Working Group
Media Anthropology

Multimodal Digital Curating

19 – 20 January 2023 | Online Workshop | AG Medien | DGSKA

Part 3 of the Workshop Series "Multimodal Digital Engagements"

Website: https://agmedien.de/multimodal-digital-curating/
Please register here:
https://uni-koeln.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJwqceusrDstHdG68_57CwtvJ32NqzFRI4MH

In recent years, digital practices of curation have found increased interest in the field of (media) anthropology. Anthropologists and ethnographers developed online exhibitions, created web sites, or used social media platforms as research tools and means to produce and present their research in multimodal digital formats, and to a broader audience.

Digital curating not only encompasses a broad variety of curation technologies such as audio-visual media, VR-video, blogs, podcasts/videocasts, design-based web-applications, social media platforms or the critical use of AI technology, but also addresses hybrid formats and offline spaces. Digital exhibitions are inherently multimodal as they often reflect diverse modes of fieldwork, production, and representation and go beyond the often implied online/offline divide.

Digital Curating ideally involves collaborative processes with research partners, but also with designers, programmers, and other institutional actors. As such, digital curating not only transgresses the diverse modalities of production of what is exhibited, but is in itself a mode of knowledge production and social practice.

Multimodal forms of digital curating allow for a more experimental use of audio-visual media – (moving) images, drawings, designs, and sounds can be (re)combined and presented in novel ways to foster different kinds of experiences. They also relate, reflect, and expand analogue forms of exhibitions, not least due to their reach beyond geographic locations. During the workshop, we want to focus on practical and hands-on perspectives, and at the same time critically engage in the challenges of digital curating, such as economic constraints, bias in digital technologies, sustainability and archiving of digital environments, as well as asymmetries and power dynamics in collaborations between diverse actors and professional spheres.

The workshop Multimodal Digital Publishing is part of a series of workshops and lectures, focusing on different multimodal digital formats such as presenting, publishing, displaying, archiving, gaming, designing, etc. This series is aimed to serve as a platform for scholars and practitioners working on multimodal digital experimentations to share practical experiences and theoretical insights. It brings together researchers and curators from anthropology and related fields to share their experiences with multimodal and experimental forms of digital curating in formats like websites and social media platforms.

Organization & Contact:
Anja Dreschke (mail@anjadreschke.de)
Anna Lisa Ramella, University of Cologne (anna.ramella@uni-koeln.de)
Simone Pfeifer, University of Cologne (s.pfeifer@uni-koeln.de)

Working Group
Media Anthropology

Program

(all times in CET)

19 January 2023

10.30	Welcome
11.00-12.00	Shireen Walton (UCL): *Multimodal explorations: digital (co)-curations in and between Iran and Italy*
12.00-13.00	Larissa-Diana Fuhrmann (JGU Mainz*): Curating artistic appropriations relating to political violence in a collaborative research approach*
13.00-15.00	lunch break
15.00-16.00	Roger Canals (University of Barcelona): *Research as an eclectic assemblage: notes on two multi-modal projects involving digital curation and visual experimentation*
16.00-17.00	Christoph Bareither (University of Tübingen) & Pia Schramm (University of Tübingen): *Digital Curation as Analytical Concept and Approach to Ethnographic Co-Design*

20 January 2023

10.00-11.00	Jennifer Deger (Charles Darwin University, Australia): *Curating anthropology's new forms*
11.00-12.00	Rafael Schacter (UCL): *A Curatorial Methodology for Anthropology*
12.00-14.00	lunch break
14.00-15.00	Paolo Favero (University of Antwerp): *When the Old is the New New*
15.00-16.00	Carolin Höfler (KISD, TH Köln): *Collaborating on Design Processes*
16.00-16.30	final discussion

Please register here:

https://uni-koeln.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJwqceusrDstHdG68_57CwtvJ32NqzFRI4MH

Working Group Media Anthropology

Abstract & Bios

(in order of program)

Day 1 (19 January 2023)

Multimodal explorations: digital (co)-curations in and between Iran and Italy
By Shireen Walton

Abstract:
In this paper I reflect upon the multimodal explorations developed as part of two ethnographic research projects, in Iran and Italy respectively, over the last decade. The former involved digitally co-curating an online digital photographic exhibition as part of a transnational study of popular digital photography in Iran (2012-2015), while the latter involved multimodal methods to explore the place of smartphones and the experiences of ageing, health, and migration in the daily lives of older adults in an inner-city Milan neighbourhood (2017-2020) as part of the ERC-funded, collaborative, Anthropology of Smartphones and Smart Ageing (ASSA) project.

