on.

According to the oft-repeated myth, the cut-up was discovered by the British artist Brion Gysin in October 1959 when he accidentally sliced through a stack of newspapers while creating a drawing mount in his room at the ‘Beat Hotel’ in Paris. As he shifted the pieces, new words and sentences appeared, which he “though [were] hilariously funny and hysterically meaningful.”<sup>[iii]</sup> Initially utilised as a generative writing technique akin to the chance techniques of Dadaists such as Tristan Tzara, extensive research and experimentation



with the cut-up by Gysin, Burroughs, and a swathe of associates opened up a wide set of experimental multi-media practices that not only utilised the written page, but audiotape, film, photography, and early computer technology. It was through these experiments that Burroughs worked on theorising the way that these media effect society at large. While the cut-up has been extensively addressed within the field of literary studies, these practices were not solely literary or artistic experiments. Rather, my dissertation, *Cut into the Past: Media and the Arts of William S. Burroughs, 1959-1976*, seeks to bring the cut-up back into the field of media studies where it was initially grounded. The project cuts into the past and seeks the point where Burroughs' media leak out among the aesthetics, politics, and media environments of their day.

Historically speaking, Burroughs' experimentation with the cut-up was situated within a rapidly growing media landscape. The increasing consumer availability of television brought images of the American-led war in Vietnam into the homes of Americans, making it the first "televised war"; shifting and shaping public opinion in often indeterminate ways.<sup>[iv]</sup> Alongside the broadcast of these moving images, print media continued to take up an equally considerable amount of the mass media pie. The Time Inc. media empire founded by Henry Luce and Briton Hadden in 1922 had expanded to become one of the most significant media outlets in the Western world, and was rapidly growing within America, widening its circulation some 62% from 1961 to 1970.<sup>[v]</sup> Although he sat on the fringes of mainstream culture, Burroughs was not immune from the ever-expanding grasp of the mass media. At the time that Gysin supposedly discovered the cut-up, a reporter and photographer from the Time Inc. magazine, *Life*, had visited Burroughs in his room in the same building, interviewing the author for a feature on the Beat literary and cultural movement. Appearing a month later amongst advertisements for Old Hickory bourbon, Absorbine Jr. pain relief, and the latest 1960 Buick, the article's writer Paul O'Neil patronisingly admonished what he saw as a misled bohemian attempt to critique American society, constructing the classic image of Burroughs as the down-and-out junkie.<sup>[vi]</sup> Thus, Burroughs was not left out of the expanding post-war mass media landscape, but was absorbed into it. Although his ideas and those of his counterparts were treated as marginal, they were ultimately covered and recognised on a national scale.

Yet Burroughs was not particularly comfortable with this level of notoriety. The mass media conglomerations that were covering his activities were central to what he labelled the *control machine*—a conservative network of individuals who covertly utilised their status and access to mass media outlets to manipulate the political, economic, legal, and social environment. Likening it to the ways in which the various counting methods of the Mayan calendar allowed priests to control how people related to time, he suggested that:

The mass media of newspapers, radio, television, magazines form a ceremonial calendar to which all citizens are subjected. The "priests" wisely conceal themselves behind masses of contradictory data and vociferously deny that they can exist. Like the Mayan priests they can reconstruct the past and predict the future on a statistical basis through the manipulation of media.<sup>[vii]</sup>

Following this line of thinking, it was not the heads of government that exerted the most control over the population. Rather, it was the conglomerates that controlled the use and flow of language and information that structured the reality in which the population found themselves. What literary historian Lytle Shaw has labelled "normative time" was kept in place by mass and broadcast media outlets such as *Time*: magazines issued weekly, daily



newspaper editions, and the hourly segments of television and radio broadcast.<sup>[viii]</sup> All of this was further predicated upon the structuring of time according to the rhythms of work and leisure that emerged in the wake of the industrial revolution. What the cut-up thus offered was a means to break down normative time and the cultural, political, and social structures that came with it. In a more poetic sense, it allowed for leaks, fast-forwards, and playbacks.

In drawing the cut-up out of literary studies and back into the space of media histories, my research frames the technique within three classes of media. The first two—resistance to covert manipulation in the mass media and invisible activism—operated throughout countercultural media responses such as the underground press, mimeographed magazines and pamphlets, small press publishing, and independent record labels. The third of these classes, occult mediumship, is itself occluded from the centre due to a continual search for the substrate upon which mainstream media has grown. While these frames engage with countercultural, underground, and occult ideas and subjects that are situated on the margins, the technologies deployed by Burroughs within these spaces are anything but. The cut-up was not only a technique for the appropriation of content, but also a technique that appropriated technologies of the control machine.

Despite the fringe intensions and concepts of the cut-up, these experiments were largely conducted and distributed using common consumer technologies and on occasion, within institutional spaces. The cliché image of the technique is the author cutting down a sheet of paper with a pair of office scissors and rearranging the fragments to form a new text. But scratching below this surface, it becomes evident that even some of the more obscure experiments used media that were just as banal. The typewriter, portable audio cassette player, and mimeograph machine were all central not only to the cut-up technique, but to the average American office space in the 1960s. Even when the cut-up was explored through more cutting-edge technologies, such as the computer based cut-ups and permutations conducted in collaboration with Gysin and computer technician Ian Sommerville, the technique was situated within the institutional realm of a London-based computing company where the trio experimented with the computers after office hours. These examples are not only far from the imaginary or forgotten media that are the domain of a number of contemporary media historians, but are seemingly also distant from the subversive aims of the cut-up technique itself. What Burroughs thus brings to discourses engaging with ‘marginal’ media is an ever-shifting understanding of the centre/periphery relation.

It is worth here returning to the much mythologised first cut of the cut-up project: that of Gysin slicing through a stack of newspapers. Presumably laid out as a means of protecting the surface of the desk from errant ink splashes or the carvings of his knife, the stories contained in the newspapers were stacked one atop another. As the knife cut through the paper, Gysin was able to find new textual juxtapositions by combining different fragments in new ways. Like this initial cut, to cut into the past is to recognise that history is not a flat plane, but a form of stratified, interwoven knowledge. In the case of Burroughs, where many of his ideas and theories that came in the wake of this first cut may have rested on the edges, the technologies he utilised sat squarely within the centre. Likewise, while he railed against the control machine of mass media, his work and life was popularised by it in a swathe of not always favourable coverage. Burroughs’ engagement with media via the cut-up therefore demonstrates the often-unstable ground of centre/periphery discourses and opens up new ways of understanding these histories as leaking out and feeding in to one another.

[i] “Origin and Theory of The Tape Cut-Ups”, track two on William S. Burroughs, *Breakthrough In Grey Room*, Sub Rosa SUB CD006-8, 1988, compact disc.

[ii] Oliver Harris, *William S. Burroughs and the Secret of Fascination* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003).

[iii] William S. Burroughs and Brion Gysin, *The Third Mind* (New York: Viking Press, 1978), 44.

[iv] See: Michael Mandelbaum, “Vietnam: The Television War,” *Daedalus* 111, no. 4 (Fall, 1982), 157-169.

[v] David Farber and Beth Bailey, *The Columbia Guide to America in the 1960s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 410.

[vi] Paul O’Neil, “The Only Rebellion Around,” *Life* 47, No. 22 (November 30, 1959), 114-130.

[vii] William S. Burroughs, *The Job: Interviews with William S. Burroughs by Daniel Odier* (New York: Penguin Books, 1989), 44.

[viii] Lytle Shaw, *Narrowcast: Poetry and Audio Research* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018), 1-2.

# The Archaeology of Satellite Television in Switzerland, 1957-1984

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## The Archaeology of Satellite Television in Switzerland, 1957-1984

The collective research project “Beyond Public Service: Towards an Expanded History of Television in Switzerland, 1960 to 2000” is financed by the Swiss National Science Foundation and lead at the University of Lausanne by Prof. François Vallotton and Dr. Anne-Katrin Weber. It aims specifically to embrace the plurality of televisual practices, techniques and actors before the digital era. To do so, it’s conceived around three strands that respectively concern the history of audiovisual professions, the analysis of discourses on and about television, and the study of the media’s technological developments. Adopting a cultural history perspective, my dissertation examines this last strand through an examination of the beginnings of satellite television in Switzerland.

In line with the scholarships developing in the field of Media archaeology and New media studies, the goal is to write the archaeology of the Swiss satellite television by considering its emergence from a *longue durée* perspective. Mobilizing, among others, the methodological and theoretical notion of “dispositive”, as elaborated by Profs. Maria Tortajada and François Albera, this research aims to analyze distinctive forms of satellite television, forms that can be tangible realizations as well as discursive constructions. The main hypothesis of this research is twofold: first, a unique definition of satellite television doesn’t exist; second, the media’s signification is constructed by its conditions of existence, understood as the combination of the media’s technical, representational and reception-related elements, and its inscription in a cultural, political, economic and social time and space.

My study focuses on the years following the launch of the Soviet satellite Sputnik in 1957 and preceding the effective realization of a Swiss satellite television, which takes the form of a francophone international public channel in 1984 with the creation of TV5, a cooperation of public broadcasters from France, Belgium, Switzerland and since 1986 Canada. Following a genealogical approach, we could easily have gone back to the 19th century; the imaginary of spatial communication is indeed way older than its material realization. The choice of 1957 matches, thus, our ambition to consider imaginary objects in relation to similar existing technological achievements, and vice-versa.

The almost thirty years separating 1957 from 1984 are characterized by important technological evolutions and a plurality of debates that gradually lead to a dominant model of satellite television in the 1990s. According to the global media sociologist Jean K. Chalaby, from the mid-1990s on, the European satellite television industry has matured and stabilized after a difficult start. This consolidation is due to more powerful technologies, a channels' multiplication, but also to a better understanding of the European public's cultural diversity, which leads the producers to tailor the programs accordingly.

This research is thus interested in the formative years of this "new media" with the period's interest lying in its instability. The media definition and uses are indeed not yet fixed and this uncertainty is conducive to a profusion of projects, artefacts and debates of many kinds, reflecting the utopian and dystopian effects new media technologies can produce in different social, professional and political circles. In order to account for this plurality and to examine the potential crossroads linking heterogeneous arenas, we will study different actors and places discussing the television satellite technology, such as mass media (the press, public radio and television), the field of space research, the national Postal services, the Parliament, and some international organizations physically present in Switzerland, such as the International Telecommunications Union in Geneva. It should be noted, however, that the media television was well institutionalized when satellite technologies emerged. Thus, we will pay careful attention to the ways this new form of television interacts with a cultural and economic system in place.

Furthermore, an important part of the research considers the role new media technologies, in particular satellite television, take in the liberalization and the transnationalization of the Swiss audiovisual landscape during the studied years. Satellite television has indeed a complex relationship with national borders, since it deterritorializes the contents. The issue of cross-border media is however not new in the history of telecommunications and Switzerland's history of broadcasting has been transnational from very early on. Surrounded by big neighbors, the small country is traditionally an importer of radio and television programs, via airways and cable. But the question is posed with particular acuity in the context of liberalization of European public televisions in the 1980s, with notably satellite technologies crystallizing expansion hopes as well as fears of loss of national control.

