Technologies of Memory

Society is memory, Émile Durkheim stated. And in his groundbreaking work, *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (1925), Maurice Halbwachs described social memory as enacted through ritual, language, art, architecture and institutions. What characterized these instances of shared memory was persistence over time—a stability and capacity for storage that was contrasted with the fleeting character of individual memory. However, today's new time technologies make us question not just the classic description of social memory, but the social ontology that it presupposes. In the age of digital computing, interconnection through real time flows gives unprecedented priority to the present and the future, and the distinction between internalized and externalized memory functions have been challenged from a number of different perspectives. For the inaugural conference of *The Archive in Motion* project, we take a look at the new technologies of memory and the questions of social life that they open onto.

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Program

09:00–09:30 Coffee and registration

09:30–09:40 **Jon Arild Olsen (National Library):** Welcome address

09:40–10:00 **Eivind Røssaak**: Introduction

10:00–11:00 **Wendy Hui Kyong Chun:**
Undead Memories, Imagined Networks

11:15–12:15 **Jussi Parikka:**
Waste Memory: Psychogeographies of the Technical

12:15–13:30 Lunch

13:30–14:15 **Trond Lundemo:**
(No) Control of the Universe: Temporal Linearity and
The Archives of the Planet

14:30–15:30 **Wolfgang Ernst:**
Chronopoetics of Techno-Archival Memory

15:30–16:00 Coffee Break

16:00–16:45 **Yngvil Beyer:**
July 22nd: Archiving the Mediation of Unforeseen Events

17:00–17:45 **Ina Blom:**
The Autobiography of Video: Revisionist Approaches to
a Memory Technology

17:45–1800 Concluding Remarks

- The conference will take place at the National Library, Henrik Ibsens gate 110, Oslo.
- Registration by Wednesday 30 November on the AiM web site.
- The conference fee of NOK 120 covers tea/coffee as well as lunch. Please contact the coordinator about any dietary restrictions (allergies, vegetarianism etc.).
- Conference participants will get a 10% discount at the Scandic KNA hotel by referring to the National Library's discount agreement. The hotel is located very close to the conference venue. Please see their web site for further details.
- Contact: Ellef Prestsæter (coordinator), ellefp@ifikk.uio.no / +47 99 27 84 11.

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Abstracts

Undead Memories, Imagined Networks

Wendy Hui Kyong Chun

How does something live in memory? How do networks affect our efforts to save and destroy data? Examining odd temporal effects of networks—such as viruses that refuse to die or explode, data that we can neither erase nor access—this paper argues that much information is undead. That is, the constant repetition and transmission of information renders it neither dead nor alive, present nor absent.

Waste Memory: Psychogeographies of the Technical

Jussi Parikka

Society is memory, but society is not without its technics. The debate concerning memory, archive and storage increasingly addresses the particular technologies of storage that current digital technologies are offering. The relation of digital technology to concepts and sensations of time has been actively debated since the 1980s and 1990s. Speed, slowness and duration have been the cornerstones of this debate in terms of storage possibilities, but at the same time we could argue that the other side of speed needs to be addressed too. What would an analysis into technologies of memory look like, if we started with obsolescence, decay, dust and rust?

As Jennifer Gabrys has argued in her wonderful Digital Rubbish-book, we find a whole alternative temporality of electronic media if we look at things that are discarded and dysfunctional. Indeed, in this talk, I propose to address the specific temporalities born in the midst of digital culture through notions of failure, obsolescence and decay. This talk looks at how the technological object itself opens up as a city and an imaginary for memory and, more widely, the social, and how some experimental media practices have recently addressed such chemical and material layers of the technological. Hence, we end up opening up the notion of psychogeography to new technical regimes, as well as introducing the idea of the aesthetic-technical.

(No) Control of the Universe: Temporal Linearity and *The Archives of the Planet*

Trond Lundemo

Cinema has arguably been the most powerful medium for forming social memory during the 20th Century: Its unique role as a medium with a special censorship authority testifies to this. Cinema's mnemotechnical powers are in large part due to the temporal linearity of the film screening. Linearity is the condition for the shock effect and the tactile dimension (Walter Benjamin), and for the 'coincidence' between the film and consciousness (Bernard Stiegler). Consequently, this mnemotechnical force also comes with great ideological power.

As the consumption of moving images largely has migrated to other platforms, the temporal linearity is altered in several ways. This makes user interaction and ubiquitous access more predominant features of current media. The modes of memory have changed in the digital sphere. However, the social memory of the 'archival clouds' of the web is also subject to ideology, as pathways of navigation are pre-programmed, and no use of a medium is independent of its soft- and hardware.

