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Master thesis:

ARCHIVING AS A CULTURAL FORM: CREATING VIDEO ARCHIVES AND
DATABASES

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This work I dedicate to Low-Fi Video movement, with hope it will help transmitting its idea of enthusiasm.

Abstract

Institution of archiving is more than ever actualized in the re-formulation of the archive institutions. It is their immanent function of historization in the constant process of self-reflecting, adjusting to new social constellations and establishing selective criteria which will illustrate/determine the overall comprehension of culture. Introducing the database as a cultural form which will be, by many predictions, perceived as a dominant cultural form in 21st century, a new principle of participatory role of public in creating narrative is a result of an overcoming cultural need for leaving the linear narrative imposed by the institution behind and move towards new cultural production and presentation practice. I find that one of the most illustrative anticipation of this process of redefining the archiving practice is the institutional relation to archiving video. Video itself is a medium which reflected the change in socio-economic, cultural and artistic situation in the second half of 20th century. Facing the challenges of video archiving: technological, legislative, institutional, will follow the primary decision: to recognize it as a cultural heritage and to attempt to contextualize this complex practice in the overall cultural history.

In the current efforts to use new technological possibilities to achieve widely accessible base of cultural heritage (UNESCO, EU), we are facing a new kind of dynamic transmission: digitization. There are certain aspects of video archiving which need to be approached with special attention: technological aspect and cultural rights aspect. Both of these aspects show the necessity of wide coordination in exchange of experiences and in establishing a common ground in making legislative and technological regulation. One of the best examples of adequate cultural policy steps in relation to new media is the Netherlands. On the example of Nederlands Instituut voor Mediakunst Montevideo/Time based Arts in Amsterdam we can see its positioning within the national cultural scene allowed a systematic building a valuable archive of video in Netherlands, but due to its long term planning and activity on international level, it has credibility for larger international collaborative actions. Recognizing the possible applications of such practices presents a specific challenge in Serbia. Archive of alternative film and video,

which is my Case study II. I find its potential to transcend regionalism and promote the historization of a more universal approach to creative activity in its specific background (cine-amateurism in Yugoslavia), collection (film and video production, as well as media archive) and credibility among artistic society on the local and regional scene. This potential is growing with the possibility to launch the first online videobase, using a part of its collection: the Low-Fi Video archive. On these two examples we can observe the existing and possible practices which can articulate innovative models of archiving and treating new media, but also to show possible strategies in reforming the archive institutions. Their positioning in rapidly changing circumstances can anticipate future overall comprehension of treating cultural memory and help in tracing its effects in culture on national and international level.

L'archivage comme une forme culturelle: la création des archives et des bases de données de l'art vidéo

L'accélération du développement technologique - étant un phénomène de la transition de la société industrielle à la société informatique – pose des questions par rapport à la culture de cette société. Se manifeste-t-il un nouveau rapport à la culture, et si c'est le cas, quel est le type de ce rapport qu'entretient cette nouvelle société informatique?

La question la plus urgente parmi plusieurs est celle de la “numérisation” du patrimoine culturel. La notion du mémoire culturel est intimement liée aux tentatives de redéfinir l'héritage culturel et son rôle à l'avenir. Selon Eric Kluitenberg¹, le système de “média intégrés” englobe les fonctions principales du mémoire culturel. Ce système de “média intégrés” devient le lieu-cléf du mémoire culturel. Dans cette condition, la définition de l'archivage – id est la sauvegarde du mémoire culturel – est constamment mise à jour et re-formulée. “L'institution l'archive” change, elle se métamorphose.

L'archive est chargé de la création d'une histoire collective, l'archive doit être adapté aux nouvelles constellations sociales, doit être le résultat d'une réflexion sur soi. En conséquence, l'archive établit des critères de sélection déterminant voire illustrant la compréhension générale de la culture.

La base de données digitale devient la forme culturelle primordiale du 21ème siècle, permettant la participation égale du public à la création d'une ligne de narration historique. Elle représente un nouveau principe d'archivage, étant le résultat d'une nécessité grandissante d'un nouveau système qui puisse remplacer le principe de création d'histoire classique, imposée par des institutions culturelles, axé sur l'établissement d'un système causal, linéaire et chronologique.

¹ Eric Kluitenberg: *Delusive Spaces*, NAI Publishers, Institute of Network Cultures, Amsterdam, 2008, page 234

Selon Lev Manovich², ces deux types sont des ennemis naturels se battant afin de gagner le même territoire dans la culture humaine.

La base de données présente le monde comme une liste des informations, refusant de les ordonner, tandis que l'archive classique crée une cohérence, joignant les informations dans une chaîne “cause-effet”.

Ce processus de la rédéfinition de l'archivage est à observer dans le monde de l'art vidéo. Dans la deuxième partie du vingtième siècle notamment, l'art vidéo était le médium qui reflète les mouvements socio-économiques, artistiques et culturels.

Son passage vers sa reconnaissance en tant que forme artistique dans le monde de l'art contemporain, et dans le monde académique, sa participation dans l'activisme social et dans l'économie de la culture servent tous comme un miroir historique.

Mes méthodes de recherche pour cette étude étaient l'observation et l'analyse qualitative.

J'y ai introduit mes expériences obtenues dans mon travail professionnel se composant de divers emplois et des recherches personnelles au niveau international:

- 1) présentatrice de l'art vidéo (Low Fi Video movement, Kosmoplovci, et autres projets internationaux de la présentation de l'art vidéo)
- 2) commissaire au “Centre Académique de Film” à la cité d'étudiants de Belgrade en Serbie
- 3) Des recherches suivies aux “Archives du Film et de la Vidéo Alternatifs” au “Students' City” Cultural Center.
- 4) Des recherches suivies à l'aide de Monsieur Alberto de Michele de l'association vidéo Park 4D TV à Amsterdam, aux Pays-Bas.
- 5) Des recherches suivies à l'aide de Madame Gabi Wijers de “Time-based Arts Institute Montevideo”, à Amsterdam, aux Pays-Bas.
- 6) Mes recherches personnelles à l'aide de la littérature et l'internet.

2 Lev Manovich: “Database as a Symbolic Form”, in *Database Aesthetics*, essays, editor: Victoria Vesna, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis – London 2007, pages 44 - 45

La définition du terme “archive”

L'archive, dans son sens classique, est associée à l'image d'un “réceptacle contenant toute mémoire matérielle”. A l'âge digital, introduisant les bases de données purement digitales et non trois-dimensionnelles, on témoigne une transformation de l'archive en une forme beaucoup plus “perméable”. En émerge une discussion autour de son importance et son rôle à l'avenir.

Nous observons la coexistence de deux types de concepts d'archivage – mentionné avant – l'archive matériel classique et l'archive digitalisé. La coexistence produit des interactions multiples, au niveau de leur logiques respectives, au niveau de leur matériels sauvegardés et aussi au niveau de leurs objectifs. Leur caractères spécifiques exigent de leurs utilisateurs de s'adapter.

L'importance de la transmission dans l'archivage

La définition sémiotique de la culture en tant que “mémoire non-héréditaire” à l'opposé de la mémoire héréditaire se définit à travers le type de la transmission de cette mémoire-dite. L'importance de la transmission mène les auteurs à explorer plus profondément le rôle que joue les divers aspects du processus de transmettre la mémoire culturelle:

La transmission peut être un acte d'intervention dans la matière à transmettre elle-même, le contenu et la présentation de la mémoire peuvent être activement changés par le transmetteur. Par contre, la mémoire peut être transmise sans avoir subi quelque intervention par son transmetteur, sans aucune adaptation à la situation actuelle, et un décalage, une “démodement” se crée. Pour le cas premier, de différents modes de façonnement sont possibles: l'arrangement, la “réparation” ou “retouchement”, la (ré-)insertion de la mémoire dans un nouveau contexte. Sans façonnement constant, la matière à transmettre s'écarterait de la réalité, souffrant d'une incompatibilité avec elle.

En outre, ces modes de façonnement finissent par modifier la mémoire à transmettre à un deuxième degré: elle ne devient pas uniquement une matière à changer, mais aussi une

matière “à objets”: elle est un “ensemble de modules” qui sont assemblables, malléables, plaçables par les transmetteurs et les récepteurs. Il faut permettre aux modules de fonctionner comme *signes*, comme des éléments “vivants” susceptibles à “l'activation” de leurs utilisateurs et interprètes. Considérant “l'archive total” - l'archivage de toute chose, même infinime - en une base de données gigantesque, une phantasie devenant possible par les avancements récents dans le monde de la technologie de sauvegarde, on se rend compte que cet “archive total” possède le pouvoir d'annihiler la sauvegarde elle-même, le passé. Les avancements des techniques d'archivage ne vont pas de pair avec un agrandissement proportionnel de l'expérience. Une mémoire doit être sélective pour être une mémoire fonctionnante.

Les efforts qui sont dirigés vers l'application de nouvelles méthodes technologiques de la mise en place d'une base de données d'héritage culturel accessible par le grand public (voir UNESCO et l'Union Européenne) nous confrontent avec un tout nouveau type de transmission: la “numérisation”, le changement d'une matière trois-dimensionnelle en code binaire. Le processus de la numérisation est, en courts termes, la conversion d'un ensemble de signes en code binaire universellement compris par tous les ordinateurs, tous les systèmes de lecture digitale. Mais ce processus n'est pas sans défis, il amène avec lui autant de dilemmes complexes que de perspectives très prometteuses.

La culture digitale est éphémère. Elle ignore la notion de l'original, d'un côté, mais elle est aussi victime du dégradation rapide de toute technologie digitale de l'autre. La culture digitale ne reproduit pas d'œuvres originales, sa fonction principale étant le travail sur des données, sur le “input”. Elle ne s'occupe pas de la conservation dans le sens de l'archivage, même pas de la diffusion, mais de la transformation. Dans cette activité de la transformation, la bataille constante contre le dégradation des technologies prend une place particulière. Cette bataille nourrit la transformation est la rend d'autant plus dynamique et animée.

La base de donnée comme une forme culturelle

L'élévation du statut de la base de données au niveau d'une forme culturelle dominante, annoncée par l'auteur Lev Manovich dans son œuvre *The Language of New Media*³, a provoqué un vif débat international. Des recherches étaient initiées afin de comprendre comment cette forme, les bases données, reflète notre société du 21^{ème} siècle.

Définissant la spécificité de ce nouveau médium, Lev Manovich prend la position que leur qualité particulière de pouvoir intégrer plusieurs indices fait des bases de données la parfaite fondation pour les objets des nouveaux medias. Cette qualité particulière est adéquatement illustrée par le principe “syntagme et paradigme” que l'on trouve en sémiotique: le paradigme est présent avec les objets de média et le syntagme est intrinsèque. Lev Manovich explique que le syntagme de ces objets de média prennent la forme d'un fil de narration. Selon Ross Gibson⁴, les produits des média digitaux sont provisoires. C'est exactement ce caractère provisoire qui lie le nouveau paradigme au transnationalisme, un transnationalisme qui, lui, se trouve à l'opposé d'un nationalisme apparent dans le roman du 19^{ième} siècle ou bien dans le cinéma du 20^{ième} siècle.

Ross Gibson est d'avis que les dynamismes opératoires et la capacité de recombinaison des bases de données, de systèmes de fichiers, sont le miroir parfait des dynamismes et de la capacité de recombinaison de la société post-industrielle. Et c'est cette malléabilité qui doit être acceptée en tant que droit, mais aussi en tant que responsabilité imposée à l'auteur d'une base de données comme à ses *participants*. Ici, on fait face au phénomène surprenant et novateur des bases de données: les utilisateurs deviennent participants, auteurs à leur tour. Ils représentent les dynamismes sociaux de nos temps.

3 Lev Manovich: *The Language of New Media*, MIT, Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England, 2001

4 Ross Gibson: “Cultural forms, knowledge management and the rise of digital multi media systems”, *Cultural Studies Review* (Volume 12, numéro 1, 2006), Melbourne University Press, 2006

Vidéo

Pendant les années 1960, l'acceptation générale enthousiaste et rapide de la vidéo comme un nouveau médium a contrasté avec la difficulté de la définir et l'étudier systématiquement. En ce qui concerne la sphère artistique professionnelle, il lui a fallu un certain temps pour qu'elle soit acceptée dans le curriculum académique. Pourtant, la façon dont elle a inspiré une nouvelle approche de l'art contemporain et dont elle est devenue rapidement la force majeure des pratiques artistiques expérimentales, a été une véritable préparation pour le percement des nouveaux media, dont on est témoin.

L'art vidéo concerne la notion de concept et représente un défi pour la rhétorique tournant autour un médium spécifique. C'est une matière de la perception: des images en mouvement post-matérielles.