The year 1984 is especially relevant to consider the linkages between new cross border media technologies and Swiss media landscapes' liberalization. It's indeed that same year that the Swiss public broadcaster Société Suisse de Radiodiffusion takes part in TV5 and that the abolishment of the audiovisual state monopoly is implemented. These two events are preceded with heated and interrelated debates. In 1980, a newly created enterprise, lead mainly by newspaper publishers, requests a concession to launch the first Swiss satellite television. The prospect to give this possibility to a private group animates the following discussions in various political and professional arenas. The arguments intertwine with debates lead in the Parliament on the television public monopoly, and the future of Swiss media landscape in general.

Finally, this study will pay careful attention to the specific imaginary that surrounds not only the actors and spaces directly involved in satellite television material development and discursive definition, but also the Swiss general public. To examine how the "European astroculture" is expressed in Switzerland – borrowing the term from the historian Alexander C. T. Geppert – press articles and drawings, scientific popularization magazines, exhibitions material and science-fiction writings and films will be mobilized. This approach will allow to

inscribe satellite television representations in Switzerland into a set of western spatial images with major political implications, such as imperialism and liberal globalization in the context of the cold war.

To conclude, by enmeshing a technical and economic history of satellite television with a broader perspective on its social and cultural construction in the space age, this dissertation brings together seemingly very different aspects of satellite television in Switzerland.

# Posting on the wall in pre-digital times. Media and Communication Practices in Refugee Camps in Germany (1945–2000)

Philipp Seuferling — Södertörn University



Lack of information, disconnectedness, not knowing the whereabouts of family and friends – these are central parts of the experience of forced migration. Here, means of communication and media technologies gain crucial importance for refugees. Practices of media and communication enable them to navigate, circumvent or subversively fight against “information precarity” (Wall, Otis Campbell & Janbek, 2017), which the situation of forced displacement puts upon forced migrants. Especially in the space of the refugee camp, scarce information and uncertainty affect how refugees communicate and mediate their experience and sociality.

The photos below, accessible in the museum exhibition of the refugee transit camp Friedland, Germany, show how camp inhabitants in the late 1940s literally “posted on the wall” and created a “newsfeed” on the camp’s notice boards and walls of buildings. The refugees and displaced persons created physical places of communication in order to maybe be able to get a tiny hint about where their loved-ones could be, how to get in touch or any other information important to them. The refugee camp was not only a hub for people of all kinds of origin, but also a communication hub, a space for the mediation of information, exchanging knowledge among its dwellers and possibly beyond. Later on, these announcements for missing persons were also broadcasted on radio regularly, organized by the Red Cross in cooperation with public service radio stations (Wagner, 2014).

Similarly, another source, a letter from February 1952, documents how refugee shelters in West Berlin, mostly accommodating refugees from East Germany, received 65 radios as a



donation from the public service broadcaster NWDR in Hamburg. The government official and author of the letter asks for this donation as an “act of utmost philanthropy” and describes how the lack of radios and news magazines, of being connected and informed in the refugee shelters, created one of the biggest hardships: “Being cut off from the outside world hits the inmates of the camps especially hard”[\[1\]](#).

### Historicizing the refugee and her smartphone

These sources flag up questions of how media and communication technologies and practices in settings of social arrest and uncertainty produced by the refugee camp were used and conducted in pre-digital media environments. They show that the need for communication in the situation of “refugeedom” (Gatrell, 2013) is not particularly new. In fact, the 20<sup>th</sup> century has been coined both a “century of expulsions” (Münz, 2002) and a “century of mass media” (Schildt, 2001). However, an ever-growing body of research on the interrelations of media and migration, especially on refugees and smartphones, often focuses on digital media, ending up in a rhetoric of newness or even of “digital exceptionalism” (Marwick, 2013), while arguing that digital technologies have changed the entire situation for refugees’ and migrants’ experiences (addressed e.g. by: Leurs & Smets, 2018; Morley, 2017; Hegde, 2016). In response to this, my PhD project wants to historically scrutinize how refugees were part and made sense of changing media environments before the internet, included different technologies into communicatory practices, or invented ways of remaining connected in times of scarce information.

Understanding histories of new media as histories of their uses, which are negotiated and embedded in social structures of the time they were established (see Marvin, 1990; Gitelman, 2006), the project uses the setting of the refugee camp to explore how the experience of refugeedom and information precarity was mediated and communicated in analogue media environments. Arguably, refugees in the exilic, transitory space of the camp, have always relied on communication and media practices to navigate this situation. This leads to the further argument that considering these questions in a time frame before digital media gives insight into alternative media histories growing out of the specific information situations at the margins.

### Marginal media histories of forced migration

Refugees interned in camps and shelters are at the margins of communication. At the same time the camp might produce a new space which rather is a center of communication, at least a material communicatory hub for those dwelling in it. The spatial metaphor of marginality can shift attention to the construction of centers and peripheries and social processes of positioning subjects at social distance and hindering their mobility between centers and fringes. Refugees embody marginality through being the outcasts of “the national order of things” (Malkki, 1995).

Refugee camps, consequently, are institutions that organize modernity’s refugee and border regimes. They can be understood as heterotopian spaces in Michel Foucault’s (1997:332) sense, a “place that lies outside all places and yet is actually localizable”, a “counter arrangement”. Especially applicable to refugee camps, he continues his description: “Anyone can enter one of these heterotopian locations, but, in reality, they are nothing more than an illusion: one thinks one has entered and, by the sole fact of entering, one is excluded” (ibid.:335). Refugee camps are other spaces outside and inside the order of national spaces,



they materialize “social imaginaries” (Taylor, 2004) of inclusion and exclusion, by ordering spatial relations between individuals at the center and the margins.

On this presumption, I want to explore histories of media and communication practices from the margins. If refugee camps are “counter arrangements”, this marginality creates a space where counter actions, alternativity and inventiveness can grow and be explored. Media and communication practices and technologies are part of the experience of being a forced migrant, the need for connected-ness and the experience of information precarity are central features (cf. Leurs & Smets, 2018) – and they are not particularly new. Hence, marginality is a key characteristic of refugee’s media practices, a factor that affects how media is used. Media and communication practices both reproduce and counter-act to imposed marginality. They can be hopeful mechanisms and facilitators of potential change and the production of “reclaimant narratives” (Bishop, 2018), while at the same time they are made part of power structures and the dynamics between periphery and center.

Vilém Flusser (2002:104) writes about exile: “Because it is unusual, exile is unlivable. One must transform the information whizzing around into meaningful messages, to make it livable. One must ‘process’ the data. It is a question of survival: if one fails to transform the data, one is engulfed by the waves of exile. Data transformation is a synonym for creation. The expelled must be creative if he does not want to go to the dogs”. Marginality and creativity and inventiveness are somehow linked, which should be paid more attention to in media history. Looking at marginal spaces and groups as historical media users can give us more nuanced insights into alternative, different media histories. When Carolyn Marvin (1990:8) states that “the history of media is never more or less than the history of their uses, which always lead us away from them to the social practices and conflicts they illuminate”, marginal spaces and subjects lead the path to new perspectives on how pre-digital media users made sense of and included different means and technologies of communication into experiences of information scarcity, that exile and escape are producing and have already produced in analogue media environments.



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## Endnotes

- [1] Letter from Willi Eichler (SPD Berlin) to Adolf Grimme (director of NWDR), 18 February 1952. StA HH. 621-1/144. NDR. 11\_712; translated by the author.

Photos

(c) Swen Pförtner/Museum Friedland

# Ecoutez-vous! Free radio in a border region between the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany

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“Ecoutez-vous” (eng. Listen to yourself) was the emblematic slogan of *Radio des Travailleurs Liégeois* (eng. *Radio of the workers of Liège*), a radio station created in the context of the workers’ movement in 1979 in the Belgian city of Liège. The aim of the radio station was to give a voice to the workers of the region suffering from the decline of the heavy industry.<sup>[1]</sup> The radio station thus wanted to give a new medium to a “silent” social class in terms of radiocommunication. However, as the quote below illustrates, this development wasn’t limited to the workers<sup>[2]</sup> and *Radio des Travailleurs Liégeois* stands paradigmatically for an emerging and completely transformed radio landscape in Western Europe in the early 1980s.

*„L’état a bien sa propre radio, les capitalistes et tous les marchands de savon ont aussi les leurs, alors, pourquoi nous, travailleurs, ne pourrions nous pas disposer, en toute autonomie, d’un moyen de communication moderne.“*<sup>[3]</sup>

(eng. The state, the capitalists and every factory owner has its own radio station, so, why can’t we, workers, have our own independent modern means of communication?)



A major part of the PhD thesis “Pop cultural Exchange in the Meuse-Rhine Region” will deal with the question of how this emerging free radio landscape during the late 1970s and the early 1980s helped to renegotiate the importance of pop culture, especially music, in media. To do so, the project will focus on a border region between the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany.[\[4\]](#)

To analyse the interaction of media and the transnational character of the region, the concept of ‘entangled media histories’ is introduced in the study which “(...) refer not only to interrelations with respect to transborder or transnational, but also to transmedial or intermedial phenomena in media history – looking at the whole process of media communication, if possible.”[\[5\]](#)



Pop music in this context has to be seen as a mirror of ongoing societal debates. In fact the radio stations that emerged everywhere in the border region gave the sound to numerous societal movements like the above-mentioned workers' movement, the environmental movement or the peace movement. The free radio stations played music from different national and cultural contexts during the programs, the discussions, the talk shows or entertainment shows that they broadcast. The aim of the project is to decrypt the music programs of these radio stations and to ask how they can be integrated in a broader analytical scheme and to analyse what a specific sound tells us about ongoing societal debates. This analysis of the media landscape will be integrated in a matrix on the intersection of societal, cultural, economic, generational and political debates. [\[6\]](#)

The history of free radio stations is thus from a double perspective important for a 'media history from the margins':

On the one hand free radio stations changed the way radios addressed their audiences and how audiences were implemented in the making of radio programs. From this perspective the topic is strongly related to the question of how marginal groups used the new means of communication in the 1980s to make themselves heard. Request programs or amateur music journalists changed to a large extent the landscape of music programs.

On the other hand, the project will focus on a marginal region. We know the history of media and the history of popular culture on the European and the national level quite well. We have for most of the bigger European public broadcaster monographs explaining the history of the respective institutions. Most of these monographs dedicate smaller parts to the role that they have played for culture and popular culture.

On the same level we try to understand how pop cultural exchange has been influenced on the European and the transnational level by media. Bigger commercial broadcasters like RTL or Europe No 1 or networks like the European Broadcasting Union have found a certain attention in this context.

But it is not only the transnational and European level that needs further research. Europe consists essentially of linguistic, cultural, regional or national border regions. During the 1990s when the European Union had 15 member states, 10-15% of its population lived in national border regions.

Up until now the historiography of media has barely paid attention to the interaction of media in border regions or the fact that people in these regions can access media from different national and cultural contexts.

In fact we can see similar evolutions in every part of the region. While workers in Belgium were for example winged by trade unions to make their own radio programs and to play their own music (in the case of *Radio des Travailleurs Liègeois*), this wasn't the case in the Netherlands. In the area of South-Limburg that also suffered from the decline of the heavy industry, workers who lost their jobs took their mostly individual initiatives to broadcast their own programs and play the music that they liked.

Most of the time initiators of free radio stations had the feeling that public broadcasters neither listened to their concerns or paid attention to aspects of everyday life of the

population nor did these public broadcasters played the music that people would like to listen to.