This presentation will probe the unique features of the configuration between shots and between media in Albert Kahn's *Archives of the Planet* (1908-1931) to ask whether alternative modes of social memory formations are possible. This collection of film, autochromes and stereographs were seldom edited together for exhibition, making it open to virtual connecting points and reconfigurations between the media in an unknown future. The *inter-mediary* structure of the collection implies that social memory studies must devote attention to individual characteristics of technical media.

Chronopoetics of Techno-Archival Memory
Wolfgang Ernst

This talk will address the archive not as a coherent unit of memory supply, but rather identify a multiplicity of time layers that open with new archival technologies. These layered temporalities of techno-archival memory are being designated as "chronopoetics" since they are not passive containers but dynamically create forms of temporal affect when coupled to human perception.

For historically orientated disciplines, the archive provides the fundament to write historiography upon. But under a shifted perspective, the archive is a kind of symbol-calculating machine itself, radically different from narrative history, closer to "data bank aesthetics" (Manovich). When the notion of the archive is extended to the storage of signals (like physical sound), a memory exists which addresses human perception as an ongoing presence; this represents a different aggregation of the past. The intention is to liberate archival memory from its subjection to the historical discourse and re-install it as an agency of temporal poetics in its own right.

The very term "tradition" here transforms from its emphatic macro-temporal ("historical") notion to the analysis of the time-based and time-basing micro-mechanisms of transmission. While tradition so far has been associated with long-time memories across deep historical time, this emphatic horizon now shrinks to a mere extension of the present (as its re- and protentive short-time "working memory") – a dramatic shift of the temporal prefix in the age of algorithmic, that is generative (instead of inherited) memory.

July 22nd: Archiving the Mediation of Unforeseen Events
Yngvil Beyer

YouTube videos, a 1500 pages document attached to an e-mail, hundreds of thousands tweets, dozens of Facebook groups, continuously updated web pages, blogs; this constitutes the most important written documentation of the terrorist attack against Norway on July 22nd.

The benefit of the close to real-time dissemination of digital and social media has made such channels the most important mediators of sudden, unforeseen events. Online newspapers were updated constantly, and reached an all time high number of readers the first twenty-four hours after the attack. The people directly affected by the attack, as well as traditional media, politicians and the general public, used social media to communicate and get information about the incidents. The National Library of Norway's mission is "preserving for posterity a written testimony of Norway's cultural heritage and Norwegian society as well as providing material for original research and documentation." During the two last decades written testimonies have increasingly been made available by a digital transmission channel, such as the Internet. The National Library has been working on methods for saving some of

this material for a long time. In its efforts to collect and manage the documentation of the terrorist attack on July 22nd, the following reactions and their extensive (re)mediation, the insufficiency of the traditional practice and channels is revealed.

What new challenges is the National Library facing and how do we meet them? This paper uses the terrorist attack on July 22nd as a case study to discuss these challenges.

The Autobiography of Video: Revisionist Approaches to a Memory Technology
Ina Blom

In this paper I will address the possibility of a revisionist history of early video art—one that intends to shed new light on the ways in which analog video technologies opened onto new forms of social memory and hence also the production of new social ontologies. Here, I am not interested in the artistic *use* of video for the construction of autobiographical narratives. In sharp contrast to investigations that take the agency of artists and art works as their point of departure, I focus on the agency of a technological object that (among other things) deploys artistic and aesthetic formats and contexts as part of its exploration of its own potential.

Such an approach may be associated with an anthropological tradition preoccupied with the biography of objects—i.e. the attempt to trace the changes in objects and the changes effectuated by objects as they circulate through networks, trajectories, cycles or "lives" of production, promotion and reception. However, the complex temporalities and modes of reflexivity opened up by video suggest a significant twist in such a narrative: it appears as if video deploys artistic contexts and framework for an *autobiographical* inscription that turns around its own particular memory-functions. This approach presents an alternative to existing theories of video-reflexivity in the works of Rosalind Krauss and Yvonne Spielman, among others.

Biographical notes

Wendy Hui Kyong Chun is Professor of Modern Culture and Media at Brown University. She has studied both Systems Design Engineering and English Literature, which she combines and mutates in her current work on digital media. She is author of *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (MIT, 2006), *Programmed Visions: Software and Memory* (MIT, 2011), and co-editor (with Thomas Keenan) of *New Media, Old Media: A History and Theory Reader* (Routledge, 2005), and (with Lynne Joyrich) of a special issue of *Camera Obscura* (2009) on Race and/as Technology. She is currently a Member of the School of Social Sciences at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton; she has also been a fellow at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard and a Wriston Fellow at Brown, as well as a visiting associate professor in the History of Science Department at Harvard. At the moment she is working on a monograph entitled *Imagined Networks, Glocal Connections*.