Dans son texte *Video-Resisting Definition*⁵, Jacky Hatfield déclare que c'est exactement cette capacité de se métamorphoser, ainsi que son potentiel d'amalgamer avec d'autres formes et contextes artistiques, qui ont représenté l'aspect innovateur de l'art vidéo.

“ Probablement, la revendication historique la plus légitime qu'on peut évoquer au sujet de la vidéo est qu'elle a créé une étape importante dans le passage de l'image chimique-physique de la photographie et du film à l'omniprésence des effets numériques, et son caractéristique de médium 'hybride' reflète peut-être ce statut transitionnel.”⁶

Avec son développement rapide, la simplification de l'équipement nécessaire pour la production vidéo et l'ouverture d'un nouveau champs/médium/discours tel qu'est l'internet, la vidéo est devenue un instrument et un moyen d'expression sans aucune restriction sociale.

Je considère que ce type particulier d'archivage, le video archiving possède un potentiel d'inciter des nouvelles pratiques, de démontrer les points actuels des politiques culturelles et du management d'archives. Son potentiel réside aussi dans une capacité de développement de la manière dont on organise et effectue l'archivage des arts digitaux à un niveau officiel. Je perçois aussi son potentiel d'amener une remise en question des standards actuels dans le champs culturel et de prendre un rôle dominant dans l'apport des

5 Jackie Hatfield, *Video-Resisting Definition*, <http://kmi.lux.org.uk/casestudies/resistdefinition.htm>

6 Ibid.

solutions technologiques concernant le processus complexe de numérisation.

Management d'archives vidéo

Certains aspects de l'archivage vidéo demandent une attention particulière: l'aspect technologique et la question des droits culturels. Ces aspects démontrent la nécessité d'une coordination déployée de l'échange d'expérience et de l'établissement d'une base commune afin de créer des réglementations législative et technologique.

Exemples d'archives

Un des meilleurs exemples, à mon égard, d'action adéquate de politiques culturelles en relation avec les nouveaux médias est celle entreprise aux Pays-Bas. L'art vidéo hollandais a joué un rôle principal en Europe et sur le plan international. Il a été soutenu par les autorités nationales depuis son apparition dans les institutions d'art (telles que: Lijubaan Center, Jan van Academy, Montevideo, De Appel etc.). Ce soutien l'a déterminé comme une partie importante de la stratégie culturelle nationale et l'a amené à être en tête des explorations des nouvelles possibilités et relations autour des nouvelles technologies. Netherlands Institute voor Media Art – Montevideo time Based Arts Institute (NIVM) est un centre qui couvre tous les aspects des nouveaux médias dans leurs activités: production, présentation, archivage, éducation, recherche, et établissement de standards technologiques de la présentation de vidéo. Se développant à travers les contextes sociaux changeants, ce centre a réussi à accomplir de nombreux niveaux de collaborations diverses, sur un plan régional mais aussi international, et à établir et soutenir de différentes initiatives qui introduiront plus tard des approches innovatrices de traitement des nouveaux médias. Ceci était la raison pour laquelle j'ai choisi le Nederlands Instituut voor Mediakunst Montevideo/Time-based Arts à Amsterdam à être un de mes études de cas. Son positionnement au sein de la scène culturelle nationale a permis la construction systématique d'un archive vidéo aux Pays-Bas. L'institut a gagné une crédibilité à travers ces collaborations internationales et son organisation d'activités à long terme. La grande diffusion de son programme est aussi un résultat d'un travail dédié et frugal de

présentation de l'art vidéo et des arts numériques. Cette présentation a atteint de hauts standards en compétences de commissariat artistique et de management culturel.

C'est un vrai défi de reconnaître les applications éventuelles de telles pratiques en Serbie. Le pays est encore en train de standardiser la législation concernant les nouveaux médias et la numérisation. Il est aussi constamment confronté au problème de mise à jour de l'équipement technologique dans les institutions culturelles. Dans ce cas, un des points fondamentaux serait de savoir si les acteurs au sein des politiques culturelles en Serbie sont prêts à inclure cette pratique culturelle spécifique dans son rôle traditionnel de patrimoine culturel, valant un investissement financier.

“Si l'art vidéo a représenté le premier pas dans la transformation structurelle de l'art dans le monde entier”, comme l'évoque Douglas Davis, “alors son émergence en ex-Yugoslavie a été d'un plus grand impact encore, car les technologies de reproduction ont changé les formes de production, circulation et réception d'œuvres d'art. Elles ont aussi déstabilisé les hiérarchies académiques fixes des différentes disciplines artistiques et ont introduit l'esprit industriel du modernisme dans la scène artistique serbe.”⁷

Un des premiers festivals réguliers de film en Yugoslavie qui comprenait l'art vidéo dans son programme, a été le “Alternative Film Festival”, lancé en 1982 par le Centre Académique de Film à Belgrade. En 1985, le festival a changé son nom en “Alternative Film/Video”, annonçant de cette manière une compétition égale des deux pratiques. Ainsi, il y apparaît des jeux d'apposition dans son titre. Un premier, indiquant une pratique alternative de film et de la vidéo, opposée à des pratiques établies, dominante, professionnelle de ces mêmes médias. Le deuxième jeu fait référence à une pratique de film, opposée à celle de la vidéo.

C'était notamment ce festival qui a déclenché l'idée d'archivage du corpus entier de travaux de cinéma d'amateurs et d'art vidéo ensemble, ce qui amène plus tard à établir les Archives de Film et Vidéo Alternatives, la deuxième étude de cas dans mon travail.

Ce cas m'intéresse tout particulièrement, car je trouve que les Archives possède un vrai potentiel à dépasser un régionalisme et de promouvoir l'historisation d'une approche plus universelle d'une activité créative dans un contexte spécifique qui est le cinéma d'amateur en Yugoslavie, ainsi qu'un établissement d'une pratique de collection (de films,

7 Dejan Sretenovic: *Video Art in Serbia*, CSU, Belgrade, 1999, p.11

vidéos et archives média). A mon avis, les Archives ont aussi contribué au bâtiment d'une crédibilité dans le milieu artistique, sur le plan local et régional. Ce potentiel s'accroît d'autant plus avec la possibilité de commencer d'introduire une première base de données de vidéos en ligne, en utilisant une partie de sa collection: les Low-Fi Video Archives.

L'archivage du mouvement vidéo, qui s'est symboliquement approprié l'idée autour du cinéma d'amateur, a apparu en Serbie dans les années 1990, illustrant ainsi la possibilité de l'art vidéo de réaliser même les prédictions enthousiastes, datant de son apparition, il y a des décennies. Ceci peut être un exemple d'un nouvel interface d'archivage démontrant la participation active de ce mouvement à la formation d'une nouvelle forme de communication avec les nouvelles générations et dans la réflexion sur et l'actualisation d'une histoire culturelle spécifique.

Conclusion

Ces deux exemples illustrent des pratiques existantes se référant à des modèles innovatifs d'archivage et de traitement des nouveaux médias. Ils démontrent aussi de possibles stratégies de reformation des institutions d'archives. Le positionnement de ces modèles dans des contextes sociaux rapidement changeants pourrait prévoir la future compréhension globale de traitement de la mémoire culturelle et aider ainsi à distinguer les effets que provoquent cette mémoire dans la culture, aux niveaux national et international.

Introduction

As the acceleration of the technological development in this ongoing rapid transition from industrial society into information society imposes various problems in establishing new relations in culture, one of the urgent issues is the treatment of cultural heritage in the digitization process. The notion of cultural memory is closely connected to the current attempts to define cultural heritage and recognize its role in future. Memory is never constructed solely for its own sake: it structures the relationship between past and present to formulate a plan for future action. Memory of a culture is located in the memory objects that hold the traces of the past, stored in material and immaterial forms, and aesthetic and formal design principles are the immaterial principle that structure awareness of the viewer about the cultural significance of the objects. Eric Kluitenberg, in his book *Delusive Spaces* points out that today this memory function is increasingly organized via the media system of print, electric, electronic and digital media.

“This media system has become increasingly integrated, both through technological developments (such as digitalization and convergence), and because of economic integration (mergers and concentration in the media industries). This integrated system internalizes the main functions of cultural memory; it becomes its principal ‘location’. It acts as a documentation system, of current as well as past events – the latter by making use of continuous references to that represent power (political leadership) or spiritual values (religious leaders), or simply by setting an artistic or interpretative agenda.”⁸

In further describing this space of flows in its transcending the limitations of the regional focus and de-centralization of the media control, Eric Kluitenberg finds that it simultaneously holds both the potential of absolute transparency and of absolute control and observation.

⁸ Eric Kluitenberg: *Delusive Spaces*, NAI Publishers, Institute of network Cultures, Amsterdam, 2008, p. 234

In this situation, institution of archiving is more than ever actualized in the re-formulation of the archive institutions. The institutions which were in modern times inaugurated as the holders of cultural memory are facing the challenge of positioning themselves within the new social constellations and resisting the danger of commodification of cultural memory in de-contextualized societies of spectacles and ubiquitous consumerism, where a cultural tourist is looking for a lost cultural authenticity. Boris Grojs takes the example of museums to warn on the fact that discourses of cultural memory and representation overlook the complementary relation between the museums and reality.⁹ The museum is not subordinated to the history, nor it is the instance which documents it, the “reality” is subordinated to the museum, to the collection display which defines it. Our image of reality is conditioned by our knowledge of the museums.

This is where we come to the crucial point of claiming the current social role of the archive institutions: it is their immanent function of historization in constant self-reflecting, adjusting to new social constellations and establishing selective criteria which will illustrate/determine the overall comprehension of culture. Archiving is, now due to the increase of technological possibilities, intensified and, as an activity enabled to be dispersed in new space of flows, becoming a wide spread individual, group or independent activity, and institutions are now on call to recognize possibilities and dangers of this new responsibility for self-justification in giving the recognition or selection to a much wider corpus of cultural memory, in rapid acceleration and expansion of material over the experience.

It is then logical consequence of this discussion that the artists recognize this problem and treat it using archival forms and database projects in creating comments, and with this very choice of the medium, they push the cultural establishment and archive theory and management towards more effective and faster solutions. Appropriation of the function of an institution is not a new model in arts, but in the moment of digitization process, it is more effectively involved into the creation of cultural policy towards this process.

⁹ Boris Grojs: “O novom”, *Prelom – časopis za savremenu umetnost i teoriju*, No. 5, Beograd, 2003, p.122

Introducing the database as a cultural form which will be, by many predictions, perceived as a dominant cultural form in 21st century, a new principle of participatory role of public in creating narrative is a result of an overcoming cultural need for leaving the linear narrative imposed by the institution behind and move towards new cultural production and presentation practice. According to Lev Manovich, these natural enemies compete for the same territory of human culture: database represents the world as a list of items, and it refuses to order that list, contrasting the cause-and-effect trajectory created by the narrative¹⁰. This way, database becomes the center of creative practice in the computer age. This separation of the content and interface is also applied to the model of experiencing culture. It is, of course, possible that the illusion of choice left as an option in multi-index databases will be rejected as a weak mask for a centralized selection and hidden narrative, but there is still a potential for achieving a new form of access to a cultural memory resources and develop it according to emancipatory prerogatives.

I find that one of the most illustrative anticipation of this process of redefining the archiving practice is the institutional relation to archiving video. Video itself is a medium which reflected the change in socio-economic, cultural and artistic situation in the second half of the 20th century. With enthusiasm and hope, it was perceived as inter-subjective and epistemological means which renews our vision of reality and offers a possibility of active relation which can change the reality.¹¹ The path it went through in its positioning in the contemporary art scene, academic recognition, participation in social activism and economy of culture indicates and illustrates the changes in the overall cultural system. Facing the challenges of video archiving: technological, legislative, institutional, only follows the first decision: to recognize it as a cultural heritage and to attempt to contextualize this complex practice in the overall cultural history.

In defining the major issues I will make an overview on current theoretical attempts to describe and define the notions of archive, database and video. There is a dynamic, often

¹⁰ Lev Manovich: "Database as a symbolic form", in: *Database Aesthetics*, essays, editor: Victoria Vesna, University of Minnesota Press, Mineapolis - London, 2007, p. 44-45

¹¹ Fred Forest: "Sociološki video" (Sociological video), *Videosfera*, essays, editor: Mihajlo Ristić, SIC, Beograd, 1986, p. 111

polemic, discourse related to these issues which is seen in constant challenge to predict or follow rapidly changing conditions in society and culture.

There are certain positive examples of treating video with all the necessary attention towards its specificity, but also building an insight into a “tradition” of this field of practice. In this study I will try to present one, in my opinion the most relevant in Europe, center for the archiving, presenting and research on video: Nederlands Instituut voor Mediakunst Montevideo/Time based Arts in Amsterdam. In its various aspects, it opens perspectives in terms of supporting the artistic use of video, presenting it, but, most of all, performing the institutional responsibility towards establishing systematic approach to research of new media and international coordination and networking in solving urgent problems of obsolescent technology in archiving of new media art.