The ecological movement (*Radio ça bouge dans les sous-bois*, *Radio Amis de la Terre Vielsalm*,...), students (*Radio Sart Tilman*), multilingual radios for intercultural understanding, citizen radios (*Radio Freies Aachen*, *Radio Distel*,...) and countless small initiatives played music in the radio for one neighborhood or street. These people used radio stations as a new way to express themselves and discuss the things they wanted to discuss.

In that sense the underlying key pillars of the emerging free radio landscape in the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany are very similar: people had societal and political concerns, wanted to be heard and were looking for means of communication.

Several examples illustrate how free radio stations in this border region interacted and influenced pop cultural exchange:

- The Belgian legislation allowed people from the late 1970s onwards to have their own radio stations. In the Netherlands and Germany free radio stations stayed prohibited until the 1990s. Subsequently the Belgian legislation attracted people from the neighboring regions who created their programs with the music that they liked in Belgium and transmitted it to their countries.
- The Dutch public broadcasters were quite progressive in the 1960s and 1970s when it comes to Anglo-Saxon pop music while other European broadcasters remained conservative. What seemed modern during the 1960s didn't meet the taste of the listeners in the 1980s anymore. In this decennia radio pirates in the Netherlands created their pirate radio stations to hear more Dutch-speaking and local music, and – surprisingly – German-speaking music.
- We can see in all three countries that the mainstream media reacted to the evolving radio landscape. Newspaper publishers invested their capital in the emerging radio stations. Public broadcasters built up their own channels with more 'peps' or tried to intensify the contact with the 'marginal regions' on their borders.

Free radios and community radios lost nevertheless their importance during the 1980s. Factors that can explain this evolution are the large interest of commercial radio stations in the market and the fact that in Germany and the Netherlands bigger regional private and commercial radio stations were legalised during the 1990s.

The region in the focus of the analysis was nevertheless not an isolated case. The French-German border, the Austrian-German border, the North-Ireland-Ireland border or the Dutch-Belgian border were very active when it comes to the emergence of free radio stations. One of these contact zones where different media landscapes and political debates meet will be analysed in the context of the PhD project "Pop cultural exchange in the Meuse-Rhine region".

[1] For example: Radio des Travailleurs Liégeois, Chertal (Cockerill), Des ouvriers de l'aciérie racontent, expliquent et répliquent, émission diffusée en septembre 1980 ; Radio des Travailleurs Liégeois, La S.A. des Usines à Cuivre et à Zinc de Liège, émission réalisée en Mars 1980 ; Radio des Travailleurs Liégeois, La stratégie du cuivre dans le monde, mars 1980.



[2] Ingrid Hayes, *Les voix de la crise. Radio Lorraine cœur d'acier 1979-1980*. Paris 2018.

[3] Ralum (ed.), *Livre de la Radio des Travailleurs Liégeois*. Louveigne, s.d. quoted from: Jacques Morael, *Radios libres, la crise ! Mémoire présenté en vue de l'obtention du grade de Licencie en Information et Arts de Diffusion à l'Université de Liège*, 1982.

[4] The so called 'Meuse-Rhine Euregion': The Province de Liège (Belgium, French and German speaking), the Area of Zuid-Limburg / Southern Limburg (The Netherlands, Dutch speaking) and the District of Aachen (Germany, German speaking) including the city of Liège, Maastricht and Aachen.

[5] Cronqvist, M. & Hilgert, C. (2017): *Entangled Media Histories*, *Media History*, 23:1, pp. 130-141, DOI: 10.1080/13688804.2016.1270745

[6] Andreas Fickers/ Dietmar Hüser, *Populärkultur transnational. Europa in den langen 1960er Jahren*. Unpublished DFG/FNR research proposal. Luxembourg, Saarbrücken 2017.

# “The filming baker’s wife” Elisabeth Wilms – Amateur film practices and/as useful cinema culture

Alexander Stark



A city in ruins. The camera pans over what once was the center of Dortmund, Germany. It captures people who live in wet basements and self-made sheds, people who steal coal from railway wagons and search for food in rubbish heaps. It catches malnourished children, dependent on food from foreign aid organizations, who explore this landscape of debris in tattered clothes. It follows district nurses in their daily job to take care of the old, the sick and those who lost family members or their belongings in the air raids on the city.

This film footage, made in the first months and years after the Second World War, does not stem from a governmental or military initiative, but is in fact the work of a German amateur filmmaker named Elisabeth Wilms, who had started her hobby only a few years earlier in 1941. Since then, the autodidact used most of her free time to capture her surroundings with a 16mm camera. Early on, she started to create her own documentary films from the material she shot. Two examples for that are the color films *Pumpernickel* (1942) and *Der Weihnachtsbäcker* (1943), which depict work processes in the bakery that she ran together with her husband in a rural part of Dortmund. Unlike many other buildings in the city, the family’s house and business wasn’t destroyed during the war. At its end, Wilms was able to hide her camera and kept on filming the daily life around her. Thus the German clerical charity organization *Evangelisches Hilfswerk* got to know about her and asked her to produce to fundraising films about the postwar hardship in Germany for them. Elisabeth Wilms agreed. The shots described above stem from these films, named *Dortmund November 1947*

(1947) and *Schaffende in Not* (1948), and were made for the purpose of persuading people to donate money.

Although the two films were a failed venture, as my research shows, they were Wilms' entry into the business of sponsored filmmaking. They gave her a certain degree of local popularity, which enabled her to obtain her first paid film projects in recovering post-war Germany – projects ordered by municipal companies and industrial corporations located in and around Dortmund. Within a few years, this commissioned activity became more and more extensive, so that she soon produced up to ten documentary films per year. The filmmaker, nicknamed “Die filmende Bäckerfrau” (the filming baker's wife) by the press, used the income and knowledge gain from these projects to further professionalize herself. Over the course of four decades, she worked for a wide variety of clients and was thus active in almost all areas of non-commercial cinema. Her films were projected almost exclusively as non-theatrical exhibitions in various contexts, which depended on their purpose. When Elisabeth Wilms died in 1981, she left around one hundred films, of which about sixty were commissioned works, as well as an extensive written estate of over two thousand paper documents related to her film production. These remnants, supplemented by documents from the archives of Wilms' customers, serve as the body of sources for my PhD-project, entitled “*The filming baker's wife*” *Elisabeth Wilms – Amateur film practices and/as useful cinema culture*.

The project is located in the areas of amateur film studies and useful cinema studies. Both are comparatively young branches of film and media studies. Amateur film as a research object was marginalized for many years and only slowly came to attention since the middle of the 1980s, for example through the works of Roger Odin and Patricia Zimmermann. Today, it is a vibrant field of research, with scholars like Martina Roepke, Alexandra Schneider, Siegfried Mattl, Ryan Shand, Charles Tepperman, Nico de Klerk and Mats Jönsson who have contributed to this. Nevertheless, previous work in this field has mainly been limited to the private use of amateur films, which, however, hardly played a role in the case of Elisabeth Wilms. From the beginning on, she produced most of her films for public or semi-public audiences, regardless of the existence of a client. Moreover, attempts are often made to create a definition of the amateur with a clear distinction from the professional. The grey zone between these two ascriptions, in which Wilms was working throughout her life and which was apparently marked only by blurred boundaries, is hardly noticed instead. In addition, the perspective of female amateur filmmakers is underrepresented in research already published.

The study of utility films also only recently attracted growing attention, for example through the works of Yvonne Zimmermann, Alexandra Schneider, Charles R. Acland and Haidee Wasson. With regard to the numerous films in Elisabeth Wilms' portfolio which were part of the useful cinema culture, it is without question to make the methods and findings of this research branch fruitful for my project. While previous studies in this field are mostly limited to either the perspective of the client *or* the filmmaker, the numerous source materials available in the case of “the filming baker's wife” make it possible to study the perspectives of filmmaker and client as complementary to one another within the scope of my project.

Against this background, the case of Elisabeth Wilms is an interesting object for media historical research for several reasons. What is striking at first is the gender aspect of the topic: Her professionalization began in the early 1950s. At a time when the (West) German society was still far from striving for gender equality and emancipation and when female film producers were the exception, she was already a successful filmmaker who worked for clients from clearly male-dominated sectors such as the steel industry. It is also important to note that

Wilms grew up and lived in the craftsmen milieu and, despite her success with her film projects, worked in the family bakery and grocery store until 1964.

Although she was a successful filmmaker, her undetermined status remained an area of tension throughout her whole career and she never left the grey area between amateur film and professional filmmaking. Besides, her filmic life's work is also characterized by an extraordinary range that covers almost all areas of non-commercial cinema, which is due to the long period of her activity and the diversity of her clients. Moreover, Wilms also became a visual chronologist of Dortmund by capturing everyday life as well as major events in her surroundings with her camera for about forty years. Thus, her films reflect destruction, reconstruction, economic miracle and structural change. Last but not least, her work is extraordinarily well documented both in writing and film, and can provide detailed insights into her career, production processes, the reception of many of her films, as well as into the areas of amateur and utility film in general.

Taking these aspects into account, the aim of my PhD-project is therefore to take Wilms' case as an example for the interconnections of amateur and commissioned film production in Germany during her period of filmmaking. In doing so, I do not only study her professionalization process and the questions relations related to her status, but also the three fields of utility film production which played the biggest role in her career: Charity films, promotional films for the City of Dortmund and industrial film production. Additionally, I focus on the role that her films play in the local commemorative culture of Dortmund. Methodically, a combination of film-historical production analysis, context analysis and reception analysis is used, which is based on the examination of written sources and selected film examples.

*Image source: Stadtarchiv Dortmund (date unknown)*

# Decoding Swiss television. The discourses on television in Switzerland from 1967 to 1991.

Adrian Stecher — Université de Lausanne



My dissertation „Decoding television in Switzerland“ is part of the research project “Beyond Public Service: Towards an Expanded History of Television in Switzerland, 1960 to 2000” which proposes to analyze the history of Swiss television from 1960 to 2000 in a multidisciplinary way. This research project, financed by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNF) and lead at the University of Lausanne by Prof. François Vallotton and Dr. Anne-Katrin Weber, aims specifically to embrace the plurality of televisual practices, techniques and actors before the digital era.

The American and European intelligentsia usually criticized television.[1] Compared to other cultural products such as film or theater, or even to radio programs, television was always considered to be a sort of anti-cultural product. Pierre Bourdieu, a French sociologist, denied in his book “Sur la television”, which he published in 1996, that the television is a place and an arena for conversation. He argues, that there is not much you can say on television, let alone about TV.[2] Meanwhile, a more differentiated picture of television has emerged in science. It is no longer defined solely by its cultural potential, but broadly understood as a complex network of relationships between the recipient, program, institution and technology.[3] My PhD thesis builds on this understanding of television and aims to analyze the scientific and political as well as the medial and televisual discourse in Switzerland between 1967 and 1991. Together with the two other doctoral theses, which are part of the SNF research project my scientific contribution should lead to illuminate the discursive history on television in Switzerland and thus close a long-term research gap, which in Switzerland mainly focuses on the institutional history of television.[4]

The cultural peculiarity of Switzerland, with its linguistic diversity and its federal structures, has a significant impact on television in Switzerland. A Swiss television in the singular form does not exist. Switzerland's television landscape is a highly segmented one. Local and national broadcasters have been producing programs in four languages since the introduction of the dual order model in 1991. Prior to this, television in Switzerland was fully institutionalized. The broadcast of television program lied in the competence of the SSR, which consisted of the Swiss television (SF-DRS), the Télévision Suisse Romande (TSR) and the Televisione Svizera Italiana (TSI). Some aspects of the institutionalized history of the television has been told and described.