After providing an overview of both projects, I seek to reflect on the potentials and challenges of engaging with online digital co-curation in both studies, in discrete geographical settings, and distinct social, political and technological moments. I draw on the notion of the 'contact zone' (Clifford 1997) as it relates to the digital exhibition as a collaborative and participatory digital and visual method (Gubrium and Harper 2013), and as a methodology of mobility in/for transnational research (Walton 2017). Subsequently, based on our collaborative work in the ASSA project, I think through how contemporary multimodal methodologies, such as working with smartphones and social media as site and method of research, can engender immersive forms of ethnographic research and storytelling, including the production of images, drawings, comics, and videos (Walton and Haapio-Kirk forthcoming, 2022). The paper overall hopes to engage with the workshop theme of multimodal digital curation as representation, everyday practice, and research possibility.

Bio:
Shireen Walton is a lecturer in digital anthropology in the Anthropology department at UCL. Her research is in the field of visual and digital cultures, and migration and mobilities, with a focus on digital-visual and multimodal ethnography. She has carried out ethnographic fieldwork in Iran, the UK, Italy, and online. She received her PhD in 2015 from the School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography, University of Oxford, with a thesis on popular digital photography in/of Iran, about which she has published several articles and book chapters. She joined UCL Anthropology in 2016 as a Teaching Fellow in material and visual culture, before carrying out postdoctoral research in 2017-2020 in Milan, Italy as part of the ERC-

funded project 'The Anthropology of Smartphones and Smart Ageing' (ASSA) at UCL Anthropology. Following this, she was a lecturer in anthropology at Goldsmiths, University of London between 2020-2022. Her recent monograph, *Ageing with Smartphones in Urban Italy: Care and Community in Milan and Beyond* (2021), was published open-access with UCL Press as part of the ASSA book series, and in 2022, her book was published in Italian as *Smart Ageing a Milan (e altrove): Soggettività e socialità nei contesti digitali urbani italiani*, with Ledizioni.

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Curating artistic appropriations relating to political violence in a collaborative research approach
By Larissa-Diana Fuhrmann

Abstract: In my digital media ethnography on political violence, I experimented with curatorial practices as a means of producing and transmitting knowledge to a broader audience. In a collaborative approach I worked with scholars, artists and other professionals on digital and analogue exhibition formats. I co-founded the curated web application 'reclaim platform – art against political violence' and co-curated the group exhibition 'Mindbombs – Visual Cultures of Political Violence' at the Kunsthalle Mannheim. Additionally, Instagram became a platform I used productively as an online research and exhibition space. In my interdisciplinary approach I critically engaged in ethical and methodological challenges I faced. In my contribution I will reflect on how I conceptualized the digital exhibition formats, which technologies I used and which problems occurred. Through this I will give an insight into my collaborations and how this approach transformed my ethnographic research.

Bio: As a scholar and curator, Larissa-Diana Fuhrmann is interested in theoretical and artistical explorations of political violence from a decolonial perspective. She critically questions the production and transfer of knowledge and includes digital research tools and means to produce and present her research. She is currently working on her dissertation where she uses curatorial practices as part of her digital media ethnography.

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Research as an eclectic assemblage: notes on two multi-modal projects involving digital curation and visual experimentation
(www.va-marialionza.com ; www.visualtrust.ub.edu).
by Roger Canals

Abstract: In this talk I propose to conceive ethnographic research as a shared process of investigation and experimentation which may lead to a plurality of different yet interconnected outcomes that I suggest to define as an "eclectic assemblage". I will provide two examples for explaining this idea. First, a long-term research on the religious cult devoted to the goddess María Lionza. This research gave birth to books, articles, films, photographs, a participatory website (through which believers could send their own photographs and videos) and an exhibition. My thesis is that all these materials have to be conceived as an organic whole,

always in motion. Second, I will provide some comments on a project I am currently directing which seeks to better understand, through the use of a multiplicity of visual methods, how people from different socio-cultural milieu interact with images in terms of (mis)trust. By mixing images of different sources as well as different research methods, this project aims at reimagining the way we do, represent and communicate anthropology today, especially in regards to the current debates about the fake and the visual hoax. It will emphasize the importance of "provisory" results.