A specific challenge is to recognize the possible applications of such practices in Serbia. Still with big task of taking a serious action in standardization of its legislation concerning new media and digitization, in a constant problem to update technological equipment in cultural institutions, one of the fundamental initial questions in Serbia would be in this case if its cultural system is ready to embrace this specific cultural practice in its tradition as a cultural heritage worth investing and saving for the future. There is a possibility of a “capillary” action of independent organizations and individuals, but with the help of the state, in a period of transition, this process would be much effective and faster. In finding the basis for its historization in Serbia through the Archive of alternative film and video in Belgrade, I will try to contextualize it using the tradition of cine-amateurism, avant-garde conceptual art and alternative culture, making a suggestion for possible institutional approach and acceptance of complexity of video archiving practice in Serbia in future.

In observing the managerial aspects of video archives, I will try to make a short insight in current tendencies in two levels: technological and cultural rights level. I will also rely on the advice and experience of Montevideo Institute in describing the aspects of networking and international collaboration.

Methodology

Theoretical framework:

This study will be a result of an interdisciplinary approach: it will be based on examining the tendencies of cultural policy towards cultural memory, and also it will rely on the theory of new media.

I will also rely on empirical methods of research, and there are several sources.

I intend to use the experience I got in my work in the video art presentation (Low-Fi Video movement, Kosmoplovci, and other activities related to video presentation international projects), my work in Academic Film Center of “Students’ City” Cultural Center (SCCC) in Belgrade, research I made in Archive of alternative film and video of SCCC, research I made in Amsterdam with the help of Alberto de Michele (Park 4D TV) and Gaby Wijers (Montevideo Time based Arts institute), and research I made using literature and internet. My basic methods in research for this study were observation and qualitative analysis.

Working on the specific projects of presentation of video production brought to my attention the importance of pretext of the development of video in the region of ex-Yugoslavia, and, thanks to Low-Fi Video movement, I was able to understand the link between the innovative experimental practices of cine-amateur movement in Yugoslavia and later expansion of video, based on the same principle of “democratization of film”, later proclaimed as one of the principles of Low-Fi Video movement in the 1990’s. I was in the position to make an observation of the whole cycle of a movement (1997-2003), noting all the planned and unexpected achievements of this project. This gave me the opportunity to understand the relations between the treatment of the tradition and its transmission into the field of new media, maintaining the basic principle, but improving the outreach and its social function adopting new possibilities. Video as the medium for large scale social impact of cultural activity was announced with its appearance in the 1960’s, but the realization of such a case brought many new questions and novelties in

1990's. Based on the enthusiasm of the core organization members and support of the hundreds of participants, the movement was carried out in the frame of alternative culture in Serbia in the 1990's. The archive of the movement was preserved also thanks to the personal engagement and, after the closure of the project, with the help of Remont Gallery in Belgrade, and it was moved to the Archive of alternative film and video in Belgrade in 2006.

Observing the functioning of Archive of alternative film and video, from the point of a program coordinator of Academic Film Center in SCCC (AFC SCCC, beside the Film Program of SCCC, is one of the initiators and founders of the Archive), I had the possibility to get the insight into an effort in preserving the archive of kino-amateur movement of Yugoslavia, but also to witness the problems and challenges in creating the strategies and positioning of a newly established archive institution for a specific area of practice, in a country with a low level of awareness of its importance and without long term strategy in new media archiving and preservation. In the process of this Archive's development, I was able to get more information on the problems and the potential of this activity in Serbia and in the region.

In May 2008 I visited the Time Based Arts Institute - Montevideo in Amsterdam, where I had the opportunity to make an interview with Gabby Wijers, the head of the Archive of NVM, and to have her guidance and help in making a research at the Institute. I collected the information about the managerial aspects of the Archive and the Institute as a whole, and made a research of their mediatheque. I also made an interview with Alberto de Michele from Park 4D TV, updating the information about this organization with which I already had collaborated in past, so I have a certain continuous input of information about it.

All the data I will subdue to a analytical interpretative method with the intention to articulate possible models as expanding and deepening the video archiving practice with the effect on articulation of cultural policy strategies.

Explication of the hypothesis and importance of this subject

I find that the issue of archiving video is related to many aspects of transformation of cultural practice in digitization process, and adequate cultural policy should be articulated with the consideration of the results of positive examples among institutions and initiatives, since it is a rising field of various activities which aren't often supported by the existing cultural policy strategies. In rapid change of conditions of cultural production, exchange, dissemination, education, it is of utmost importance to predict and recognize current and future developments of this process of digitization, and therefore the theoretical research in new media field is necessary component of successful cultural policy planning.

In a process of establishment of a new cultural branch: new media, we can observe how the elements of a socio-cultural cycle: art education, production, animation, diffusion and - which is in the focus of this study - protection and preservation, are defined in cultural systems. The specificity of this process is the technological potential of easier synthesis of several elements enabled by the digital turn. However, the process of defining and formation of these elements in the field of experience has to be followed (or, in the case of the less developed countries, prepared) by positive stimulative cultural policy instruments: legal regulation, economic measures, development planning and programming. The relation between cultural policy concept and institutional practice is of an utmost importance, considering the dynamics of this field. The articulation of cultural policy can be relied and in correlation with the achieved practice of the successful institutions and centers. Therefore, there is a responsibility expected from cultural policy decision makers towards a flexible and thorough approach to collaborative platforms on national and international level, in the times of a necessary collaborative standardization of future practice.

There are examples of an adequate and long term cultural policy relating new media, which point to the necessity to turn to the long-term strategies which will be flexible enough to adapt to rapidly changing conditions and new requests and needs in this dynamic field, in constant communication with the carriers of this practice.

In defining the role of archive in a local and global context, there is a potential to find a principle which will embrace both the need of historization of a local cultural production and establishment of wider basis for new models of dissemination and exchange.

In Serbia, there hasn't been a cultural policy adequately articulated and effective, but there is a potential to accept and develop ideas from the evolving initiatives and specific cases and establish more intensive communication with practitioners and cultural workers in the field of digital media.

Theoretical approach

Discussing the notion of archive

The role of archive in culture is gradually gaining more importance as contemporary societies experience increase in the pace of technological progress. In the process of digitization that we are witnessing nowadays, the treatment of cultural heritage has been intensively adjusting to the new technological conditions.

“Basically, it is imperative to realize that the *notion of cultural heritage* itself has not been invented by accident. There is a growing concern toward all that is threatened to disappear as a consequence of the acceleration of history produced by the digitization of culture, which proportionally increases the feeling of acceleration imposed by what is usually referred to as 'modernity'. “¹²

¹² Jan Baetens and Jan Van Looy: “Digitising Cultural Heritage: The Role of Interpretation in Cultural Preservation”, Jan Baetens and Jan Van Looy, *Image & Narrative, Online Magazine of the Visual Narrative*, issue 17: *Digital Archive*, editors: Jan Baetens Pascal Gielen, Rudi Laermans, http://www.imageandnarrative.be/digital_archive/digital_archive.htm

The notion of archive was usually associated with the classical archive as “the reservoir of material memory”. In Western societies, according to Jan Baetens, Pascal Gielen and Rudi Laermans, this form of organizing of memory gained more respect, than the other: immaterial, which is the more fluid one. In digital age, with the introduction of digital databases, we can witness the transformation of the archive into a more fluid form, but also we can observe the growing discussion of its importance and its future role. Its importance in history grew thanks to its role of “library of proof” for a society. With the rise of the potential of permanent transformation in the digital age, we can observe a coexistence of two archival concepts in this stage of digitization: classical and digital archives, which coexist; their respective logics, areas and scopes interact, and their users have to switch permanently from one type of archive to another.¹³

In this process, the visions of “total archive”, enabled with the rise of technological potential for this enterprise, initiated a discussion of its definition, purpose and essential role. Rudi Laermans and Pascal Gielen in their text *The Archive Of The Digital An-archive* turn to the work of Michel Foucault and his try to re-articulate the notion of the archive into a more general epistemological category:

“As Deleuze (2006) rightly stresses, the novelty of Foucault's view on the archive has everything to do with his thesis that it consists of statements or utterances. Not that the archive is only a corpus of statements. Rather, the archive is the quasi-transcendental but always historically particular system that makes specific statements possible, thus framing both language and every specific corpus of utterances during a particular period. In Foucault's own words, ‘the archive is first and foremost the law of what can be said, the system that dominates the appearance of utterances as singular events. (...) The archive (...) is that which is at the root of the utterance as event and defines in the body

¹³ Jan Baetens, Pascal Gielen and Rudi Laermans, “The Digital Archive”, Jan Baetens and Jan Van Looy, *Image & Narrative, Online Magazine of the Visual Narrative*, issue 17: *Digital Archive*, editors: Jan Baetens Pascal Gielen, Rudi Laermans,

http://www.imageandnarrative.be/digital_archive/digital_archive.htm

in which it happens from its very beginning the system of its “utterability” (Foucault, 2002: 186-188). In short, in the view of ‘the early Foucault’, the notion of archive refers to the general system of formation and transformation of utterances. Such a conceptualization has indeed not much to do with archives as storage depots.”¹⁴

The authors examine his later work where he re-defined it as a primarily sociological reality marked by power differences. They find the possibility, recognized in Foucault’s archive-notion in terms of the “system of utterability” or “the law of what can be said”, to conceptualize the deep structure of the database or a computer system as “the archive of the digital archive”.

In their overview of cultural semiotics of Yuri Lotman and Boris Uspenski, Jan Baetens and Jan Van Looy in their study *Digitising Cultural Heritage: The Role of Interpretation in Cultural Preservation*¹⁵ present culture as a form of “non-hereditary memory”, as opposed to hereditary memory, which is situated at the centre of socio-biological speculations considering culture. Explicitly based on transmission, this definition leads these authors to broader exploring the aspects of this process: transmission as a form of intervention in the content and shape of that which is to be transmitted, transmission at the expense of change (without permanent adaptation, the incompatibility between legacy and present evolution would be too large):

“This cultural intervention in transmission takes various shapes: one has to sort, fix, (re)inscribe in a context, in short, one has to permit the objects in question to function as *signs*, 'living' element susceptible to activation by new interpreters and users. Insofar that semiotics aims to analyze culture in terms of memory and transmission and that it seeks

¹⁴ Rudi Laermans and Pascal Gielen : “The archive of the digital an-archive”, Jan Baetens and Jan Van Looy, *Image & Narrative, Online Magazine of the Visual Narrative*, issue 17: *Digital Archive*, editors: Jan Baetens Pascal Gielen, Rudi Laermans, http://www.imageandnarrative.be/digital_archive/digital_archive.htm

¹⁵ Jan Baetens and Jan Van Looy “Digitising Cultural Heritage: The Role of Interpretation in Cultural Preservation”, Jan Baetens and Jan Van Looy, *Image & Narrative, Online Magazine of the Visual Narrative*, issue 17: *Digital Archive*, editors: Jan Baetens Pascal Gielen, Rudi Laermans, http://www.imageandnarrative.be/digital_archive/digital_archive.htm

to evaluate the techniques and strategies employed for guaranteeing the persistence of the semantic character of cultural heritage, this discipline inevitably develops into a 'mediology' in the most general sense of the term..."¹⁶

Using semiotic theory as a starting point in observing digitization of cultural heritage, they reach the problem of the idea of universal archive, and conclude:

"In fact, the theoretical possibility of conserving everything may destroy the object of conservation itself, i.e. the past: the theoretically infinite possibilities of modern archiving techniques are not automatically accompanied by a similar growth of experience of the past. When we are able to conserve everything, the idea of historical consciousness itself implodes, erases, destroys itself in a sense, as we are incapable of dealing with the explosion of available information. A functional memory needs to be selective; otherwise it will sink into chaos. In other words, without forgetting, no remembering."¹⁷

This approach directs to a role of archive which is in new social conditions under re-consideration: selection. It is now clear that in digital era, the forms of databases and networks enable more open, interactive and flexible structures, but I will focus in this study on archives established by the institutions or organizations which are in the position to claim their selection to be relevant for the society. This position may be given by the state in their very establishment, or might be gained through the time, achieving the status of a cultural institution by results and reputation in the sphere of cultural public. However, it is necessary to have a look on these new structures also, and I will go back to these phenomena using the example of video bases, to depict a context for the focus of this study.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Digitization as a process in culture

In the current efforts to use new technological possibilities to build a widely accessible base of cultural heritage (UNESCO, EU¹⁸), we are facing a new kind of dynamic transmission: digitization. Cultural heritage, a cause and the result of this process¹⁹, has always been undergoing different kinds of transmission, and it is always inseparably connected to the medium. The process of digitization is, in short, conversion of growing body of signs into universal binary code, but it brings much more complex dilemmas and opens new perspectives.