Therefore the aim of my doctoral thesis is not to outline Swiss television history normatively, but rather to document and to analyze the ideas of television produced by the different areas of society – politics, media, science and television itself. Another goal is to structure the order of the discourses on television and to identify the players, such as political opinion leaders, political interest groups, journalists and scientists who over a period of time participated and changed, maintained or called the discourse and the view on television. I tend to work with a variety of written sources. From parliamentary sources to media products to documentaries from archives, from sources written by interest groups to sources, which describe the making of television shows. To complete the picture of television discourse in Switzerland, I also consider analyzing the television show's itself. The most important cinematic source of this work is the political talk show "Fernsehstrasse 1-4", which SF-DRS introduced in 1974 and continued with interruptions until 1980.

The analysis of the sources occurs on two stages. At first, the written sources are analyzed using the traditional discourse analytical approach. It allows to describe the public approach to the topic of television, to demonstrate continuities and discontinuities in content and power constellations and to map, classify and describe the creation of collective symbolic images of television in Switzerland.[5]The second subordinate stage of the analysis follows the approach of film and television. This approach allows me to understand television productions based on their discursive potential and to make statements beyond the spoken content to visual meaningfulness, staging of the actors and the reflection of the medium about themselves.[6]The period of investigation from 1967 to 1991 makes sense because parliamentarians launched a debate on radio and television in 1967, which aimed to provide Swiss radio with a constitutional basis for the second time. This political process was followed and commented by the other arenas of public discourse. 1991 includes the legal process that implements radio and television at the constitutional level.

Under these conditions, a multitude of question complexes arise and lead the exploration of the source material. What is being talked about? This question is aimed at the content of the political, media and scientific discourse on television in Switzerland. Who is involved in the discourse? At this level of analysis, the content of the documents should be asked and how the modalities of expression were shaped. How is television handled legally? The last thing to do is to ask about the regulative ways in which television is used. To what extent are laws passed at the state level to regulate television? And which control bodies were called otherwise?

The arenas studied to answer these questions constitute science, political leaders, and television itself, which, according to the American philosopher Nancy Fraser, are those places that produce discursive publics.[7]Therefore, they are particularly suitable as research sites for the research objective of mapping the public opinion on television and to analyze and document the discourse on and about television conducted in Switzerland.



[1]See Adorno Theodor W., Fernsehen als Ideologie, In: Adorno Theodor W., Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft, 2. Band, Frankfurt a.M. 1997, S. 518-533. And: Postman Neil, Amusing ourselves to death. Public discourse in the age of show business, New York 1985.

[2]See Pierre Bourdieu, Sur la télévision.

[3]See mainly Hickethier Knut, Dispositiv Fernsehen. Skizze eines Modells, In: grisko Michael (Hg.) Texte zur Theorie und der Geschichte des Fernsehens, Stuttgart 2009, p. 271-292.

[4]See mainly Markus T. Drack, La radio et la télévision en Suisse : histoire de la Société de radiodiffusion SSR jusqu'en 1958, Baden 2000 ; Theo Mäusli and Andreas Steigmeier (eds), Radio und Fernsehen in der Schweiz : Geschichte der Schweizerischen Radio- und Fernsehgesellschaft SRG 1958-1983Baden 2006 ; Theo Mäusli, Andreas Steigmeier and François Vallotton (eds), La radio et la télévision en Suisse : histoire de la Société suisse de radiodiffusion et télévision SSR de 1983 à 2011, Baden 2012.

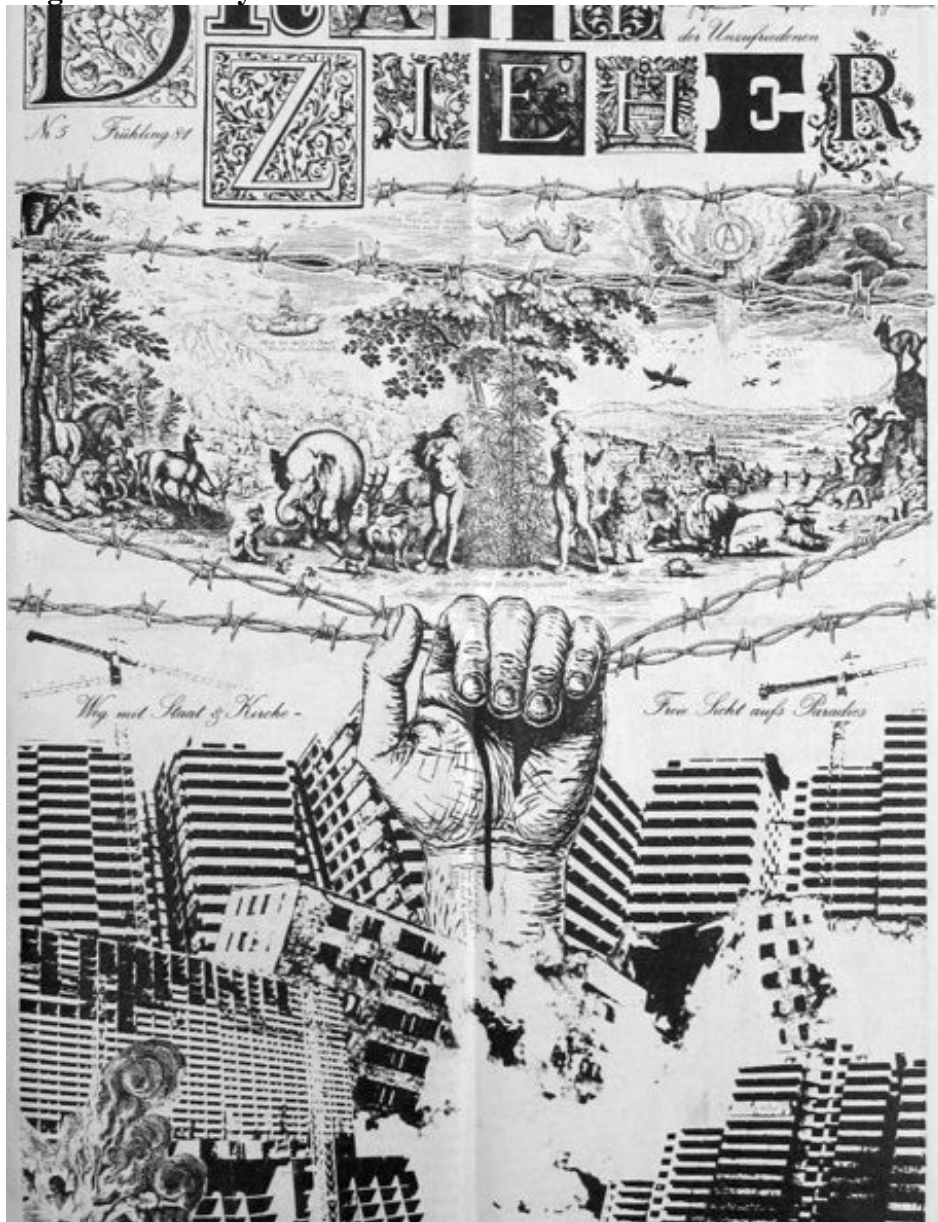
[5]See Jäger Siegfried, Kritische Diskursanalyse. Eine Einführung, 7. Vollständig überarbeitete Auflage, Münster 2015.

[6]See Hickethier Knut, Film- und Fernsehanalyse, 5. Auflage, Stuttgart 2012.

[7]See Fraser Nancy, Widerspenstige Praktiken. Macht, Diskurs, Geschlecht, Frankfurt a.M. 1994.

# The reinvention of the city. Outlines of the urban in the Swiss Alternative movement in the 1970s and 1980s

Nadine Zberg — University of Zurich



The modernist city of the Western postwar era with its downtown business districts, «green» suburbia, and extensive highway networks increasingly came under scrutiny over the course of the 1960s. Hence, the 1970s, a decade often referred to as an “age of fracture” or “age of crisis”,<sup>[1]</sup> also brought along a fundamental renegotiation of the city which paved the way to what is now called the “renaissance” and “culturalization” of the urban from the 1990s to the present.<sup>[2]</sup> In my research project, I examine this controversy of the 1970s and the subsequent transformations in the major Swiss cities, and the various actors involved in it: city-planners and policy-makers, a new generation of architects, urban heritage protectors, citizens’ groups,

and the Alternative Left. The latter, I claim, took on a crucial role in this process. Emerged in the wake of “1968”, the Alternative Left[3] was at first inspired by the romantic retreat to nature and to the self, but by the second half of the 1970s the focus shifted towards the city, which became the dominant object of the alternative protest and the place of a leftist utopian nostalgia. Alternative-Leftist activists offensively appropriated the city as a political object on a discursive as well as material level (culminating in the Swiss so-called *Achtziger Bewegung*, literally “eighties movement”), thus setting the groundwork for the following transformations of the urban space.[4]

I construe the Alternative Left as a group of actors which in their collective form were essentially constituted by their media practices. Facilitated by the arrival of the photocopier and new, cheaper and more readily accessible printing technologies, the 1970s saw a rapid expansion of do-it-yourself, so-called underground print media, written and assembled at the kitchen tables of alternative communes, sold at the local Leftist bookshops and read and debated in the alternative cooperative cafés, constituting a *Gegenöffentlichkeit* or counter-publicity.[5] It was in this marginal discursive, social and medial space, I argue, that the city was crucially rethought and the lines along which it would be transformed over the course of the following decades were laid out. To examine how these ideas and new perceptions of the city circulated or diffused from this marginal space into mainstream society, academic discourse and official city planning, the network as an analytical concept[6] might provide a fruitful perspective: with its implication of a de- or multicentered, web-like structure, it allows to take circulations, (the shifting of) power relations, and thus the effects between the historical margins and centers (of society, of political power, of interpretational sovereignty etc.) into account. I am looking forward very much to discussing some difficulties of working with this iridescent concept at the graduate symposium of the summer seminar.

[1] E.g. Rodgers, Daniel T.: *Age of Fracture*, Cambridge 2011; Hobsbawm, Eric: *Das Zeitalter der Extreme. Weltgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts*, München 102010, p. 503-537; Doering-Manteuffel, Anselm/Raphael, Lutz: *Nach dem Boom. Perspektiven auf die Zeitgeschichte seit 1970*, Göttingen 2008; Jarausch, Konrad H. (ed): *Das Ende der Zuversicht? Die siebziger Jahre als Geschichte*, Göttingen 2008.

[2] Föllmer, Moritz: *Cities of Choice. Elective Affinities and the Transformation of Western European Urbanity from the mid-1950s to the early 1980s*, in: *Contemporary European History* 24/4 (2015), p. 577-596; Reckwitz, Andreas: *Die Selbstkulturalisierung der Stadt. Zur Transformation moderner Urbanität in der »creative city«*, in: *Mittelweg* 36, 18/2 (2009); Baumeister, Martin/Bonomo, Bruno/Schott, Dieter: *Introduction. Contested cities in an era of crisis*, in: eid. (eds.): *Cities contested. Urban politics, heritage and social movements in Italy and West Germany in the 1970s*, Frankfurt [a.M.]/New York, 2017.