Bio: Roger Canals is an anthropologist and filñmmaker from Barcelona. He currently works at the Department of Social Anthropology of the University of Barcelona. Specialist in Visual Anthropology and Afro-American Cultures, he is the author of many articles as well as of the book A Goddess in Motion. Visual Creativity in the Cult of María Lionza (Berghahn Books, 2017). As filmmaker, he has made several ethnographic films, internationally awarded, among which The Many Faces of a Venezuelan Goddess (2007), Bea wants to know (2010), A Goddess in Motion(2017) or Chasing Shadows (2019). In 2016 he received the Fejos Postdoctoral fellowship for Ethnographic Film by the Wenner-Gren Foundation. He is currently the principal investigator of the ERC-Consolidator Grant: Visual Trust. Reliability, accountability and forgery in scientific, religious and social images (2021-2026).

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**Digital Curation as Analytical Concept and Approach to Ethnographic Co-Design
By Christoph Bareither**

Abstract: The presentation will provide an overview over several ongoing multi-researcher projects that are located in the field of digital anthropology and that make use of "digital curation" in two different ways. In the DFG-funded project "Curating Digital Images: Ethnographic Perspectives on the Affordances of Digital Images in Museums and Heritage Contexts", we have employed an analytical concept of digital curation (more precisely, digital *image* curation) as a set of entangled media practices in order to study how museum visitors and users of digital image archives interact with digital image technologies. In the presentation, I will describe how the notion of "digital curation" became analytically useful for our ethnographic work and how it contributed to the crafting of our key argument. The second project is the VW-funded multi-researcher project "Challenging Populist Truth-Making in Museums: The Role of Museums in a Digital 'Post-Truth' European Society" (CHAPTER). In this project, we are currently building a museum app (with our partner company Fluxguide from Vienna) for three partner museums in Berlin, Krakow and London. The purpose of the app is to inspire young visitors to critically reflect upon the power and influence of populist truth-making in everyday life. The app is based on our ethnographic research on the impact of populist truth-making on European museums; and in 2023 we will continue the development process together with young museum visitors. Here, "digital curation" is not so much an object of our research as it is a methodological approach. We conceptualize this approach as a form of *ethnographic co-design*, a form of interactive encounter that allows us to improve the product (the app), but that also allows us to continue our ethnographic investigation into the relationships between museums, populism and young people's everyday lives.

Bio: Christoph Bareither's research and teaching focuses on the ethnographic study of everyday digital cultures, combining the strengths of cultural and digital anthropology. The aim of his work is to contribute to urgent socio-political debates by shedding light on the transformations of everyday practices and experiences enabled through digital technologies (e.g. social media, digital image technologies, video games, machine learning). His work integrates a variety of other fields, such as popular culture research, research on memory cultures, heritage and museums, and the ethnography of emotions. The topics he deals with include, among others, cultures of artificial intelligence, digital image cultures on social media, digital transformations of Holocaust remembrance, populist truth-making in digital 'post-truth' societies, and video gaming cultures. Christoph Bareither also contributes to the methodological development of digital ethnography and computer-assisted data analysis, bringing together cultural anthropology and digital humanities (see for example the project Curating Digital Images). Together with fellow researchers, he is also working on new formats for digital science communication and public engagement (see the CHAPTER project). At the LUI, he is also running the Digital Anthropology Lab, an international and interdisciplinary Hub for the ethnography of everyday digital cultures.

Day 2 (20 January 2023)

Curating anthropology's new forms
By Jennifer Deger

Abstract: An expanded appreciation of the analytic force of the digital is overdue. Recent publications such as Feral Atlas: the More-than-Human Anthropocene and Phone & Spear: a Yuta Anthropology not only incorporate multimodal elements—they model new forms of anthropological thinking and collective knowledge making.

In both these works, the objects of curation were not simply multimodal digital files, but distinctly different registers of situated knowledge. Bringing them together required particular kinds of critical and creative care. This presentation will draw from my experiences with these digital projects to describe how the decision to conceive my role as curator—as distinct from editor or author— helped me to better appreciate how the digital enables new ethical, conceptual, and formal fidelities to the worlds and relationships from which such works emerge.

Bio: Jennifer Deger is Professor of Digital Humanities at Charles Darwin University, Co-Director of the Centre for Creative Futures, and a member of Miyarrka Media, an intercultural and intergenerational arts collective from North Australia. Her work follows images and words through the intertidal zones of art, anthropology, and the environmental humanities. She has held a number of research fellowships including as a visiting fellow at the NYU Centre for Media and Religion and the Aarhus University Research on the Anthropocene (AURA). She is co-curator of Feral Atlas: the More-than-Human Anthropocene (Stanford University Press, 2021). In 2020 Miyarrka Media was awarded the Gregory Bateson Book Prize for Phone & Spear: a Yuta Anthropology.