“Thereby it is often forgotten that the alignment of the triad culture/memory/media is all but new. In fact, the three notions are and have always been mutually dependent. One could even say that media as carriers are often confused with the anthropological fact of culture itself. Anyhow, it is useful to take into account the hypothesis, although it can be nuanced or rejected afterwards, that we are witnessing a radical cultural change which reminds us in terms of importance of the other three great cultural revolutions in the west, which are the invention of print, the invention of photography/cinema and the invention of the phonograph, but which at the same time creates a unique situation in that it resembles neither quantitatively nor qualitatively the spheres of image, sound or text. For

¹⁸ The Council of Europe declaration of December 2000 was echoed in UNESCO's Universal Declaration on cultural diversity (2 November 2001):

- stressed "the necessity to: ensure that in the information society, everyone has reasonable access to knowledge, culture and cultural heritage" (Resolution 1, paragraph 1a)
- recommended that the governments promote "ethical, non-discriminatory policies for public access to information about the cultural heritage, encouraging the use of electronic media, and contributing to the development of adequate policies to combat the illicit traffic in cultural assets that may be encouraged by this increased accessibility of information".

¹⁹ “As to the conceptual question, here also we are dealing with a dynamic phenomenon, a practice, a development: cultural heritage is at the same time cause and effect of an act of transmission within a culture, within a social group and from one generation to the next.” “Digitising Cultural Heritage: The Role of Interpretation In Cultural Preservation”; Jan Baetens and Jan Van Looy, *Image & Narrative, Online Magazine of the Visual Narrative*, issue 17: *Digital Archive*, editors: Jan Baetens Pascal Gielen, Rudi Laermans, http://www.imageandnarrative.be/digital_archive/digital_archive.htm

the first time, we have the impression that new media are capable of simulating all other media.”²⁰

In their exploring the essence of the digitization process, the authors emphasize the fact that digital culture has an ephemeral basis which ignores the notion of an original on the one hand, and which appears to be victim to a permanent technological decay on the other. They remind on the significant difference in this transmission: since digital culture doesn't reproduce any originals (it presents itself as a system of processing information), its primary function is not conservation (in the sense of archiving, possibly reproducing and diffusing), but transformation. Having this in mind, it is of major importance that digital culture still hasn't found a stable or permanent technological format, and there is a dynamic process of struggle with rapid obsolescence of the material carriers of content. In case of databases and online archives, it is even more problematic.

In their study *Heterotopic Spaces Online: A New Paradigm For Academic Scholarship and Publication*²¹, Jeffrey R. Galin and Joan Latchaw examine some of the major turnovers in digitization process. They remind on the usual understanding of archives as depositories for the “indefinite accumulation of time”, dealing with collection and organization of the objects over time, but also serving as physical spaces where people congregated to study archived objects. Here authors also turn to Foucault, to his term *heterotopias*, specific kinds of lived space, which have the curious property of linking to all other sites in our culture but in a way that contradicts, neutralizes, inverts, or reflects the "set of relations that they happen to designate", describing the archive as one of those “sacred places” that reflect us and our cultures. "Heterotopias" here reflect the "space in which we live," as opposed to the utopian spaces that we can only imagine. Such places, they cite Foucault, belong "to our modernity" and are "proper to western culture of the nineteenth century."

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Jeffrey R. Galin and Joan Latchaw: *Heterotopic Spaces Online: A New Paradigm For Academic Scholarship and Publication*, <http://english.ttu.edu/KAIROS/3.1/coverweb/galin/index.htm>

“Had Foucault been alive to witness the emergence of cyberspace, he might have identified certain online spaces as heterotopias as well and observed that they are proper to Western culture and late twentieth century postmodernity. Furthermore he might have noted that, like the heterotopian mirror, electronic archives are helping institutions reimagine social relations, institutional policy, and even literacy: how we read, what we read, and even what we produce.”²²

Database as a cultural form

Because of the complex consequences, the inauguration of the database into a new dominant cultural form, announced by Lev Manovich in his book *The Language of New Media*²³, inspired a very wide debate and research on how this form is reflecting the society of the 21st century.

There is a common ground for big majority of the authors who deal with this subject:

The age of linear media, characterized by narrative forms such as film and literature, is coming to an end. In its place, the database will emerge as the primary cultural form of the twenty-first century. In the age of the Internet, one of the most adequate and most accepted definitions of the database is: a structured collection of data organized to maximize fast search and retrieval by a computer. It represents a potentially powerful categorization system as it provides a range of options for sorting and viewing sets of data. The database, like narrative, also represents a basic way of organizing human experience. A database can be a library, a museum, in fact, any large collection of cultural data.

Lev Manovich, in defining the specificity of new media, finds the database a perfect foundation for new media objects because of its quality of having more than one index: “database of content with one or more interfaces”. Without the ability to access and

²² Ibid.

²³ Lev Manovich: *The Language of New Media*, MIT, Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England, 2001

organize the data in different ways, it would not be possible to create more than one interface. This quality can also be illustrated by the idea of "syntagm and paradigm", described by Ferdinand de Saussure in the late 19th century in his linguistics studies, and later adopted by Roland Barthes in the 1970s for his work in semiotics.

In traditional media, the syntagm is present and the paradigm is implied, meaning that there is one set object among a set of imaginable, but non-existent possibilities. In the case of new media objects, Manovich claims that the syntagm takes the form of a narrative. That is, as the user chooses a path through the database, a narrative is created.

According to Ross Gibson, the syntheses produced by digital media are provisional, and that is one of the points that connect this new paradigm with the transnationalism, like the narrative in the 20th century (cinema) and 19th century (novel) was connected to the nationalism.

“Now let’s compare the cinema/nationalism nexus with the contemporary dyad of digital media and transnationalism (or globalisation). How have digital multimedia systems arisen to reflect and analyze our contemporary psychic and social conditions?

Like cinema, digital multimedia simultaneously reflects and shapes reality. And like cinema, digital multimedia can federate disparate elements (sounds, texts, graphics, perspectives, vistas and audio-visual rhythms) in astonishing configurations. (...) But *unlike* cinema (and unlike nationalism), digital multimedia produces syntheses that are always *explicitly provisional*. (Yes, in this respect it is like transnationalism.) Because of the dynamics of its file structures and the integrating and operating codes applied to those files, any digital multimedia configuration or event is always ready to be dismantled and re-assembled into new alignments as soon as the constituent files have been federated. In other words, because multimedia rarely gets 'locked-off', its component elements can always be pulled apart sent back to their databases and then instantaneously re-arranged into newly iterated federations.”²⁴

²⁴ Ross Gibson: “Cultural forms, knowledge management and the rise of digital multi media systems”, *Cultural Studies Review* (Volume 12, Number 1, 2006), Melbourne University Press, 2006

It is exactly this operative dynamics and the recombinative readiness of the file systems in digital multimedia databases that this author finds that reflects the dynamics and recombinative readiness of contemporary post-industrial societies. He finds that digital file-systems have arisen partly to address the need for cultural forms that enable us to think and feel in synch with the volatilities of contemporary existence.

“Responding to the quickness of digital and transnational cultures, we need cultural forms that allow us to become sceptical and curious investigators. We need operable, speculative databases surging with ideational and affective elements that can be searched, combined and activated to create combinative complexes that unfold and re-align, that converge and diverge through time. And crucially this operability must be accepted as the right and responsibility not only of the author or designer but also of the *participants*. “

Here we come to the crucial point of the “database turn”: addressing the users as the participants, addressing social dynamics of our times. It involves human-computer interaction, it is infused with aesthetics and semantics, and it is there to conjure experiences of complexities and richness which help us reflect upon our everyday experiences. Differing from the cultural forms based on linear narrative, Gibson finds that databases prioritize dynamic system thought over structural thought and serial thought, it enables people to assess the multi-dimensional array of repercussions and possibilities associated with every action in the world, now that they overcame the perception based on singular delineation of effect following the cause.

The term databases aesthetics is frequently used in the discourse on digital art to describe the aesthetic principles applied in imposing the logic of the database to any type of information, filtering data collections, and visualizing data. According to Christiane Paul database aesthetics, in that sense, “often becomes a conceptual potential and cultural form – a way of revealing (visual) patterns of knowledge, beliefs and social behavior”²⁵. Among the examples of art works which examine various aspects of database aesthetics, Christine Paul finds the project *Carnivore* by Radical Software Group illustrative for the

²⁵ Christiane Paule: “The Database As System And Cultural Form: Anatomies of Cultural Narratives”, *Database Aesthetics*, editor: Victoria Vesna, University of Minesota Press, Mineapolis, London, 2007, p.95

tension between the data structure/stream and the visual form it can take. This project's core is the unlimited possibilities of the visualization of server's data stream in a collaborative, "open source" way – allowing its users to create maps of the data stream that often remain detached from the original source. She also finds the video installation *Every Shot Every Episode* by Jennifer and Kevin McCoy illustrative for using database logic as a formal strategy: the project carry the medium of film/video into the realm of digital art by fusing the inherent characteristics of those two. It consists of twenty episodes of the TV series broken into database single units, thus experimenting with a form of enhanced cinema. There are various examples of art works which present or examine the specific potential and overall effect of the database as a form. Some of them directly contribute to conceptualizing new approach in cultural research.

Video – the pioneer of new media

The development of the form

In its rich history, video as an artistic form has anticipated the development of new media in 20th century. The enthusiastic and fast acceptance of video as a new form in 1960's and later among artists, contrasting the difficulty to be defined and systematically studied, to be accepted into the official academic curriculum, the way it inspired new approach to the contemporary art and rapidly took leadership in experimental art practice was a preparation for the new media breakthrough we are now witnessing. In her text *Video - Resisting Definition*, Jackie Hatfield describes video as a key aspect of the experimental process in 1960's and 1970's:

“At this time, with no fixed art world history video's malleability and conceptual open-endedness enabled many possibilities. An international tribe of late twentieth century artists rejected the assumption that visual art should be an object oriented art, and recognized that video could be an art form of the experiential, whereby physically the trace could be recorded as a continuous signal, rather than as with film, an individual

frame. Post-photo electronic, video is also a latent image of the unseeable, and like sound or performance, an art of space and time. ²⁶

In making any firm and fixed technological description of video, we would find difficulties in this rather dynamic change of technology:

“However, although the term ‘video art’ connotes an analogue era and an apparent fixedness, its material specificities are in flux. As such it necessitates continual theoretical or philosophical review; the polemics are open to change; so that video is and always has been a technology of combination, and in its current guise, a chameleon-like extant property in the continuing history of digital ‘new’ media. A philosophy based upon ‘video’ materiality per se therefore would be built upon shifting-sands, and this has similar complexities to that of digital forms, whereby individual works and technological combinations might defy material classification. The practical history of experimental video therefore typifies the formulation of post-material paradigms. ²⁷

Eluding the definition

Further in her text, J. Hatfield concludes that *video* is a stuff of concept, and a challenge to medium specific rhetoric; a perceptual thing - post-material moving-image. It is exactly this changeability that was the groundbreaking aspect of video art, its potential for amalgamation with other art forms and contexts.

Scott McQuire in his text *Video theory* also finds that problem in defining video: if the definition restricts video to specific objects or practices, the term is bordering on archaic, and if it is extended to the realm of electronic imagery, there is a risk of losing sense for the object or practice it is applied to. Recalling the conclusion of Jacques Derrida²⁸ that

²⁶ Jackie Hatfield: *Video - Resisting Definition*, <http://kmi.lux.org.uk/casestudies/resistdefinition.htm>

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ “I am reminded of John Conomos, speaking at the first of these forums, where he argued persuasively that video is a *hybrid* art, or, rather, a medium characterised by hybridity. His opinion is close to that expressed by Jacques Derrida in an essay on Gary Hill where he concluded that the question of the identity of the medium—which generally revolves around the specificity or uniqueness of video compared to other media—is “badly put.” (Derrida, “Videor”, p. 178)”, Scott McQuire: *Video Theory*, www.braintrustdv.com/essays/video-theory.html

question of the identity of the medium is “badly put”, he points to the transformations of the theory which need to be considered:

“As much as there is a heterogeneity of practices which go under the name "video," the eagerness to acclaim video as a hybrid medium, or a medium of hybridity, needs to be measured against the transformations of theory which have occurred over the last twenty or so years—in other words, over video's life. In particular, I would point to the crisis of disciplinary boundaries, the sustained questioning of the value of totalising theories, of identifying the essential qualities of an object, and particularly of the practice of setting up rigid lines which divide what is "inside" a field from what is outside.”²⁹

The author still draws three lines in characterization of video: instantaneity (recording and broadcasting can be simultaneous), plasticity (“...what happens with video belong less to this external axis of framing than to its internal dimensions, as the interior of the image becomes increasingly fluid, there are new possibilities for what might be called *internal montage*.”³⁰), architectonics (video monitor has been incorporated as an object into a physical space blending sculptural and representational concerns).