[3] For the conception of the Alternative Left as a collective entity cf. Reichardt, Sven: *Authentizität und Gemeinschaft. Linksalternatives Leben in den siebziger und frühen achtziger Jahren*, Berlin 2014.

[4] While working mainly with primary sources from Swiss actors and institutions I will locate and discuss my findings within a transnational framework.

[5] Cf. Reichardt 2014., p. 231-271.

[6] Or one of its relatives such as the Foucauldian *dispositif*, Deleuze/Guattaris notion of the rhizome or Bruno Latour’s actor-network.

# Talks

# The unknown and forgotten role of the photocopier machine transgressed as a creative tool

**Beatriz Escribano Belmar – University of Castilla-La Mancha**

Taking into account that nowadays it is almost a fact that Media Art (New Media Art, Art and New Media, depending on the preferences used) was not born without inheritance, this research presents a return to the past, through the Media Archaeology as approach and as a support tool, to study some of the electrographic practices of reproduction, generation and printing of images in underground movements which have stayed outside of recognized art. Mainly the one related to the photocopier machine and the artistic practices which emerged from its adoption and transgression as artistic media, subverting its original function.

It is important to emphasize that, on the one hand, the study unearths the electrographic art productions by the original materials, artistic documentation and bibliographic sources, as well as artistic collections held by the International Museum of Electrography (MIDE) in Cuenca, Fondazione Vodoz Danese (Milan, Italy); Museo Comunale d'Arte Moderna dell'Informazione e della Fotografia, Musinf (Senigallia, Italy); Museum für Fotokopie (Mülheim an der Ruhr, Germany), the private museum of Karin und Uwe Hollweg (Bremen, Germany), the Archiv-Black Kit by Boris Nieslony (Colonia, Germany) and the private art collection by Jean-Claude Baudot (Paris, France), as well as other private artist's collection.

Perhaps more crucially, it is based on face-to-face interviews with the main artists in different countries, as a way to learn about these practices, main artists and contacts, and the geographical connections from primary sources. Indeed, many of the historical bibliographical sources are not precise or correct in data, dates and even names and facts.

The decade of the 1960s has an exceptional significance not only from a political, social or economic point of view, but this was the decade when the roots of Media Art appeared. In that period and within that historical context, two automatic technologies of the image, personal computer (1964) and Portapak video camera (1967), reached the market. However, despite there is an apparent lack of knowledge about it, such technologies were by no means the only ones. In the context of the counter-culture movements of that time and owing to some of them, a group of pioneer and experimental artists became attracted to an emerging office technology they encountered as "found media" (McCray, 1979: 6; Shanken, 2009: 206) in universities, offices or copy shops. This technology was the photocopier machine which came up with the commercial goal of making copies in a more agile, fast, cheap and instantaneous way with the Xerox 914 model in 1959.

The photocopier machine is a technology invented to make paper copies, so using it for any other purpose, as to create, is a transgression of its functional structure. In the United States, pioneer artist Sonia Landy Sheridan, working with her students in the production of some posters for the democratic convention in 1968, discovered the photocopier machine as the perfect tool for the generation and distribution of this type of works and a creative tool. Similarly, there were other artists as N'ima Leveton, an engraver artist from San Francisco, who produced her first series of prints on a coin machine found in a supermarket. In the

seventies, German artist Jürgen O. Olbrich discovered this technology in the office where he worked and made his first xerographic records from the used handkerchiefs that he kept in his pocket. Klaus Urbons and Amal Abdenour discovered the photocopier at their workplace, where they began to use it covertly. But these are only some examples of artists first encounters with this technology.

Historically it was the American Chester Floyd Carlson the inventor who patented the electrophotographic reproduction process, after making his first copy in a garage in Astoria on October 22, 1938. That copy consisted of a text written by hand with graphite pencil in which the date and place of the historical event was indicated: "10.-22.-38 Astoria". The result of his innovative process was denominated "Xerography", that is to say, "dry writing" because dry electrostatic was used for copying documents. The first electrographic machine came on the market in 1950, but its process was manual until the Xerox 914 emergence.

Taking an approach focused on the technical aspect to reach a theory of Media Art prehistory on the processes and means of [re]production of images, it could be provided that the development of the automatic photocopy machine has its roots on these five different work lines:

- 1. Mechanical processes of reproduction. Since first men using stone engraving to reproduce certain symbols on stamps, the woodcut, the printing press or the cyclostyle, among others.
- 2. Photochemical processes of reproduction, that is, the photography development line including silver salts and no silver salts processes: camera obscura, Thomas Wedgwood's photograms, Niepce's heliography, to Henry Fox Talbot photogenic drawing, blueprint process, to Photostat and Rectigraph tools, among others.
- 3. Manual processes of reproduction or those means which helped to mechanize drawing to reproduce or copy the reality understanding the laws of perspective. For example: Alberti's window, Wollaston's camera lucida, or Christopher Scheiner's Pantograph.
- 4. Thermal processes of reproduction, in relation to thermography and thermofax.
- 5. Electrostatic processes of reproduction, including direct electrostatic processes, such as direct electrophotography by H.G.Greig y C.J.Young, and the *procédé de photographie sans développement* by Marcel Demeuleare; and the indirect electrostatic processes by Chester F. Carlson.

In this way, the previous processes and means were the background for the invention of an automatic, instantaneous, multiple, fast and cheap reproduction system, much more agile and easy to handle, that allowed both the reproduction of documents and images, and these contributed to captivate all the artists.

### **When the photocopy machine made Art**

As technology linked to the market and beginning as a Xerox company product in the United States, the photocopy machine established and codified a geographical configuration where it was marketed and used artistically. In this sense, the relationship between artistic creation and technology industry made visible the economic, political, and cultural disparity that existed through the different countries where these artistic practices germinated. For example, while artists were using the photocopy machine at the end of the 60's in United States, in Austria there was a deviation of more than 10 years or in Poland there were not public copy shops until the 90's.

First artists who subverted this technology were mainly North Americans, where Xerox



started to be commercialized. In the same period, only in Italy, artist and designer Bruno Munari was able to access a photocopier. The reason is that in 1961 he started to organize some exhibitions in the Olivetti center in Milan, which were also presented in the United States. In one of those trips to the United States, he met the Xerox 914 machine and began to use it in a creative way. His first works were called “*Xerografie originali*” to emphasize the fact of being original artworks, even if they were created with a photocopy machine.

After passing through the United States, the photocopier reached other European countries in the 70’s. Germany was a fruitful midpoint in terms of avant-gardes and it was not going to be less different in relation to the more experimental and underground ones. In fact, in 1967, the Fluxus group -Wolf Vostell, Christo or Timm Ulrichs, among them- began to use this technology for some of their artistic reflections and discourses. Ulrichs created *Die Photokopie der Photokopie der Photokopie der Photokopie*, a work that serves as a milestone for the first artists of the Copy Art movement. This German used *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* book by Walter Benjamin, to make multiple originals from the reproduction of its cover using the technique of degeneration. The work stages the question of whether endless reproduction ultimately depletes meaning over time.

Then, in the 80’s, Xerox company lost the patent rights and other companies began to extend their range of offers and services. However, the high price of these technologies made some artists to depend on the patronage of different companies for their personal artistic research. It was not until the middle of the 80s when the domestic and portable photocopy machine arrived to the market and massive creation took place. Consequently, this aspect resulted in more exhibitions, activities, workshops or publications in Europe sponsored by different companies.

Since then, this revolutionary machine had been used by many artistic avant-gardes movements, such as Mail Art, Pop Art or Conceptual Art, in order to apply some of its possible various techniques; others specifically electrographic movements or trends, such as Fax Art, graphic design or publicity could make a use more related to the xerographic graphic language.

In this way, in the United States began a passionate focus to create with this technology that led the machine to be a center which revolved different artists using it to go beyond the use of a simple artistic technique. This specific movement, known as Copy Art, had a recognizable style with definite graphic characteristics as a result of the diverse geographical context where it was developed and changing with the progress of the machine itself. But, in addition, it had openness and flexibility, since it allowed other artistic practices or disciplines to participate in this movement, confusing it with other practices. In actual fact, it can be distinguished three main generations of artists working internationally with the photocopy machine, with the appearance of texts that work as the movement’s declaration of purpose and written to disseminate and defend these creations.

“Copy Art” is a term which moves away from the real objective of the movement, but it is a symbol of time when artists, obsessed with highlighting the pioneering use of technology, designated what they created by the new tool selected, emphasizing that quality. Same happened with Polaroid (Polaroid Art), video (Video Art), or computer (Computer Art). Although digital technologies were established in the 1980s, these analogue and electronic tools provided with new creative needs that reflected some of the changes that were taking place in economic, social and political fields and also predicted many of the Media Art

features. Those three technologies and their artistic practices have been described as “underground experimental avant-gardes” (Alcalá, 2015), specifying their extremely experimental character and developed in parallel to the official ones. Moreover, in 1981, French artist Christian Rigal considered these three technologies, along with the Polaroid, guilty of the great change in the artistic creation (Rigal 1981), too; and this idea was also defended by Frank Popper and Marie-Odile Briot at the large “Electra” exhibition in 1983.

Despite the relevance of the artistic works that all these artists made, only the technical aspects were stressed, and the few theoretical texts that exist considered it as minor proposal compared to Pop or Conceptual Art productions.

### **When domestic multi-reproduction technology made art**

As an originally electric and later digital technology, the photocopy machine had a number of technical and functional features that made it unique for a creative use, with concepts as immediacy, instantaneity, visual noise or repetition.

The result of subverting this technology, being a transgressed medium, is that its special features and restrictions as a machine became the Media-specificity that gave rise to the graphic language and the iconography of the movement. In fact, some of its great peculiarities were the limitations and restrictions of this technology, which did not scare the artist away, but to take advantage of them as creative strategies. Some of them include the following:

1. The machine dimensions. Until the arrival of personal and smaller photocopiers, size of most models forced the artist to move on the machine’s glass all the small materials he wanted to use to create the work, usually in spaces not related to art, as copy shops, offices or universities.
2. Size and limited format of the glass or registration screen, between an A4 and an A3, as well as the size of the paper. This resulted in the artist adapting the work using small elements, fragments or photographs. In the case of larger works, the artist was pleased to assemble the different generated pieces to compose a whole.
3. Restricted depth of field. The photocopier hardly had depth of field, so the light imprint was made by direct contact with the glass, illuminating the closest to the glass part and leaving dark background.
4. The internal rhythm of the machine process. This technology exposes the objects by means of a sweeping light that moves with a particular rhythm. If the original is moved during the registration time, there will be a deformation on the image which was used creatively.
5. The horizontal format of the glass adopted for creation. The artist no longer created on the vertical plane, classical one since the Renaissance, but he did it on the horizontal plane which was inaugurated with the avant-gardes and was fully developed with these practices. This horizontal format produces a very particular flatbed iconography in the resulting works.
6. Visual grammar-noise. This machine uses light as a gesture to be manipulated that attends to electrostatics, and uses toner powder as component of the work, whose grammar is specific of this technology both in its analogical as well as digital aspect. This aesthetics of the point of toner was mainly exploited by the most independent artistic currents.
7. The original copy or the multiple original. For a long time, there has been a need to talk about the concept of original and copy when reflecting on the creation with the photocopy machine. However, it is difficult to talk about the concept of copy when artist use to create or generate original pieces. The only case in which the machine

acted as a reproducer is in the realization of editions or fanzines, in which copies are made to obtain the desired number of prints.