Jussi Parikka is Reader in Media & Design at Winchester School of Art (University of Southampton) and Adjunct Professor in Digital Culture Theory at the University of Turku, Finland. His writings have addressed accidents and dark sides of network culture (*Digital Contagions*, 2007 and the co-edited volume *The Spam Book*, 2009), biopolitics of media culture (*Insect Media*, 2010, the co-edited special issue of *Fibreculture* "Unnatural Ecologies", 2011 and the edited digital book *Medianatures*, 2011) and media archaeology (the co-edited volume *Media Archaeology*, 2011 and the forthcoming book *What is Media Archaeology?*, 2012). Website and blog: http://jussiparikka.net

Trond Lundemo is Associate Professor at the Department of Cinema Studies at Stockholm University. He has been Visiting Professor and Visiting Scholar at the Seijo University of Tokyo on a number of occasions. He is co-directing the Stockholm University Graduate School of Aesthetics and co-editor of the book series "Film Theory in Media History" at Amsterdam University Press. He is also affiliated with the research project *Time, Memory and Representation* at Södertörn University College. His research engages in questions of technology, aesthetics, and intermediality as well as the theory of the archive. Recent publications include "Archive Theory as Film Theory" in *In the Very Beginning – at the Very End: Film Theory in Perspective*, eds. F. Cassetti et al. (Forum, 2010) and "Jean Epstein's Writings on Technics and Subjectivity", in *Jean Epstein*, eds. S. Keller and J. Paul (Amsterdam University Press, 2011).

Wolfgang Ernst is Professor and Chair (Media Theories) at the Institute for Musicology and Media Studies, Humboldt-Universität, Berlin. His books include *M.edium F.oucault. Weimarer Vorlesungen über Archive, Archäologie, Monumente und Medien*, (VDG Weimar, 2000), *Das Rumoren der Archive: Ordnung aus Unordnung*, (Merve, 2002), *Im Namen von Geschichte: Sammeln, Speichern, Er/zählen* (Fink, 2003), *Das Gesetz des Gedächtnisses. Medien und Archive am Ende* (Kulturverlag Kadmos, 2007). He is co-author (with Wladimir Velminski) of *Semën Karsakov: Ideenmaschine. Von der Homöopathie zum Computer* (Kulturverlag Kadmos, 2007) and co-editor (with Stefan Heidenreich and Ute Holl) of *Suchbilder. Visuelle Kultur zwischen Algorithmen und Archiven* (Kulturverlag Kadmos, 2003), and (with Georg Trogemann and Alexander Nitussov) of *Computing in Russia: The History of Computer Devices and Information Technology Revealed* (Vieweg Verlagsgesellschaft, 2001).

Yngvil Beyer is a PhD fellow (2011-2014) at the National Library of Norway. She holds an MA from the Department of Media and Communication at the University of Oslo. Since 2009 she has been at the National Library, where she has worked on digitization and cataloging at the map section as well as contributed to the revision of the national protection plan for moving images. Her publications include "Small Talk Makes a Big Difference: Recent Developments in Interactive, SMS-based Television" (co-written with Gunn Enli, Arnt Maasø, and Espen Ytreberg) in *Television and New Media* (vol. 8, no. 3, 2007).

Ina Blom is Professor at the Department of Philosophy, Classics, History of Art and Ideas at the University of Oslo and leader of the AiM project. Her fields of research are modernism/avant-garde studies and contemporary art, with a particular focus on media aesthetics and the relationship between art, technology, media and politics. Recent publications include *On the Style Site: Art, Sociality and Media Culture* (Sternberg Press, 2007), "Spectacle versus Cinematographic Subject" in *Cognitive Architecture: From Biopolitics to Noopolitics*, eds. D. Hauptmann and W. Neidich (010 Publishers, 2010), and "*Radical Software* and the Noosphere" in *Are You Ready for TV*, ed. C. Martinez (MACBA Publications, 2010). She is a regular contributor to *Artforum*, *Frieze*, *Parkett* and *Texte zur Kunst*.

Eivind Røssaak is Associate Professor at the Research Department at the National Library of Norway. He has published widely on film history, new media, postmodern philosophy, and literature. His publications include an experimental history of margins in art and philosophy, *Sic. Ved litteraturens grenser* (Spartacus, 2001), *The Still/Moving Image: Cinema and the Arts* (Lambert Academic Publishing, 2010), as well as the edited books *The Archive in Motion: New Conceptions of the Archive in Contemporary Thought and New Media Practices* (Novus Press, 2010) and *Between Stillness and Motion: Film, Photography, Algorithms* (forthcoming on Amsterdam University Press, 2011). In the fall of 2011 he is Visiting Professor at the University of Chicago, where he is giving a seminar on "The Archival Turn in Cinema and Media Studies".