“Probably the most legitimate historic claim we might make for video is that it formed an important way station in the movement from the chemical—physical image of photography and cinema to the ubiquity of digital effects—and its characterization as a "hybrid" medium perhaps reflects this transitional status.”³¹

The author also points to the increasing tendency to decompose the image which is supported by everyday use of video (remote control), so it becomes a “laboratory of the information society to come” – now being located in the contemporary home. Here we can observe another important development enabled by the technological possibilities of home video production and use: vernacular video. Since the invention of portapac (Sony) and creation of the first video art piece (Nam Jun Paik, 1965), there have been numerous

²⁹ Scott McQuire: *Video Theory*, www.braintrustdv.com/essays/video-theory.html

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

enthusiastic speculations of how this “democratization” will affect the everyday communication, media sphere and culture.

With its rapid progress, simplification of the equipment for video production, along with the opening of the new field /media/discourse: the internet, video became a tool and means of expression without any social restriction. Tom Sherman, in his text *Vernacular video*³² finds that in the face of the phenomena of vernacular video, institutionally sanctioned video art necessarily attaches itself even more firmly to traditional visual-art media and cinematic history. He finds that video art continues to turn its back on its potential as a communications medium, ignoring its cybernetic strengths (author specifically stresses that video alters behavior and steers social movement through feedback).

“As a general rule, the vernacular use of a medium pushes content over form. If a message is going to have any weight in a chaotic environment - where notions of beauty are perhaps secondary to impact and effectiveness - then content becomes very important. Vernacular video exhibits its own consistencies of form. As previously elaborated, the people's video is influenced by advertising, shorter and shorter attention spans, the excessive use of digital effects, the seductiveness of slo-mo and accelerated image streams, a fascination with crude animation and crude behaviour, quick-and-dirty voice-overs and bold graphics that highlight a declining appreciation of written language. To characterize the formal "aesthetics" of vernacular video, it might be better to speak of anesthetics. The term anesthetic is an antonym of aesthetic. An anesthetic is without aesthetic awareness. An anesthetic numbs or subdues perceptions. Vernacular video culture, although vital, will function largely anesthetically.”³³

³² Tom Sherman: “Vernacular video”, *Chto Delat magazine*, September 2007, Special issue: “Make Film Politically” http://chtodelat.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=375&Itemid=99999999

³³ Tom Sherman: *Vernacular video*, *Chto Delat magazine*, September 2007, Special issue: “Make Film Politically” http://chtodelat.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=375&Itemid=99999999

Tom Sherman finds this situation to be a big challenge (“Herculean and irresistible”) to video artists, facing this vernacular domain which is a noisy torrent of immense proportions, but he concludes that the robust life force of vernacular video will be something for artists to ride, and something to twist and turn, and something formidable to resist and work against.

Maybe one of the biggest phenomena is the closely related to the vernacular video rise is the rapid growth of the *You Tube* platform. One of the main qualities of this new content distribution model is that the concept — uploading, viewing and sharing videos — appeals to unlimited mass of users. Its growth has been truly phenomenal in three years, and it remains one of the prime examples of success in Web 2.0., used by millions everyday. Its accessibility and popularity encourages widely the usage of video as a tool of everyday communication, thus giving huge stimulant to the increase of vernacular video. It can anticipate the possible database modeled archive interfaces, with the option of two-way communication, which could support the efforts for animation of users and re-defining archive in “Remix culture”.

Due to the complexity of the term “video”, I will try to set a primary terminology for further development of this study. I will rely on the glossary made by Electronic Art Intermix: Online Resource Guide³⁴, which, in my opinion, embraces the knowledge and experiences of a significant number of relevant institutes, centers and archives who deal with video and new media. Here are some basic definitions which I will accept in my study:

Video - The term used to describe visual material in a standard 30 frames-per-second electronic form. A video monitor is a unit that looks like a TV set but does not have

³⁴Electronic Art Intermix: Online Resource Guide, <http://resourceguide.eai.org/glossary.html> ; Glossary Sources: The Association of Moving Image Archivists (AMIA); Bay Area Video Coalition (BAVC); The Getty Research Institute: Introduction to Imaging; Independent Media Arts Preservation (IMAP); Moving Image Collections; National Film and Sound Archive of Australia; Netherlands Media Art Institute: Montevideo/Time Based Arts; ProjectorPeople.com; Texas Commission on the Arts Videotape Identification and Assessment Guide; The Universal Preservation Format Initiative (UPF); Variable Media Network; VidiPax: Magnetic Tape Preservation. In further work, I will also consult the BAVC Glossary (<http://palimpsest.stanford.edu/byorg/bavc/bavcterm.html>)

antenna terminal connections. Instead, one or two cables are connected directly, that is, without the need to select a specific channel because there are no channels. [AMIA]

Video art - The term 'video art' is understood to refer to expressions of visual art in which video is used as a medium, both in the production process and the presentation. [Montevideo]

Video preservation - An archival system that ensures the survival in perpetuity of the program content according to the highest technical standards reasonably available. There are three major facets of video preservation: (1) safeguarding the recording under secure and favorable storage conditions, (2) providing for its proper restoration and periodic transfer to modern formats before the original or next generation copy is no longer technologically supportable, and (3) continuing protective maintenance of at least a master and a copy, physically separated in storage, preferably in different geographic locations. (From the National Film Preservation Board's Television/Video Preservation Study: Volume 1: Report 1997.) [BAVC]

Videotape formats - Recording formats that differ in magnetic patterns of information, but rely on the same fundamental process of recording image and sound on magnetic tape. A particular format needs its own playback machine that is able that to read the magnetic pattern. There are several characteristics that distinguish one format from another, such as the type of recorded signal, tape speed, width and placement of the video tracks and audio tracks. After 1970 the EAIJ standard was accomplished. The VHS (video home system) 1/2" consumer videotape format is one example. Since 1956, approximately 50 formats have been introduced world wide. For examples, see the resources Hardware section. Current video tape formats include C, U-Matic, Betacam, M, Betacam SP, MII, D1, D2, D3, D5, Digital Betacam, Beta, VHS, Hi-*, 8mm, S-VHS, DVC Pro and DVcam. [BAVC]³⁵

Videotape - Oxide-coated plastic-based magnetic tape used for recording video and audio signals. [BAVC]

³⁵ The full list of formats made by BAVC, is attached in the Appendix

Video system - Term used to indicate, among other things, the number of picture lines and pictures per second. See also NTSC and PAL. [Montevideo]

Video sculpture - An installation consisting of one or more monitors, its form reminiscent of a 'traditional' sculpture. In this type of installation, video is the most important medium, but apparatus and specifications of the performance can be essential to the impact and meaning of the sculpture. [Montevideo]

Video installation: Single-channel - An installation in the narrow sense, consisting of a single videotape that must be shown in a space that is controlled by the artist. [Montevideo]

Video installation: Multichannel - Video installation consisting of several carriers and (monitor) screens whose images are connected. [Montevideo]

Video installation: Multimedia - An installation in which at least one of the media used is video. [Montevideo]

In my research of the archiving of video, I will focus on institution of archiving of video art, pieces produced in video formats which can be classified as artistic forms and art documentation, and video products that function in the context of contemporary art. In making the context for this subject, I will also take into consideration the phenomena of vernacular video and video forms as results of digitization and documentation.

Video archives – a step forward in archiving

Management of video archives

Considering the growing importance of archiving, the rise of the database as a dominant cultural form and increasing video content production and presentation in all the spheres of culture, I find video archiving one of the most illustrative processes for the overall situation in the domain of cultural heritage transmission in the age of digitization. I find that this particular area of archiving in culture has the potential to exercise new practices, present the current issues in cultural policy and archive management, make a transition towards treatment of new media art archiving on the official level of cultural policy, lead to the reconsideration of current standards in culture, also to take a lead in technological solutions for the challenging process of digitization.

There are certain aspects of video archiving which need to be approached with special attention: technological aspect and cultural rights aspect.

Technological aspect

In her text *Video Art Preservation*, Gabby Wijers found three main reasons for special approach to the task of video preservation and archiving, and they represent the three characteristics of video: short life, technical, or otherwise variable nature, and rapid obsolescence of the formats. The threats of losing video art production for future generations can be seen in several basic levels. Video is a medium that needs adequate playback equipment, and that is the point where we can easily see the problem because it is often the case when new format emerges, the equipment manufacturers discontinue the production and support of older, superseded equipment.

“On the other hand, the video artist makes use of a ‘reproducible’ medium, with survival of the work of art ensured simply by the possibility of copying the tape. Video art, installations and live installation performances developed out of a multidisciplinary practice: conceptual art and performance. Sometimes the technology used is simply the

vehicle, which makes it all technically possible. The technology used is always part of a larger (social) context and is subdued to the artist's intention that can be conceptual or materialistic. These are the starting points in thinking about the preservation of video art and electronic art in general. Without strategies for preservation many of these art works will be lost to future generations. The early works are already threatened. “³⁶

Gabby Wijers finds that in contrast to the archiving approach of the information and communication technology, authenticity and artistic intention can be very important, so the context, user interaction and distributed authorship should be taken into account, too. She points to one of the characteristics of video art: there is a **carrier** of the signal (**content**), which can only be made visible with the help of playback equipment in a manner of presentation that is either specific or not (**context**), depending on the artist. The precise medium of storing this data or signal is variable and at the discretion of the artist.

“One of the main question here is if it is possible to separate the content from the soft- and hardware is here one of the main questions. Next to the content, the context (look & feel) should remain. A responsible approach to preservation requires gaining an insight into the artist's intention and the significance of the technology used. Here, consultation with the artist is essential.”³⁷

She also points out to the problems occurring in this process, and among them is that in many cases it is unknown whether or not the carrier, playback equipment and manner of presentation are essential to the meaning and perception of the video work, which leaves the dilemma if changing the format, replacement of the current equipment will affect the authenticity of the work of art. There we can see this specificity of video art comparing to the traditional codes: uniqueness of the physical manifestation doesn't apply to video art, the work of art can be unique and authentic, but its tangible form as such is not.

³⁶ Gabby Wijers: Video Art Preservation, <http://kmi.lux.org.uk/casestudies/videoart.html>

³⁷ Ibid.

There is a difference in consequences in technical quality in the two cases, transfer from analogue(sub)master to a copy leads to loss of quality, but transfer from a digital master to an analogue viewing copy, which only causes negligible loss of quality. Still, according to the experience of Gabby Wijers, none of the existing carriers is durable, which is why the solution for definitive preservation has been sought in the sphere of encoded storage where it is possible to transfer the information to a different material environment without loss of quality.³⁸

Main issues in technological aspect of video archiving are: cataloguing, providing storage conditions, preserving the original format, making and saving copies in other or the same formats.

In his study *A System of Formal Notation for Scoring Works of Digital and Variable Media Art*³⁹, Richard Rinehart approaches the issue of archival practice of digital and media art⁴⁰ as a problem of conceptualization of these forms which is needed to serve the needs of documentation and preservation as well as other activities that surround media art such as education and collaborative creation.

“In many cases these art forms were created to contradict and bypass the traditional art world's values and resulting practices. They have been successful to the point of becoming victims to their own volatile intent. Individual works of media art are moving away from all hope of becoming part of the historic record at a rapid rate. Perhaps as important, the radical intentionality encapsulated in their form is also in danger of being diluted as museums inappropriately apply traditional documentation and preservation methods or ignore entire genres of these works altogether.”⁴¹

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Richard Rinehart: *A System of Formal Notation for Scoring Works of Digital and Variable Media Art*, University of California, Berkeley

⁴⁰ “Digital and media art forms include Internet art, software art, computer-mediated installations, as well as other non-traditional art forms such as conceptual art, installation art, performance art, and video.”, *ibid.* page 2

⁴¹ *ibid.* page 3

The author finds that the computer code as implemented currently is still too environment-specific, operating differently under variable conditions such as operating system or hardware. He finds also that a formal notation system must accommodate media art works that are not digital and it should be legible well into the future independent of the media it is intended to preserve. For these reasons, notation for media art should be human-readable with less interpretation than is required for computer code.

He makes a distinction between the conceptual model and expression format.

“For instance, this conceptual model could be expressed using various formats such as Extensible Markup Language (XML)(4) or a database file. In this way the conceptual model itself defines the integrity of the score while allowing for variability in its expression. The conceptual model could be considered a kind of meta-score. This new conceptual model and notation system could be used: to aid in preservation of media art works; for their re-creation in the future; as a record format; as an architecture for media art management databases; as a framework for online public access catalogs of media art; for educational and community forums dedicated to media art; and as a framework for generative and collaborative artist networks (...).”