### **From the creative parameters of the electrographic materiality**

In this way, since the 60's the production of a fruitful artistic production that lasted more than 30 years and which was extended through diverse geographic contexts together with the interest of exchange, took place. This artistic production offered some creative parameters that, from the physicality that imposes all electrographic production, connect with those general parameters of current Media Art. Amongst these, specific mention can be made of the relevance of the process itself; the interest in the error which is directed to the current digital culture of Glitch Art, or its search as a form of originality; or the artist closer to a researcher, who collaborates with scientists and technicians. In addition, the procesual interface appeared, which, in the case of the photocopier is the glass where the light sweep took place in order to trap the objects and translate them into the machinic language. In this way, creative development ceases to be an undeniable path towards a final object, passing from the traditional "image-object" to the "image-process", which will be the type of image that stands out as a product of these artistic practices and Media Art ones.

However, one of the most important potentialities and the unbearable break that Copy Art provoked, has to do with the concept of the original and the copy, the uniqueness and the multiple. This is where the greatest subversive power resides, which has caused the rejection by the market, criticism and art historians. Although the photocopier was introduced in the market to copy documents, the artists used it precisely to generate original works, where the act of photocopying is a deformation of the academic approach of artistic creation. It should be clarified that the machine has an attribute as producer of multiples by nature that transgresses the uniqueness. This does not devalue the original, but transforms the purchasing value of a work into value of exhibition and dissemination.

### **Historical milestones of artistic practices with the photocopy machine in the context of Media Art**

All the artistic contributions that were made by artists linked to electrography have been relegated outside the general story of the history of contemporary art, even though it spread internationally and their artistic contributions contaminated some of the main artistic contexts of what it is considered as historical Media Art. For example, this technology was presented in the XX Biennale di Venezia in 1970 by Italian artist Bruno Munari who installed the Rank Xerox in one of the rooms, called *Laboratorio per la Produzione Manuale e Meccanica*, so that the public could experiment with it. During this event the Italian artist took the opportunity to present his publicación *Xerografia. Documentazione sull'uso creativo delle macchine Rank Xerox*, which was a kind of catalog that served as a recipe book on the potential applications of this technology in the field of art and design. The same happened at "Software Information Technology: Its New Meaning for Art" exhibition (1970) curated by Jack Burnham at the Jewish Museum in London where Sonia Landy Sheridan asked a 3M Color-in-Color photocopier to be installed and available to the public during the exhibition.

It is important also to highlighted "Ars + Machina I: Infographismes, Photographismes, Reprographismes" exhibition in 1980 and "*Electra. L'électricité et l'électronique dans l'Art au XXe siècle*" in 1983, both in France, which were divided into main thematic blocks: Computer Graphics, Video and artworks made with photocopy machine. In 1992, it took part of the prestigious and significant Media Art Festival, Ars Electronica, in Linz, where the Austrian artist Peter Huemer organized the exhibition "Copy Bites" in the Galerie MÆRZ of

that city; and one year later, Monique Brunet-Weinmann curated the exhibition “*Copigraphic Interconnections*” (1993) within Montage’93, Festival International d’Image, which took place in Rochester. Two years later, Brunet-Weinmann and Jacques Charbonneau co-curated the exhibition “*Photocopy Art – Who were the Pioneers?*” –or “*Que sont les Pionnières devenues?*”, in French–, in the Galerie Arts Technologiques in Montreal, within the well-known Media Art symposium, ISEA International Symposium of Electronic Art. Furthermore, these artistic practices have been cited in some of those publications which are milestones in the history of electronic art, such as the book *Art of the Electronic Age* (1993), written by French Frank Popper, who was a very important figure for the recognition of xerography in France. Another landmark publication is *Postmodern Currents. Art and Artists in the Age of Electric Media* (1996), written by Margot Lovejoy who was an artist of the First Generation of Copy Art; or the publication *Sintopía(s). De la relación entre Arte, Ciencia y Tecnología* (2007), in which Marisa González wrote one of the chapters dedicated to Electrography-Copy Art. Also Edward Shanken, in his noted book *Art and Electronic Media* (2009), quoted the pioneers Bruno Munari and Sonia Sheridan and the contributions of German Timm Ulrichs.

### Conclusion

So to sum up, the relevance of presenting this research it is also to demonstrate that is not a casual thing to consider these practices in the context of Historical Media Art, but it is a fact that was historical Media Art and it was considered in the most relevant places and festivals that are historical references of Media Art. The important thing is to make art historians, curators, theorists, critics and other experts aware of this fact, especially when the movements and tendencies relates to the materiality, the new materialism, of the digital are on the rise.

It is precisely now when it is important to do media archaeology. To that end, a review of all those unpublished and own documentary materials all these public and private museums, archives and collections have been held emerges as a need to maintain the works produced with these new machines.

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# “Multivision” and slide projection in the 1960s: new promises of an old media

Olivier Lugon – University of Lausanne

In the 1960s, the projection of still pictures, which for decades had seemed outdated by the rise of cinema, enjoyed an unexpected revival as a modern means of communication. Taking advantage of the new possibilities of electronic control, the slideshow left the sole logic of the single projection inherited from the magic lantern and extended the spectacle to multi-screen presentations of slides and recorded sounds. A new art of *synchronization* of images expanded the idea of montage beyond the linear succession of film, and brought the promise of both a new richness and efficiency of visual communication. By the end of the decade, the multiscreen slide projection had already established itself as a mass media on its own, commonly known as “multivision” in English, German or French, where it was also named “*mur d’images*” (“pictures wall”) or simply “*audiovisuel*”. This last term not only subsumed the different categories of photography, film, electronic transmission and sound recording, it also designated the multiscreen slideshow itself, presented as the embodiment and the very center of this new field of convergent media. Professionals coming from diverse backgrounds – photographers, filmmakers, graphic designers, architects – envisioned “multivision” as the modern perpetuation of various older media, be it exhibition, film, the book or the poster, giving the slideshow a potential ubiquity in mass communication. From the mid-1960s to the late 1970s, they founded numerous firms, created classes in art and design schools, published handbooks and manuals. Yet, in just a few years slideshows faced obsolescence once again with the rise of video; very soon, the “multimedia” would take over the uncertain ground once defined by the “audiovisual”, and “multivision” would shift from the center to the margins of media history. Its short and still largely forgotten history, which I propose to reconstruct through French, German and Swiss examples, can remind us of how difficult it is to make a clear and stable distinction between dominant and marginal media, successful and failed technologies under the economical logic of constant changes of technologies and formats, as much as it is difficult to isolate this very media history from other adjacent histories like the history of publishing or the history of exhibition design.

# The Invisible Screen: The Hidden History of the Teleprompter

Neta Alexander (New York University) and Tali Keren

The teleprompter, invented as a show business memory aid, has become one of the most ubiquitous technologies in modern politics. However, the hidden ways in which this device has changed and shaped our understanding of performance, newscasting, and political rhetoric have yet to be studied by media scholars. Recognising this lacuna, we trace the evolution of the teleprompter from a human-operated cumbersome device to an invisible screen designed to conceal its own existence while shaping the political and public discourse across the globe.

Today, the word “teleprompter” normally refers to “a thin, nearly invisible plates of glass angled at a 45-degree slant at either side of the podium” (Stromberg, 2012). Initially, however, it was a roll of butcher paper rigged up inside half of a suitcase. The first teleprompter was invented in 1948 by Hubert Schlafly, an electrical engineer who worked for CBS. In the early 1950’s, American actors in soap operas such as CBS’ *The First Hundred Years* started to use the teleprompter as a memory aide. In 1958, Luther George Simjian – who also invented the photo-booth and an early version of the ATM – filed a patent for a “prompting device” that creates “a personal ‘touch’ between the speaker and the viewer” (Hayward, 2013: 199). The off-screen presence of the teleprompter therefore challenges the distinction between the eye and the hand.

This tactile capacity proved crucial for newscasters, who had to read off the page. One solution to this problem was teaching them Braille so they could read the news with their fingers. The invention of teleprompters was a much more efficient solution, and “journalists became aware that their looks, facial expressions, mannerisms and demeanor all came into play with audiences who could see them on the screen” (Alan & Lane, 2003: 59).

But what exactly is the teleprompter? Is it a storage device, a projector, or a medium? How should media scholars approach this marginal object - and what could be gained from mapping its history? We would like to offer several answers to these questions by arguing that this device provides us an entryway into the intersection of military, politics, and entertainment. It was used in the 1960’s by the US military in order to cut time for missile training, and it played a central role in the invention of flight simulators; It gave rise to an industry of ghost writers, shifting the agency from politicians to speech writers; and it created a world in which the distinction between politics and entertainment is increasingly blurred. As Mark Hayward argues, the teleprompter symbolizes the rise of “neoliberal optics” – “the uses of light that contribute to forms of sociality and subjectivity that constitute neoliberal culture” (2013, 194).

Based on an ongoing collaboration between a media scholar and a visual artist, this presentation brings together archival research and an interactive art project inviting the audience to use a teleprompter. By putting themselves in the shoes of an evangelist politician, participants will gain a better understanding of how teleprompters shape political performance. This interdisciplinary approach to the study of marginal media enables us to rethink the role of tactility, opacity, and storage – drawing our attention to an invisible screen whose prominence is so often ignored.

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# Racing Against the Forger: Media History and the Search for Authenticity

Aleksandra Kaminska – Université de Montréal

This presentation examines the media technologies that mark things as authentic. It considers the security features that do the work of reliably storing, protecting, and communicating authenticity across both space and time. While the recent hyper-securitization of borders has put front and centre a surveillance apparatus built on the identification and authentication of people and things as they move, circulate and are exchanged in the world, implementing ways to achieve this legitimation has been a long-standing technical concern for states and enterprises. Using the examples of passports and paper bills, the focus here is particularly on the “authentication devices” used in security printing—stamps, seals and watermarks; propriety pigments and substrate composition; magnetic and UV inks; holographs, nano-optics and RFID; etc. As complex media within systems of governance and scientific innovation, the technical history of authentication is rooted in the genealogies of image-making and security printing, material science and media convergence. This paper presents a project working to write this interlaced history of authentication devices, and in doing so situates current and emergent developments in the ecology of digitized security within a media history of visual, informational, and computational devices.

This presentation proposes a way to map and analyze how scientific advances in security printing and techniques for image making reverberate across trends in authentication, and to situate these in dialogue with the history of media technologies and innovation. It outlines overlapping strategies that are employed for marking authenticity: 1) *visual effects* in the form of imaging and display (e.g. holographs, fluorescent threads); 2) *tactile effects* that include forms that can be detected through touch (e.g. intaglio, letterpress); 3) *miniaturization* and the drive to store large amounts of information in small areas (e.g. microprinting, microdots); 4) *invisibility* and the push to hide the traces that mark the object (e.g. steganography, watermarking, magnetic inks); and 5) *connectivity*, and the quest to connect and protect (digital) information within and across objects (e.g. barcodes, RFID, biometrics). In the convergence of these strategies, authentication shifts from being a sensory mechanism that can be seen or touched (human-readable), to a multi-functional (“multi-media”) technology accessible only through machine-readability.