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A Curatorial Methodology for Anthropology
By Rafael Schacter

Abstract: The museum has played a central role within the history and development of anthropology. In this chapter, the author explores a particular technique of curating that he has recently explored within him own anthropological practice, a method that can act not merely as exhibit, but that can encompass research, output, and impact in one. The curatorial methodology thus moves beyond the idea of exhibition as space of impact alone and rather sees it as a space in which research, output and impact are in constant and mutual constitution, in which the project acts as platform for investigation, as site of exposure, as nexus for access. The ambition of the curatorial to 'set a temporal process in motion rather than focusing on the outcome of any final exhibition', thus becomes a method through which to avoid the 'forces of historical inertia' that museums are 'perhaps inescapably, implicated [within]'.

Bio: [Dr Rafael Schacter](#) is an Associate Professor in Anthropology and Material Culture at University College London. Schacter works on public art and global art, curating and writing widely in both these areas. He received his PhD at UCL in 2011 and was a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow at the same institution from 2014-2017. Schacter has published three books; *Street to Studio* with Lund Humphries in 2018; *Ornament and Order: Graffiti, Street Art and the Parergon* with Routledge in 2014; and the award-winning *World Atlas of Street Art and Graffiti* with Yale University Press in 2013. He is currently working on the manuscript for his fourth book, *Monumental Graffiti*. Schacter also has a wide-ranging curatorial output. Most recently curating *Motions of this Kind* at the Brunei Gallery (SOAS) in 2019, Schacter has curated at the Tate Modern (the *Walking Tour* for the *Street Art* exhibition in 2008), Somerset House (*Futurismo Ancestral*, *Mapping the City,* and *Venturing Beyond* in 2014, 2015, and 2016 respectively), and recently completed curating a four-year public art project in Heerlen, the Netherlands (2018-2022).

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When the Old is the New New

By Paolo Favero

Abstract: My presentation aims to addresses the transformations that have been taking place in the recent decades in the terrain of image-making, visual culture, visual technologies and indeed of visual anthropology. Addressing the continuity between past and present practices I acknowledge that we are in an era of post-digital visuality, where the distinction between what is digital and what is not is of second order importance. My presentation suggests that audio-visual-sensory research is a fluid terrain where different media, senses, modes of collaborations and of narration concur in creating something which is at once a communication of scientific research and a form of production of new ethnographic evidence. It also claims that what we do with visual media today contains indeed elements of novelty

yet also many elements of continuity with the ambitions, intentions and desires of previous generations of scholars. In a way, the Old is the New New.

Bio: Paolo Favero is an image-making visual anthropologist with an interest for the meaning of images in human life. He works across visual and digital cultures and anthropology. His most recent project focusses on dying, living and loving in New Delhi. He is also specialised on emerging technologies, visual and sensory ethnography, arts-based methods and existential anthropology. Paolo is the author of four single-authored books: "Image-Making-India" (Routledge, 2020), "The Present Image"(Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), "Dentro e Oltre l'Immagine" (Meltemi 2017), "India Dreams" (Stockholm Univ. Press 2005).

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Collaborating on Design Processes
By Carolin Höfler

Abstract: With today's Internet-defining processes of data mining, archiving and presentation practices are among the dominant entrepreneurial strategies of global networking. The concept of curating, borrowed and expanded from art studies, is becoming a new paradigm for technology corporations like Google and Meta Platforms. They too are engaged in curatorial activities, in collecting, indexing, and displaying ever-increasing amounts of data, or in designing archives. With this in mind, the question arises as to what alternative practices of digital curating, archiving, and mediating are conceivable that do not simply continue or reinforce entrepreneurial processes of collection and evaluation, but rather produce interruptions, twists, and points of reference. What physical and digital arrangements and infrastructures can initiate processes of collaboration and translation that give rise to novelties in research and design? How can artistic and scientific methods, principles, notations, and tools be collected and further developed in an open-source format? On the basis of exemplary online exhibitions and archives of artistically creative research, these and other questions will be explored. In particular, mechanisms and principles such as versioning, (p)reenacting, transposing, and environing will be examined to test new forms of collaborative and performative knowledge production.

Bio: Carolin Höfler works as a professor of design theory and research at the Köln International School of Design at TH Köln. The art historian and architect did her doctorate at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin and was an assistant professor at the Department of Architecture at TU Braunschweig. She is member and co-founder of the DFG Research Training Group "Connecting – Excluding: Cultural Dynamics Beyond Globalized Networks" at the University of Cologne. Together with Matthias Karch, she runs the studio oza for architecture and scenography in Berlin. Her research focuses on practices, concepts and media in architecture and design, the medial saturation of public space and ephemeral urbanism. For further information: http://www.carolinhoefler.de