According to the author, a notation system should be practical, cost-effective, scaleable, and tractable. It should allow varying levels of implementation from minimal scores to complex scores that are expanded upon at various points in the life cycle of the work. Taking into account these concerns results in creating a more useful and accurate conceptual model by addressing media art works not as abstract and isolated entities, but rather as entities in the complicated context of the real world.

This study is a direct outgrowth and continuation of the efforts of two projects, *Archiving the Avant Garde*⁴² and the *Variable Media Network*⁴³. There is an ongoing discussion on the issues of compatibility with preservation framework standards such as Open Archival

⁴² http://www.bampfa.berkeley.edu/ciao/avant_garde.html

⁴³ <http://www.variablemedia.net>

Information Systems (OAIS)⁴⁴, and controlled vocabularies. There are other projects with similar goals or subject matter: *Preservation and Archival of Newmedia and Interactive Collections (PANIC)*⁴⁵ and *Capturing Unstable Media Conceptual Model (CMCM)*⁴⁶ developed by the V2 Organization in Rotterdam, the Netherlands.

Cultural rights

In this section, I will try to offer a short overview of the main issues of cultural rights related to video archives, using already achieved results in adequate archival practice, and presenting in short new initiatives related to possibilities of adapting to new conditions of digital culture.

Video technology brought a new perspective on the problems of the status of art piece in the situation of easily enabled reproduction of copies of the same quality, already in the 1970's. In developing a video archive, there is a problem to formulate an agreement which will cover all the possible aspects of a complex matter of the art piece preservation, presentation and distribution. There are also special conditions for different forms of video art, such as video installations (multi-channel and single-channel) for their presentation, and there are cases when specific formats are involved in the artist's intention and the meaning of the work. In articulating a model of agreement, there was a good example of coordination in the Netherlands, in the frame of the '*Project Preservation Video Art*', launched in July 2000 and ending in February 2003. This is how Gabby Wijers explained its importance:

“Preservation of video art is 50% technique and 50% information. Here is a huge lack of information. We seldom know if the technology used is a part of the intention behind the work and should be preserved as well. But for a proper preservation we do have to

⁴⁴ <http://ssdoo.gsfc.nasa.gov/nost/isoas/>

⁴⁵ "Implementing Preservation Strategies for Complex Multimedia Objects", Choudhury, Sharmin; Hunter, Jane, http://metadata.net/newmedia/Papers/ECDL2003_paper.pdf

⁴⁶ <http://www.v2.nl/Projects/capturing/>

research this to know how to handle it in the long term. To prevent such problems in the future, we developed, together with the SBMK⁴⁷ and INCCA, description models and model contracts. These model contracts regulate the purchase of video art (video works and video installations) by institutes such as museums. The agreements are standards, based on the most commonly occurring situations. Of essential importance in these contracts is the appendix with technical specifications and statements concerning the replace ability of the equipment.”⁴⁸

The model agreement (see the Appendix) regulates all of these aspects, predicting possible needs in the terms of preservation and presentation.

There are more issues which are related to the video specifically. The digital technology introduced the rise of remix culture, where younger generations feel free to use, combine and intervene on the media material they have access too, and according to Lawrence Lessig, this tendency is supposed to be encouraged, not legally condemned, in his promoting the idea of adopting to new practice established in digital culture. It is a vision of “free culture”, which differs from a permission culture exactly in the principle of *building upon*:

“Free cultures are cultures that leave a great deal open for others to build upon; unfree, or permission, cultures leave much less.”⁴⁹

The concept of *Creative Commons* license⁵⁰ (recognizable by digital mark CC), designed by Lawrence Lessig, intends to enable easier exchange and circulation of content, by establishing a license which is basically relied on the existing cultural rights system, but allowing “freedoms” in the further use and distribution, except for losing the attribution, the basic right. This platform is a transitional solution from an old legal system to a new one, and it can help in supporting production, but also in collecting it through the CC platform.

⁴⁷ Foundation for the Conservation of Modern Art

⁴⁸ Gabby Wijers: Video Art Preservation, <http://kmi.lux.org.uk/casestudies/videoart.htm>

⁴⁹ Lawrence Lessig: *Free Culture*, The Penguin Press, New York, 2004, page 29

⁵⁰ See: www.creativecommons.org/license

The example of a special model of free exchange is exchange of videos and computer demos on computer demo scene portals and platforms. This specific scene is functioning for many years now, throughout the world, with the basic principle of free exchange and “building upon”, using the advantages of fast exchange of real time videos through internet, also with respect of the basic right: attribution.

The other important question is perspective of archiving video when it is a part of a more complex new media project, which is now more and more often a case. There are many problems in archiving new media, also related with fast obsolescence of technology, and there is a model which is for now accepted for such specific contracts. It is designed by the *Rhizome*⁵¹ organization, and it traces the path for future practices and consideration of this specific growing area. Their concept for overcoming the preservation problems in new media archiving is emulation, and it is present as a solution in models of contracts they offer: Rhizome art base linked object contract and Rhizome Art Base cloned object contract.

⁵¹ **Rhizome** is a good example of a database of new media, but also important for all aspects of new media art production, preservation and distribution. “Rhizome.org is an online platform for the global new media art community. Its programs and activities support the creation, presentation, discussion and preservation of new media art: a broad and flexible set of creative practices employing or responding to new technologies, including software, databases, network protocols, hardware, robotics, and multimedia tools. These practices take many forms, from web sites to performances and installations. New media art is often interdisciplinary, blurring the boundaries between established disciplines and involving artists and others in collaborative processes. Because new media technologies are themselves changing and converging at a rapid pace, the field is constantly in flux. The ArtBase is Rhizome's online archive of new media art². Initially conceived and developed as an archive of net art projects exclusively, the scope of the ArtBase has since been expanded to include other forms of new media art, such as software, games, and web-based documentation of installation and performance works. The ArtBase includes works of historical significance that are submitted by the artists themselves, or by the owners of commissioned artworks, through an online submission process. The term ArtBase here refers to both the tools and system used to document the artworks as well as the artworks themselves.” From: www.rhizome.org

The examples of the archives

Video as a medium initiated a new approach to the art production and presentation in the second half of 20th century, but also faced cultural institutions with the question of adequate relation to its participation in art economy, archiving and presentation. In some countries, who opened to this innovative approach earlier than others (USA, The Netherlands, France, Germany, etc.), we can find a certain tradition and continuity in treating this subject, which opens a possibility to trace the development of the idea of new media as a cultural field of growing importance.

Although video art began to emerge as a result of work by Nam June Paik and Wolf Vostell in Wuppertal, that is, it actually originated in Germany during 1963, there were poorer opportunities with regard to video technology (studios and equipment) in Europe than there were in the USA. It is no wonder then that many of the artistic experiments during the 1960's and 1970's in Germany and Europe were still made on 16mm film, not with video camera. This is the case with *Reversible Prozesse* by Wolf Kahlen, in which the artist recorded his progressive actions; this was the film with which the Video-forum opened in 1972. Feeling the necessity to create a forum for this new art form, in 1972 the Neuer Berliner Kunstverein (NBK)⁵² founded a video library within its overall organization, renaming this into Video-Forum in 1985. It was the first institution of that kind in Federal Republic of that time and in West-Berlin. From the beginning, one of the main emphases was to build up a collection of art works. A suitable video camera was not yet available, and there was certainly no editing unit. At the beginning of the 70's, the NBK did already have a video unit ready to show videos, including the American video form NTSC, and a possibility to copy 16mm films onto video tape so that they could be projected. Beside this very important aspect of forum and screenings, there is one more important element of their activity which contributed to their development: international Berlin Art Programme, which enabled internationally recognized artists to live and work in Berlin as guests (Nam June Paik, Alan Karpow, Douglas Davis, Peter Campus, etc.), who then had the chance to meet and work with

⁵² <http://www.nbk.org/video-forum>

avant-garde Berlin video artists (such as Wolf Vostell, Rebecca Horn, Wolf Kahlen, etc). Such encounters were reciprocally productive for avant-garde and video art and the shape of film and video collection was very much influenced by this stimulating collaboration. The Neuer Berliner Kunstverein became an important contact for such artists. Today, this institution of a long tradition and experience is still active and successful in all these aspects, with constantly growing collection, program distribution, presentation and various activities. In Germany, there is a more recent initiative for upgrading a video archive model: IMAI– Intermedia Art Institute in Düsseldorf⁵³. It is an initiative of the City of Düsseldorf and the Media art agency Media 235 from Cologne. In 1980's, the founders of Media Leistner/Wirths have build up an extensive archive of video art, as well as the international distribution network. Both are now transferred to IMAI. The archive and the collection of the foundation contain 3 200 video art works of more than 200 artists from all over the world. Public research places offer visitors permanent access to the collection which is constantly maintained and extended. With the online catalogue⁵⁴, IMAI tries for the first time to enable world wide access to video art. More than 1 300 video works are in a specifically developed database system, commented by a complex metadata structure in their art historical and cultural context. With over 1300 works digitized, they emphasize the importance of conservation and preservation, and they will offer advice to artists and collectors and the possibility to archive master tapes under optimum circumstances. The standards in digitization preservation of electronic media are developed in cooperation with the expert group *el_media* of the German association of restorers (VDR – Verband der Restauratoren). The activities are: archiving and collecting, distribution, research, presentation, competence center, exhibitions.

⁵³ <http://www.imaionline.org>

⁵⁴ <http://87.193.163.99/customize/index.html>

Case study I: Nederlands Instituut voor Mediakunst Montevideo/Time based Arts, Amsterdam

One of the best examples of adequate cultural policy steps in relation to new media is the Netherlands. Dutch video has had a leading role in Europe and worldwide. The support that video received from the Dutch authorities, since its setting at the institutions (like Lijnbaan Center, Jan van Eijk Academy, establishment and support for Montevideo and De Appel, etc.), made it a part of cultural strategy and brought it to the position to lead in exploring new possibilities and relations established by new technologies (the continuity of Dutch cultural politics in such a responsible attitude towards this field of cultural production is present in current steps and planning in digitization process⁵⁵). That is why I will use the example of Nederlands Instituut voor Mediakunst Montevideo/Time based Arts, Amsterdam in this study as a positive example of a center for new media which grew from personal enthusiasm and developed supported by this general ground created by the long-sited cultural policy, a center with an impressive continuity and leadership in this field.

In this part I will use the information on Nederlands Instituut voor Mediakunst Montevideo/Time based Arts, Amsterdam (further in the text: NIVM) collected from their official publications and research I made at the Institute with the help of Gaby Wijers, head of the archive of NIVM.

Short history

In 1978, Monte Video is founded by René Coelho. From his home on the Singel in Amsterdam he makes equipment and documentation available, and furnishes one room as a gallery. The first video artist whose work is shown here on the Singel was Livinus van de Bundt, Coelho's inspiration. Other artists, such as Bill Viola, Gary Hill, Shelly Silver

⁵⁵ - In 2006, a survey was conducted by the Social and Cultural Planning Office of the Netherlands [*Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau: SCP342*], describing the current use of ICT in the cultural sector. First major step in this direction will be taken from 2007 onwards with the digitization of large parts of the Dutch audiovisual heritage.

and Gabor Body, soon made contact. It was not long before Monte Video had a large selection of works available for rental. In 1983, thanks to government funding, Monte Video was able to move to Amsterdam North. There is now sufficient space to offer regular presentations. Not only Dutch artists, but also those from other countries are given a chance to show their videos or installations. In 1986 government funding received by Monte Video was cut back to almost nothing. Monte Video received several small transitional grants from the city of Amsterdam. Time Based Arts, which had been founded in 1983 by the Association of Video Artists, was fast becoming well-known as a distributor of video art, and continued receiving government funding. In the period 1986-1993 René Coelho continued on his own. Monte Video moves back to his home on the Singel. The acquisition of production facilities, distribution, documentation and promotion goes on, financed from his own income and by organizing large projects. One of these, as an example, was 'Imago', an exhibition of Dutch video installations which toured worldwide for five years beginning in 1990. There were also plans laid for the first conservation programs for video art. The chairman of Time Based Arts, Aart van Barneveld, died; his death was followed by many conflicts within the organization. In the early 1990s Time Based Arts also lost its subsidies and threatened to go under. Monte Video and Time Based Arts decide to provide a joint art program for Amsterdam cable TV, Channel Zero. In 1993 Time Based Arts merges with Monte Video. Their work is continued under the new name of Netherlands Media Art Institute, Montevideo/Time Based Arts. This fusion did free up national funding. In both 1997 and 2001 the grants are expanded and converted into a structural subsidy for four years. In the period 1993-2002 The Netherlands Media Art Institute moves twice, in 1994 to the Spuistraat and in 1997 to its present location on the Keizersgracht.