Through this work, this presentation also suggests that an attention to authentication devices provides new theoretical perspectives for media scholars, namely on the question of reproducibility. A technological environment that makes reproduction accessible to amateurs is a constant challenge in the production of objects whose value depends on material authenticity. Thus the “technological race” between issuers, regulators, and forgers (Fahrmeir 2001) assures that authentication devices must always be increasingly technically complex. This continuous demand for “irreproducible” media—devices designed to be secretive, opaque and extremely difficult to copy—means that vigilance over amateur access, technical disclosure and ease of reproduction become politicized matters of institutional validation, preservation of value (real or imagined) and even “national security.” While reproducibility has been established as a key moment in the history of media technologies, those that are devised to be “secure” have an inverse orientation that precisely requires a media history that

hinges on the search for a perpetually un-copiable “real,” or original. This theoretical contribution accompanies the historico-material work to present and open up the dual dimensions of this project on authentication devices, an example of the kind of “unsung and offbeat” (Gitelman 2014) technologies that can expand media history.

# “This Video Does Not Exist:” A Remix of Blank Screens in Cinema

Tanya Shilina-Conte, SUNY at Buffalo

In the digital age such practices as remixing and videographic criticism have modified the production, distribution, and sharing of culture. If, according to Lawrence Lessig, we now inhabit “Read/Write culture” (“RW”) as opposed to “Read Only culture” (“RO”), we also increasingly approach film and media history in the “Play/Rewind/Fast-Forward” mode, setting the past against the future in an exchange of roles between the producer and the consumer, the director and the spectator. As a tool of resistance and critique, remix has the capacity to reframe, “refresh,” and “recalculate” accepted narratives of media development. In the process of constructing new assemblages, the false links between old concepts reveal themselves, manifesting inconsistencies in evolutionary outlines of cultural ontogenesis.

*This Video Does Not Exist* is a remix of black and white screens in the history of cinema. It demonstrates that black and white screens have been “marginalized” in cinema, often dismissed as noise or deviance within the established system of signification. One of the principles of “fair use” dictates that one is permitted to borrow a small percentage of content from copyrighted works that is not crucial to the essence of these works. In one interpretation, it is therefore “less fair” to borrow from the heart of the work and “more fair” to borrow from its marginal or peripheral elements. What *This Video Does Not Exist* borrows from other works, according to this principle, is *supposedly* only an inessential part, as these are mostly the black or white frames (not the images proper) that are transposed from the existing sources into the remix. Yet the focus on absence—the hidden and invisible elements in these sources—reveals their utter importance. In a reversal of the rationale of fair use, I bestow upon the black and white screen the “heart” and essence of my remix, while making the snippets of anterior and posterior “positive” images serve the unusual for them function of transitions, thus subverting their representational value. The result is a feature-length remixed “movie” that takes one on a tour of film and media history “from the margins,” while also challenging traditional definitions of cinema as it relocates itself onto new platforms.

The title of the remix itself alludes to the traces of internet censorship as evidenced by statements of content erasure and restriction of access that have become habitual, but unacknowledged part of our daily internet experience: “This Video Does Not Exist,” “This Video is No Longer Available Due to a Copyright Claim,” etc. During my presentation I will offer the audience a few clips from the remix to show how the filmmakers of minor and activist cinema rely on the tactics of silence, erasure, and absence, which are also employed by the corporate machine in order to instill censorship and suppression. By placing special emphasis on the role of the black or white screen in the history of cinema and switching the register from presence to absence, from the actual to the virtual regime, from the visual and visible to the non-visual and invisible, I will evoke contexts that may have been suppressed, overlooked, or enfolded by the dominant cinematic modes of representation.

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# An Interactive and Active Collective: Media as Relational and Entangled Objects

Marco Bischof & Karin Priem, Werner Bischof Estate, Zurich & Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History, University of Luxembourg

This paper draws upon different media, their contents, close relationships to lived life, and the memories and stories evolving around them. Challenging linear historical time, the paper looks at the interconnectedness of different media and how these connections and constellations shape histories. The different media analyzed in this paper are perceived as an interactive and active collective of “ongoing moments” (Dyer 2007) and nodes that reinforce each other and relate to different audiences (e.g., Edwards 2009). As both performances of the past and living objects triggering memories and the making of histories, our source materials cover approximately seventy years and refer to a broad array of actors, experiences, relationships, places, and spaces within the wider context of the work of the Swiss Magnum photographer Werner Bischof who was commissioned by Schweizer Spende to travel war-ravaged Europe after the Second World War. More particularly, the paper concentrates on how a photographic portrait of a Dutch boy, Jo Corbey, taken in the town of Roermond in 1945, came to life, why and how it was made, and how it circulated and got entangled with other media in a meshwork of meaning making (e.g., Ingold 2015). Materials and sources discussed include Bischof’s diary entries, drawings, and contact sheets, the May 1946 issue of the Swiss monthly *Du* dedicated to Schweizer Spende, family photographs and newspaper clippings, as well as a 2010 photography exhibition (plus catalogue) in Helmond, Holland, and a 2011 interview with Corbey’s twin brother and sisters, which was recorded by Marco Bischof, co-presenter of this paper. Thematically, we will focus on the story of Corbey’s identification and the different stories that evolved around his life, and discuss the involvement of different actors as a collective or inter-relational conglomerate of media and humans who added their own stories, rationales, and memories. The image appeared in different print formats, was shown in exhibitions, and inspired TV shows and films while at the same time initiating debates on children and war, promoting humanitarian action, triggering memories of the past, and helping to break silences on war experiences. In sum, the paper will demonstrate how media travel back and forth between the margins and the center of history by virtue of their relational qualities as social objects.

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# Screen Advertising: (Re-)Searching a Non-Marginal Object from the Margins of Cinema and Media Historiography

Yvonne Zimmermann – Philipps-University Marburg

As historical object and business practice, screen advertising has been all but marginal. Despite the high prevalence of moving image advertising in the history of cinema and television and despite its (experienced) ever-increasing pervasiveness in the present digital media landscape, the history of screen advertising has been a rather neglected area in media studies. The limited number of histories written about moving image advertising has privileged medium, country, or period to approach the topic.

Recent initiatives emerging within the field of useful cinema studies have demonstrated increasing interest in the history and historiography of moving image advertising.<sup>1</sup> My presentation is located within this scholarly context. It takes screen advertising as an object to rethink media history from the margins in two directions. First, it reconsiders traditional media history from the periphery; that is, it questions ‘central’ approaches and concepts from the perspective of neglected objects. In the case of screen advertising, this means to bring back on the table, among others, notions of the institution, the archive, and self-reflexivity. Second, it aims at developing alternative methodologies of writing media history that can take into account specific challenges posed to media historiography by broadening the scope of subject matters. For both purposes, I argue, screen advertising is a case in point.

My methodological thoughts are indebted to concerns and challenges encountered in the international research project *Advertising and the Transformation of Screen Cultures* conducted with Bo Florin, Patrick Vonderau and myself (2014-2017).<sup>2</sup> In my paper, I wish to take up some aspects that have been haunting the project and study them more closely. Thereby, I follow what I think has been a useful methodological framework, namely to abandon the conventional delineation of fields by medium, nation, or period and to adopt a lateral view instead that focuses on objects (products and services), screens (exhibition, programming, physical media), practices (e.g. production, marketing), and intermediaries (ad agencies).

There are two aspects that I would like to take into consideration more closely, the first one concerning *textual* analysis, the second one concerning *movement* in moving image advertising. Regarding the first: Whatever ubiquitous and comprehensive a phenomenon in practice, screen advertising from an archival perspective has often left only *textual* traces, that is advertisements for cinema or television screens. Deprived of any context, these moving images throw back and narrow down scholars to textual analysis and questions of aesthetics and representation. But what other methods can be developed instead to cope with this situation? This question is pressing, thinking for example of the archive of more than 80.000

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<sup>1</sup> See for example the anthology by Bo Florin, Nico de Klerk and Patrick Vonderau (eds.), *Films That Sell: Moving Pictures and Advertising* (London: BFI, 2016) as well as the International Screen Advertising Workshop that took place in Sigtuna (Sweden) in March 2017 and the Pre-Conference on Advertising Film at the Orphan Film Symposium in New York in April 2018.

<sup>2</sup> See Bo Florin, Patrick Vonderau and Yvonne Zimmermann, *Advertising and the Transformation of Screen Cultures* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, forthcoming 2018).

television commercials competing for the former Clio Awards in the 1960, 1970 and 1980 recently acquired by the Indiana University Libraries Moving Image Archive.<sup>3</sup> How could this collection be studied with ‘classical’ textual analysis? Can serial analysis and new digital methods provide a way out and point to a bright new future of media historiography?

The second aspect regarding *movement* in moving image advertising interrogates what cinema studies can contribute to the history of screen advertising in terms of its specific instruments to approach, analyze and theorize its objects of study. In this way, my presentation raises more questions than it can and wishes to answer. It addresses methodological challenges to media historiography from the margins and wishes to trigger fruitful discussions among the participants of the seminar.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://news.iu.edu/stories/2017/12/iub/releases/14-clio-collection.html>; last accessed February 4, 2018.

# **Chilean broadsheets (lira popular) and popular satirical press at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Santiago of Chile: alternative communication and popular culture beyond the worker subject?**

**Chiara Sáez Baeza – Universidad de Chile**

Chilean broadsheets (called “Lira popular”) was a phenomenon where literary and journalistic aspects were brought together. Their authors (at least 53 has been identified) became opinion leaders who wrote about love and religious issues, but also about social problems, political news, crimes, etc., with their own point of view. Most of them were “gañanes”: “workers without qualification, with unstable employments, often underemployed” (Romero, 1987: 82), which found a way to make a living selling their poems in streets, markets and squares. This phenomenon began in 1860 and declined from 1910 onwards, losing gradual relevance and visibility in relation to the first mass newspapers, oriented to the popular sectors, but from an industrial and commercial logic.

Popular satirical press is another case where we can find popular sectors making media at the margins of the oligarchic politics logics or the first workers political projects. A very important milestone for this was the press law of 1872 that eliminated previous restrictions. Although this press treated social or political issues in an humorous way, it was rather closer to the carnival’s laughter (Bajhtin, 1990; Salinas et al., 1996) than to the modern satire (Knight, 2004; Hodgart, 2010).

Both are cases of alternative communication, following Downing, Atton and Rodríguez’s concept of these media: i.e., “generally on a small scale in many different forms, which express alternative visions of dominant perspectives, priorities, and policies” (Downing, 1984: 52), defined “by their capacity to generate non-standardized, often outlawed methods of creation, production, and distribution, as well as by their content” (Atton, 2002: 4), whose ultimate purpose is the democratization of communication (Rodríguez, 2001). But in the gathered research about them, the concept of alternative communication has not been used as a conceptual frame (Donoso, 1950; Lenz, 2003; Santa Cruz, 2010; Zaldívar, 2004; Navarrete and Palma, 2008; Araos, 2015; among others).

The purpose of this communication is to describe the discourses transmitted by these media about some key issues. Specifically, the way in which they incorporate the traditional popular culture of many of their authors and the way in which they mix it (or not) with ideas or principles of the modern enlightened discourse. The analysis shows a language and world view imbued with traditional and modern elements regarding various types of social relations (class, gender, foreigners) and the meaning of life. Finally, the word contradiction is proposed as an analytical category that can help in the conception of a more real popular subject for the construction of a radical cultural theory.

These cases are part of a wider research under my charge, based on historical and press archives called “Toward a sociology of an absent popular culture: corporality, representation and mediatization of 'the popular repressed' and 'the popular not represented' in Santiago of Chile (1810-1925), funded by the National Commission of Science and Technology. The underlying hypothesis of this research is that there is a continuous (and persistent) circuit of popular culture that is “absent” (neither illustrated as the worker’s culture nor massive as the cultural industry, while in relation with both) in which it is possible to identify different experiences, some of them holding forms of continuity even up to the present (as the *lira popular* and the hip hop, for instance). Fundamentally, my idea is that what makes “visible” this “absent popular culture is the understanding of the political dimension of these forms of expression and communication as a way to think about social change today from a decolonial perspective.

# ***Anticipating the near future : From Video Art to New Media: the case of the VideoArt Festival, Locarno (1980-2000)***

**Adeena Mey & Maud Pollien – University of Lausanne**

The *VideoArt Festival* took place every year in Locarno (CH) from 1980 to 2000, on the initiative of the art dealer Rinaldo Bianda (1931-2001), whose interest for kinetic art and moving image dated back to the late 60's.

From the beginning, the Festival proposed not only an official competition – with a jury composed of major figures of the international cultural scene – but also an ambitious symposium curated by René Berger hosted every year in Monte Verita.

Director of the Museum of Fine Arts in Lausanne from 1962 to 1981, Berger was one of the first art historians to propose, from 1970 onwards, a systematic theoretical approach to the mass media within the framework of his classes in "Aesthetics and Mass Media" at the University of Lausanne. With this background, he brought together curators, artists, filmmakers, theoreticians, historians, scientists, philosophers, musicologists and politicians, to address themes reflecting the ever growing interest towards a transdisciplinary approach to questions related to new technologies, theories of communication, television, cybernetics, computer science and the Internet.

The FNS project *From video art to new media: the case of the VideoArt Festival, Locarno (1980-2000)*, initiated in October 2017 as part of the Ecal *Ra&D*, intends to renew our knowledge and understanding of video art and its articulation with the emergence of new media and electronic art.

In this contribution, we propose to consider the *VideoArt Festival* through this specific critical corpus of the symposia and to analyse its singularity with regards to its use and formulation of so-called Transdisciplinarity (Nicolescu), Outredisciplinarité (Berger), as well as other "inter" – disciplines, in order to address the articulation of video art with the wider epistemological changes ushered by new technologies

In particular, we will see how the concept of margins can be addressed through the concept of "minor history" (Deleuze/Joseph) which helps re-evaluate sets of artistic practices and their understanding by taking into consideration unresearched archives and events left aside by "dominant" history.

The opportunity to approach the discursive constructions of the *VideoArt Festival* and the artistic utopias that they carried on the site of Monte Verita where they were formulated, is particularly relevant, as it allows us to put into perspective the well-known role of this major cultural site in the development of particular strands of forward thinking media theory as well as of an experimental artistic culture.



# **“What actually happens in the creative process»: The absent question in media theories**

**John Ellis – Royal Holloway University of London**

Media studies have a hole in the middle: the back hole of media practice. Scholars use a wide variety of approaches to understand media. They study texts (their internal process, uses and roles in social practice); media institutions (their internal economies, management and decision-making processes); the media as political and economic actors in their own right; media as technologies, both as machines and as regimes of perception. Each approach now has a considerable history of its own. But weaving in amongst all of these is an unanswered question: “what actually happens in the creative process?”. The creative process is the moment when the all the aspects studied by these disparate academic approaches are actualised in an everyday practice.

Media practice has been (in)differently theorised by various disciplines such as screen-writing studies which tend towards a normative approach. Fully to understand media practice, however, demands that we re-evaluate our approach to what constitutes knowledge. The category of ‘skills’ is usually seen as something artisanal or practical, as the utilitarian means to an end, and so separate from the considerations of the intellectual processes and underlying structures that constitute the fundamental workings of the media industries.

However, in line with the material turn in humanities in general, the status of skills should be rethought. Skills should be understood as a complex and ongoing encounters between physical humans and the tools or technologies that they use to think. Skills are not simply a matter of agility or habit; they are processes of conceptualisation and thought. Thinking takes place through physical engagements which both produce ideas and change both human and machine. To understand ‘skills’ in this way is to see them as simultaneously embedded in the working of media institutions and of the bodies of the humans who ‘have’ those skills. It also requires a new approach to the gathering and study of data about those skills, an approach which involves the use of audiovisual recording of actual practice.

# When the exception becomes the rule ... When the margins become the center ...

Valérie Schafer – University of Luxembourg

« Theodore Roszak, whose 1969 book, “The Making of a Counter Culture,” popularized that era’s doctrines, later asserted that computer hackers — “whose origins can be discerned in the old Whole Earth Catalog” — invented the personal computer as a means of “fostering dissent and questioning authority.” Timothy Leary, the psychedelic maestro of that period, declared that “the PC is the LSD of the 1990’s.” »  
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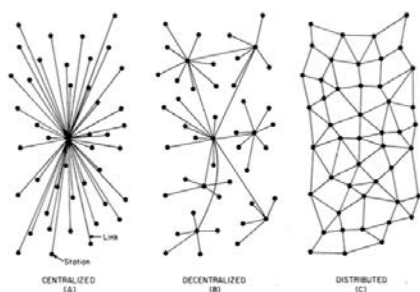


FIG. 1 – Centralized, Decentralized and Distributed Networks

In a 2012 presentation at SIGCIS<sup>4</sup>, historian Andrew Russell built upon Paul Baran’s seminal schema of network architectures<sup>5</sup> to put forward a new vision of Internet history: he suggested to call into question the American-centric, triumphalist and teleological narrative of linear success and to replace it with a decentralized, if not distributed approach.

This invites us to critically reflect upon centers and peripheries in Internet history, not only from a geographical perspective<sup>6</sup>, but also from a narrative standpoint. However, unlike other approaches in media history, the history of the Internet has been written, since its very early days, by looking at the margins. Actually, they have likely been over-valued sometimes, echoing a libertarian and counter-cultural vision strongly supported by Internet actors.

In this contribution, I wish to adopt the standpoint of this division between margins/mainstream/center, and to observe its consequences on the writing of Internet history. This presentation will address three major paths in Internet history: the redistribution of powers *on* and *thanks to* the Internet; the criticism or devaluation of the “center”, whether it is

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.sigcis.org/workshop12/Russell>

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\\_memoranda/2006/RM3420.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_memoranda/2006/RM3420.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> In fact this issue is already well established and recognized in Internet history. See for example Goggin and McLelland’s book *The Routledge Companion to Internet History* (2017), which covers a lot of countries and levels, from a national but also regional and transnational perspective.

political, informational or economic; and finally the exploration of “backstage” elements such as shadows, outsiders, etc. I will investigate in particular:

- the place of figures such as innovators, mediators and go-betweens, maintainers, users
- the oppositions of David vs Goliath, DIY<sup>7</sup> and high vs low barrier to entry, niche communities vs giant companies, etc., all of which feed a nostalgia of the 90s and a strong criticism of the current evolutions of the Web and the Internet

- the access to archives to document the margins and the “empires” of the Internet.

Based on previous research (Cyclades, Renater, digital cultures in the 90s, the history of ISPs) but also on broader historiographical aspects, this presentation aims at analysing the relationship between centers and margins in Internet history and historiography. In doing so, we will raise the following question: is Internet history especially suited and open to margins? And to go further, being somewhat provocative: if yes, is it a positive quality, or one that carries some pitfalls and risks?

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<sup>7</sup> Do It Yourself.

# Animation History at the Fringes

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Animation is a marginalised field in film history. Within these margins though, certain aspects of animation history are well researched – for example, the history and practices of the Walt Disney Studio, individual artists such as Norman McLaren and animation techniques such as cel animation. Also, grand histories of animation have been published most recently such as the three volumes of Alberto Bendazzi's *Animation – A World History* (2015) and Maureen Furniss' *Animation: The Global History* (2017). However, very few publications on animation history attempt to sketch animation beyond mainstream and auteur animation film accounting for the great variety of contexts in which animation is used.

The challenge of writing any animation history lies with the fact that animation is a cultural practice with many techniques, open to a range of visual languages with many individual styles employed in almost all areas of life: from entertainment and science, to education and advertisement, the arts and information dissemination all displayed on a range of screens in different spatial contexts such as cinemas, museums, hospitals, subways or public squares. Understanding animation in this variety and complexity makes the writing of a comprehensive history of animation a challenge.

This paper tries to face this challenge by creating an interdisciplinary framework that facilitates the integration of historiographical research on various fields of visual culture where animation plays an important role but is usually only mentioned in passing, such as precinematic optical devices (Mannoni/Pesenti Campagnoni/Robinson 1995), title sequences and other motion graphics (Betancourt 2013), corporate films (Vonderau/Hediger 2009), commercials (Florin/de Klerk/Vonderau 2016), music videos (Bódy/Weibel 1987), performing arts (Dixon/Smith 2007), (new) media art/digital art (Paul 2008), or medical imaging and scientific visualization (Cartwright 2006, Hentschel 2014). A focus on animation in fields where it is usually overlooked allows us to trace the trajectories of stylistic traditions, common functions, and similar production technologies across heterogeneous contexts. It furthermore helps in researching the education and careers of the unsung creators of animation at the fringes.

By viewing animation as a constant but marginalized element of moving image culture, spanning three centuries and thus connecting the optical toys of the 19th century with the ubiquitous hand-held devices of the 21st century, the paper takes a *longue durée* perspective and positions itself in the Marginal Times section.

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# From the dustbin of history: Rethinking the history of amateur media in a historical conversation

**Susan Aasman (University of Groningen), Tim van der Heijden (University of Luxembourg) & Tom Slootweg (University of Groningen)**

“Amateurs of one era are not the amateurs of another, even when a continuous tradition exists to connect them”, is an intriguing statement made by Lisa Gitelman (2014). Overall, Gitelman’s answer would favour a certain level of complexity as to avoid ‘sloppy media history’ even when a continuous tradition exists to connect them (137). Rather, we should explore how amateur filmmakers ‘doing and its do-ability’ can differ as they are situated in broader historical contexts. Building on this idea of a complex and dynamic history, that consists of a diversity of histories, we propose to start a semi-structured conversation between three experts in amateur media and between the experts and the audience. We seek to follow traces that connect or disconnect the various discourses and practices in amateur media history in which amateurism encountered predictions, hopes, and tried out appropriations of amateur media technologies as an alternative/marginal media space. The set of related concepts that will be deployed through time and in relation to different historical contexts are: marginality, democratisation, resistance, alternative, avant-garde, subversive and experimental. By comparing, contrasting and evaluating these set of concepts we hope to add to the overall goal of the conference to open up a space to rethink historiography.

Our format:

We will start this semi-structured but open conversation in three rounds each time starting with with three statements, introduced by the three experts who will represent a specific historical period/and type of media technology (film, video and digital). From there on, we will explore the performative power of those concepts and trace the often contradictory discourses and uses throughout amateur media history. At any time, the audience can participate, but in a semi-structured way: they can respond if they own a *wildcard* or if they received a *preformulated statement*. If they decide to join in according to the instructions, they have to help develop the conversation, until a new concept/statement or new round starts.

Result

The goal of this experimental exercise in collective re-thinking of historical continuities and discontinuities is to see whether we can achieve new perceptions of classical notions related to amateur as marginal. Can they leave the dustbin of history?

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