The Institute continued to grow through these years, and adopted the following mission statement:

The Netherlands Media Art Institute supports media art in three core areas: presentation, research and conservation. At the same time, through its facilities it offers extensive services for artists and art institutions. Among these services are educational programs, to be developed to accompany all activities.

NVM defines video art as expressions of visual art in which video is used as a medium, both in the production process and in presentation, as:

- primary medium of a visual-art expression;
- part of a sculpture or installation;
- medium of registration of a performance, or as
- registration medium by an artist.

Activities:

I Presentation

The presentation department focuses on showing media art. Among other tasks, this division organizes exhibitions in the Institute's own gallery space. The long-running group and theme shows, such as solo exhibitions, retrospectives or shows in cooperation with other institutions, are museal presentations. They afford insight into an oeuvre or theme in a clear manner. Between the longer-running exhibitions there is room for more experimental presentations such as short exhibitions, symposia, screenings, live performances in image and sound, or test installations by artists and students. Activities are also organized outside our premises. This happens both on their own initiative and in collaboration with other organizations and art institutions.

II Collection

Since the founding of the Netherlands Media Art Institute in 1978 an extensive collection of video and media art has been assembled, to which new works are continually being added. At present the collection comprises more than 1800 works, ranging from early experiments by artists now famous in The Netherlands and internationally to recent productions by up-and-coming talents. Almost all works, including the installations, are available for exhibitions and presentation both in The Netherlands and in other countries.

Most of the artworks NVM has on loan from the artist and the documentation is sometimes bought by NVM. In purchasing and loaning the works, a contract with the

author is signed, without any differences between single-channel or multi-channel videos. All the works are than available for the viewing in mediatheque, the only restriction possible from the author as a condition is the online distribution. The most common practice in treating the works on analogue formats acquired for the collection is cleaning and transferring to Digital Betacam. The artist is informed about preservation measures and sometimes asked for an extra or better source.

In acquiring private collections and archives from other institutions, depending to the works and collections, NVM gets distribution or viewing rights. Viewing rights than mean viewing for research only.

III Distribution

In order to promote a wide public knowledge of media art, the Netherlands Media Art Institute carries on an active distribution policy. Video works and media installations from the collection are to be seen at Dutch and international festivals, events and exhibitions, in galleries, museums and other art institutions.

IV Research

The Netherlands Media Art Institute supports research by artists into the usage of new media in the visual arts. Artists can be brought into contact with one another, collaborate, experiment, and create new work.

V Conservation

Since 1992 the Netherlands Media Art Institute has developed into a center of expertise for the conservation of media art. The Institute develops and performs research into models and theories in this field. Furthermore, it performs services in restoration and conservation for other public and private video collections. During the '*Project Preservation Video Art*', launched in July 2000 and ending in February 2003, under the auspices of the Foundation for the Conservation of Modern Art (SBMK), many important steps were made. In the frame of the project, a preservation trajectory was followed in which tapes of seven years old and older were converted to a digital format. Not the specific technique, but rather, the original character of the work of art, the artist's intention, the message and its effect were guaranteed in this way. Within this project, a

methodology for the preservation of video art was developed, implemented and evaluated, eventually resulting in the preservation of circa 1700 analogue video works aged seven years or over. Moreover, a model acquisition contract and a registration model for the preservation of video art were developed. Prior to the preservation project, the 'ideal' carrier was investigated through technical research into the best practice in video preservation; technique, starting points and logistics. NVIM started by defining video art and preservation priorities and then selected and catalogued the works, contacted the artists, held artists' interviews and cleaned and transferred over 1700 video artworks.

VI Facilities/Services

The Netherlands Media Art Institute performs a wide range of services: post-production, conservation and ICT, and provides advice to artists on technical questions.

VII Education

The Netherlands Media Art Institute has developed structural educational programs to accompany all of its core tasks. These provide a varied selection for various target audiences, including the general public, secondary schools, art academies and specialized groups such as artists, art historians and conservators.

VIII Mediatheque

In this department, the Institute enables access to a video database of their collection. There are three research consoles, where the user has the opportunity to make a research through the computer database interface by categories. Main categories are: List of the artists and List of subjects. Using the list of artists, the user can get a list of all works of a particular artist, and watch any selected work on the screen. Using the List of subjects, the user faces a list of key words which lead to lists of works related to those sub-categories. The main qualification is the catalogue description by the genre (video essay, poetry, fiction), but also the words and formal (Installation, Multi channel, Multimedia, Kinetic, Computer, Audio, Single channel, Interactive, Closed circuit, Interaction sound/image) and content descriptive categories.

Example:

A

Abstraction, animation, appropriation, architecture, art, artist, autobiography

B

Biotechnology, birth, body, body art

There are joint collections in the archive, as a result of collaboration between the Institute and other institutions and collections. Some of them are in distribution (Netherlands Institute voor Media Kunst, De Appel, Lijnban Centrum) and some of them are not in distribution (NVM documentations, NVM archive, ICN, Groninger Museum, Kroner Muller).

Funding of activities

NVM is supported by the state 30%, the city of Amsterdam 30%, and the rest is provided through NVM fundraising. From the state point of view, NVM activity is perceived as art, which allows its funding (opposite of e-culture, which is perceived by the state as creative industry, which understands self-sustainability). NVM has a production studio which enables artists to rent equipment in their video production under better conditions, for fixed and announced prices.

Networks

NVIM leads in the collaboration of research and application of new practices in new media archiving in the Netherlands. One of the best examples is the '*Project Preservation Video Art*', launched in July 2000 and ending in February 2003, under the auspices of the Foundation for the Conservation of Modern Art (SBMK). The project was carried out by NVIM, coordinated by Gaby Wijers. The participants were: Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven; De Appel, Amsterdam; Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam; Groninger Museum, Groningen; Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage, Rijswijk/Amsterdam; Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo; the Netherlands Media Art Institute, Montevideo/TBA, Amsterdam; Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten, Amsterdam (all of these first-phase participants); the Mickery Collection, Amsterdam,

and the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, Amsterdam. Moreover, De Pont Foundation for Contemporary Art, Tilburg, participates in the development of methodology and models. According to Gabby Wijers, this project showed how important this collaboration is:

“During the course of the project, the importance of the collective approach adopted by institutes with substantial public collections of video art, aimed at the preservation of these collections, was discussed and confirmed time and again (...). On the one hand, this collective approach has resulted in a uniform method of preservation for a representative public collection of video art in the Netherlands. On the other, this approach has enhanced the efficiency and intensified the exchange of knowledge and information. The development of contract and registration models would not have been possible without this collective approach. The same applies to the collective contacting of artists, and the artists’ interviews. Thanks to the exceptional collaboration between so many different institutes with collections to manage, this project has yielded broad support, efficiency and worthwhile results. In the future, the Netherlands Media Art Institute, Montevideo/TBA, will continue to provide the service of carrying out preservation work. Future collective research will centre on the preservation of multimedia installations. In the year to come, the Foundation for the Conservation of Modern Art, the Netherlands Media Art Institute and the Institute for Cultural Heritage will join forces to stimulate research and exchange of knowledge in this field.”⁵⁶

NVM was a member of OASIS, and now it is a member of GAMA⁵⁷ online portal for

⁵⁶ Gabby Wijers: Video Art Preservation, <http://kmi.lux.org.uk/casestudies/videoart.htm>

⁵⁷ A central online portal to Media Art in Europe, approved by EC *eContentplus* programme. With its programme *eContentplus*, the European Community supports projects that help develop the "i2010: Digital Libraries" initiative. The project "Gateway to Archives of Media Art" is amongst those projects to participate in this endeavour with a Community support of 1.2 million Euro. Initiated by Bremen's University for the Arts and the Institute for Information and Communication Technology (TZI) of the University of Bremen, the 2.5 million Euro project will be implemented within the next two years as a mutual undertaking of a consortium comprising 19 institutions from 12 European countries. The objective is to establish a professionally coordinated central online access to Europe's most important digital archives and libraries on media art and thus significantly enhance not only access but above all exploitation of the material gathered by expert institutions. The challenge is met by a well balanced team of art historians and theorists to safeguard the integrity of the approach to the artworks, cultural agents to provide not only

media archives. Among other members of GAMA are: Akademia Górniczo-Hutnicza, Krakow, Akademie der Bildenden Künste Wien, Vienna, argos - interdisciplinary centre for art and audiovisual media, Brussels, Atos Origin s.a.e., Madrid, C3 Center for Culture & Communication, Budapest, CIANT International Centre for Art and New Technologies, Prague, Heure Exquise !, Mons-en-Baroeul, Hochschule für Gestaltung und Kunst, Zürich, Hochschule für Künste Bremen,, Bremen, Hogeschool voor den Kunsten, Utrecht, (in]2 :: intelligent indexing, Bremen, Les INSTANTS VIDEO Numériques et poétiques, Marseille, Ludwig Boltzmann Institut Media. Kunst. Forschung, Linz, SCCA Center for Contemporary Arts - Ljubljana, Ljubljana, Staatliche Hochschule für Gestaltung Karlsruhe, Karlsruhe, Stiftelsen Filmform, Stockholm, Technologie-Zentrum Informatik | Universität Bremen, Bremen, Universitat de Barcelona - Laboratori de Mitjans Interactius, Barcelona.

Priorities

Priorities in near future are development of archive and its status as a national depository. There are several collections and archives which are negotiated with and considered for collaborative preservation, and the scope spreads to several levels: archives in Netherlands, personal archives, festival archives, and institutional archives. Among them are: Park 4D TV, Stupniz, Channel O.

Example of an archiving project: Park4DTV in NIVM

Short description of Park4D TV

Park 4DTV is an independent organization in Amsterdam, initiated by a group of artists and curators, gathered around the idea that “art is an important, even fundamental part of any society, and for everybody in it. Therefore it should be made accessible for everyone, everywhere”. That’s why they started in 1994 with distributing their art on television in a very simple and straight-forward format: 1 hour, 1 thing, pure sound, pure image. In

content but above all their yearlong expertise at the interface between artists, collectors, curators and the interested public, and technological research and IT experts who will implement state-of-the-art technology to ensure both a high level of user-friendliness and a sophisticated query performance. (http://www.c3.hu/c3/eu_projects/gama/index.html). See more in appendix.

September 2004 they moved their broadcasts to the internet. 2005 was their first 'internet only' year. The concept of full screen video broadcasts via internet works very well and is still unique in the world. They constantly improve the quality of their program, making their stream and site better, and "will continue to search and find every possible canvas for video/television art". Next to the stream which they see as their 'core-business' Park 4DTV always works on a sub-projects. In the last few years they released CD-ROMs, audio CD's, VCD's and DVDs. Other side projects worth mentioning are Raudio (a 24/7 radio station with the same straightforward format: one stream of pure sound) <http://www.raudio.nl> , P2park:download VCDs (10 downloadable Video Cds ready for burning on your own computer) <http://www.park.nl/p2park> and PocketMovies <http://www.park.nl/pocketmovies> - they distribute movies for mobile phones via internet and bluetooth. There is an active editorial team (Alberto de Michele, Kuno Terwind, Frank van der Stok, Jasper van den Brink, Wiel Suskens, Peter Mertens , Constant Dullaart, Jeroen Kooimans, Martin Takken) that constantly is in search for good art. A lot of work comes to them via their web-site. Another source is the workshops they give in The Netherlands and abroad. Park 4DTV thinks that good art needs to be paid for, so they don't except every entry they receive, but if they do, they pay for it. Park 4DTV has collaborated with a number of public & commercial TV-stations around the world, and their tapes have been shown in museums, galleries, bars, theatres, etc.

We can see how an initiative for making a new model of video presentation putting it into the television environment at first and consequently following the changes in communication technology performed innovative approach in video presentation and support of production. Taking advantage of the new models of video broadcast, it managed to animate, motivate and mobilize authors in responding to prevailing television forms by making park TV visible intervention in media sphere, simply offering different treatment of television media and television time ("*park video* has no beginning and no end.", it is repetitive or static, unusual form for TV). It is the constant in their activity to insist on real time experience of broadcast, making their concept an event based action. The context of TV program or internet broadcast gives it irreversible quality of time specific intervention, and program schedule the dimension of curated collage.

According to Gabby Wijers, there is an idea of taking collection of Park4D TV into the collection of NVIM. In such a complex question like archiving project like Park 4D TV, we can now see that one of its dimensions will have to be lost, but there will be still a possibility to provide an adequate description and insight into the context for users of the archived collection. Taking the responsibility for saving this collection in good conditions and with archival care still is the priority when uncertain future of this independent project is considered.

Video in the region of ex-Yugoslavia

Before presenting the Archive of alternative film and video in Belgrade, it is necessary to make a short overview of the cultural context in the region it is positioned in, and also to establish relations between alternative film practice and video, which is important for understanding the specificity of this Archive.

One of the most important phenomena for the development of film art in Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia was cine-amateurism, as a movement and as a model of film education, production and presentation. It was one of the characteristics of the socialist system in Yugoslavia after the II World War to encourage these initiatives which promoted the democratization of culture, so the cine-clubs had a certain support from the state, also a sort of collective (through the membership) approach to the production and presentation issues. Peak of this model of work was in 1960's, when the new generation of film amateurs, but also young artists and directors used a certain autonomy of cine-club model to realize some of their ideas which, on long term basis, had enormous impact to Yugoslav cinematography and also to avant-garde art. What cine-clubs offered was the opportunity to develop experimental practices which were out of the interest on the official level of state film production and art academies. This wave of new film poetics and language, its international success and massive popularity and effect they had through the manifestations such as GEF and STUFF, also state festivals like Belgrade short and documentary film festival was also inspired with the global changes in understanding film (French New Wave, i.e.). The reputation of the centers of progressive practices and experimental film production of Cine-Club Belgrade, Academic Film

Center, Cine-Club Split and Cine-Club Zagreb and others changed the meaning of cine-amateurism from the old understanding of this film activity which was based on supposed dilettantism and incompetence as a difference of the cine-amateurism from professional. In her study *Non-professional film and video production in Serbia from 1997 to 2001*⁵⁸ Katarina Sivić finds that in defining the kino-amateurism as film activity there are two criteria that differ this activity from professional film production: In cine-amateurism the motif for work is cultural need, without financial gain; film practitioners who were not film professionals, but were dealing with film based on filmophilia (amateur as the one who loves the subject). It is also notable that this practice is liberated from the rules and limitations imposed to professional practice. That also leads to the different level of production in the aspects of financial means invested into the production, technical equipment and ability to involve bigger of crew. The appearance of video technique in the 1980's coincided with the decrease of cine-amateur activity. The availability and lower costs of video technology brought the term of video amateurs. This practice lead to new video forms (video art, video film, video clip, etc.) and video production in a way continued the idea of populist art. Nevertheless, film public and practitioners were still more skeptic towards the new technique, contrasting to the enthusiasm which welcomed the video art on contemporary art scene.

It was the generation of conceptual artists in the late 1960's and the 1970's who introduced media pluralism in "their iconoclastic gestures and transformative criticism against the existing state in the society", how Dejan Sretenović in his text *Video art in Serbia* describes this period:

„ If video represented the first step in the „structural transformation of art“ in the world, as stated by Douglas Davis, then its emergence in former Yugoslavia was even more significant, because reproductive technologies changed the forms of production, circulation and reception of a work of art, destabilized the fixed academic hierarchies of artistic disciplines and introduced the industrial spirit of modernism into Serbian art

⁵⁸ Katarina Sivić : "Neprofesionalna filmska i video produkcija u Srbiji 1997-2001.", diplomski rad, FDU, Beograd, 2001, strana 7-8

scene.“⁵⁹

The author attributes emancipatory importance to video and conceptual photography, whose emergence helped technological media to establish themselves as equal and, together with the performance, even dominant forms of artistic expression. It is also important to note that before using video technology, while it was still not readily available, these authors used 8mm film format, which prepared them to work in moving images and in the mid 1970s in video (there is also a visible influence of the structural (anti) film, an influence coming through cine-clubs⁶⁰). A certain influence of the experimental film practice of cine-clubs on the video production was also evident:

In Yugoslavia, one of the most significant centers for promoting this new approach to art was Students' Cultural Center in Belgrade, the April Meetings manifestation. Student cultural centers in Yugoslavia were, in a way, result of the translation of political requests of the students rebellion in 1968 into cultural infrastructure⁶¹, where students had the opportunity to realize programs which addressed their new perspectives. The most obvious monuments of such culturalization of politics were Students' Cultural Center and „Students' City“ Cultural Center in Belgrade. In 1976, Academic Film Center, one of the cine-clubs which actively operated in Belgrade cine-amateurism scene was moved to a monumental building of the new cultural center in Students' City: „Students' City“ Cultural Center.

Students' Cultural Center (ŠKUC) in Ljubljana was open for the special programming, consisting of video participation. According to Marina Gržinić⁶² in 1980's, it was video,

⁵⁹ Dejan Sretenović: „Video art in Serbia“ in *Video art in Serbia*, essays, CSU, Belgrade, 1999, p.11

⁶⁰ Ibid. p. 12

⁶¹ From this point we can describe this “translation” as an anticipation of a wider process of *culturalization*, later more obvious, as found by J. Vesić and D. Grlja: “The articulations of political struggles and social antagonisms have moved from their “classical” domain of the state apparatuses to the dispersed field of competing “cultural options”. (...) In the post-conflictual region of the “Western Balkans,” art and culture are supposed to play the role of reconciling antagonists. They culturalize us in order to renounce the “non-civic” or, simply, “un-civilized” ways of solving conflicts by adopting the “non-violent”, symbolical mechanisms that the “cultural field” supposedly offers.”, Jelena Vesić and Dušan Grlja: *The Neoliberal Institution of Culture and the Critique of Culturalization*, www.eipcp.net/transversal/0208/prelom/en

⁶² Gržinić, Marina: “Uvodna reč”, *Između kvadrata – Alternative film-video 2003*, Dom kulture “Studentski grad”, Beograd, 2004, p.29

not film, which brought „new blood“ and very significant alternative practices - sexual, social, political... One of the members of FV Video, active at the time, Zemira Alajbegović, remembers turning to video, mainly in frame of student cultural centers:

„A substantial numbers of adherents to subculture took an interest in video, and thus, the first art, documentary and music video film were made. ŠKUC-Forum Video Production was the common name of a number of artists and video groups active at the time at two student organizations, ŠKUC and ŠKD Forum (...)”⁶³

This points also to a new aspect, along with the contemporary art scene which “comprised video as an art medium in their selections of avant-garde creative practices”⁶⁴, another important dimension of video is its participation in counter-culture, alternative culture in Yugoslavia in the 1980’s. As a new communication technology and art expression, video development was supported and intersected with the overall alternative culture practices in music, art, theater, etc. This period we can also observe as a shift from the iconoclastic gestures to iconophilia, according to Dejan Sretenović:

(...) the art of the 80s was marked with iconophilia, with the establishment of the economy of a dynamic circulation of visual signs ranging from the resemantization of pictorial models of modernism to the procedures of media image appropriation.”⁶⁵

The author explains the reasons in overall change in the media and economic sphere. This was a result of a change in Yugoslav media, which also contributed to the affirmation of new cultural forms, and television contributed also to spreading consumer culture and increase of entertainment contents. This coincided with the emergence of video

⁶³ Zemira Alajbegović: „The frozen time: the eighties, ŠKUC- Forum, FV Video and others“, *Videodokument, Video art in Slovenia 1969-1999, Essays*, SCCA, Ljubljana, 1999, p. 39

⁶⁴ “ Documenta in Kassel, The Youth Biennial in Paris, Trigon in Graz, CAYC in Buenos Aires, and up there with the others, the April meetings in Belgrade, comprised video as an art medium in their selections of avant-garde creative practices which, towards the culmination of conceptualism and its derivatives, frequently marked by strong socially critical undertones, radically questioned the function and perspectives of classical fine art forms, and pointed to the shift from an industrial to an information society.” Brane Kovič: *The Beginnings of Slovene video*, *Videodokument...*, p. 26-27

⁶⁵ Dejan Sretenović, „Video art in Serbia“ in *Video art in Serbia*, essays, CSU, Belgrade, 1999, p15

technology on the Yugoslav market, with the proliferation of television and video festivals and the ever greater commercial use of video technology. One of the first regular Yugoslav film festivals which embraced video was Alternative film festival, established in 1982 by Academic Film Center. In 1985, this festival changed its name to Alternative film/video, and officially announced equal competition, playing with two oppositions in its title: alternative film and video opposed to official/professional/mainstream film and video, and alternatives: film opposed to video. Becoming an annual gathering of film and video artists from the whole Yugoslavia, the festival offered an opportunity to present this rising production and discuss its positioning in the field of alternative film and visual practices. Milena Dragičević Šešić⁶⁶ notes that festivals of alternative and radical art, among which she puts this festival, were founded on enthusiasm and tendency of all those who were dealing with this form of art to compare their work with their co-thinkers, not with the official, proclaimed elite art on the local level. It was this festival that triggered the idea of archiving the whole corpus of cine-amateurism and video together, which later led to establishing of the Archive of alternative film and video.

Case study II:

Archive of Alternative film and video

In presenting the current status and situation of the Archive of alternative film and video I will rely on the interview I made with Ivko Šešić, the chief of the Archive, and the official document *Program and plan of the Archive of alternative film and video* published in the „Annual report and program of „Students’ City“ Cultural Center (SCCC) 2006/2007“⁶⁷.

⁶⁶ Milena Dragičević Šešić: *Umetnost i alternativa*, Institut za pozorište, film, radio i televiziju, FDU, Beograd, 1992., p. 155

⁶⁷ *Godišnji izveštaj i Program Doma kulture “Studentski grad” 2006/2007*, DKSG, Beograd, 2007

Short history

Since the first issue of the Alternative film festival in 1982, in Academic Film Center and Film program of “Students’ City” Cultural Center (SCCC) there was a plan to collect and keep all the films from the festival’s program and to transfer them into video formats. All the films were acquired on the basis of verbal agreement with the authors, and the format transfer and copying was also realized according to verbal agreement. Since it was an internal archive of AFC, the archiving conditions (space, technical equipment) were not up to standards for such an initiative, so maintaining the collection was relying solely on the personal enthusiasm. On those grounds, the archive was saved during the 1990’s, when it was physically removed from SCCC into private apartments because of the lack of responsible approach in SCCC and danger of the management imposed by the current regime. In 2000, with the shift of regime and reform of SCCC, the collection was moved back to SCCC, with the idea of officially establishing the Archive as a unit of SCCC.

During the period of 20 years in which Archive existed unofficially and it was operating in the frame of Academic Film Center (AFC) and Film program of SCCC valuable and relevant archive material of Yugoslav film heritage was collected, and Archive gained a status of a serious and responsible film institution. After 2000, all the conditions were fulfilled for the official and formal establishment of the Archive as a separate unit inside SCCC.

Establishment of the Archive presents, in a way, the conceptual synthesis of the activity of AFC SCCC, who intensively supported alternative film creativity and production, and various activities in the field of critical valorization and theoretical defining of this kind of production.

Although the values of alternative film had been stressed before, until this moment, the care from society for the existing fundus was in discrepancy with its overall aesthetical and cultural importance. Produced mainly by the means and enthusiasm of the amateurs and followers, Yugoslav alternative film remained entirely left aside, relying on the

authors and cine-clubs. Artistically and in the aspect of the production alternative to the ruling professional production, this film movement was on the margin of the interest of the institutions in charge of preservation of the film production. The establishment of the Archive of alternative film and video is therefore the most adequate way of expressing the awareness of the artistic and cultural relevance of the Yugoslav film practice. In that sense, the concept of the Archive should be understood as one of the most purposeful solutions for the preservation of all of the artistically valuable pieces, produced in our alternative film and other media.

In past years, the preparation phase for the Archive establishment was finalized. A small allaborate study was prepared, which was the intitutive base for the decision of the Board of SCCC for SCCC to establish the Archive of alternative film and video. The Board of SCCC appointed on that session the members of an advisory body: the Council of the Archive. All the necesery conditions in terms of space and equipment have been provided, reception room with videotheque has been adopted, the working space of the Archive have been equiped and adequate storage space for the maintaining of the archive collection has been made. The whole space matches proffessional standards of the preservation and archiving of the films, video and audio recordings. Its current status as a section of „Students’ City“ Cultural Center gives a certain instituional security in terms of securing the position of the employee, of its facilities and equipment, but for more extensive activity on national and regional level, it would be more adequate to have a status of national archive. So far, there is only one archive of moving images registered in Serbia according to the Law on culture, and that is the Museum of Yugoslav cinematheque.⁶⁸

Activity and planned program initiatives of the Archive of alternative film and video

Basic activity:

Archive collects and keeps pieces of alternative film, video and digital production. Out of

⁶⁸ In the process initiated by the Archive of alternative media few years ago, with goal of registration of this institution as an archive in the register of Ministry of culture of Serbia, the inertia and lack of interest and legal ground were made obvious.

existing film and video materials, by digitization, computer reconstruction of the image and sound, the source version of films and video would be drawn out. Treated this way, film and video pieces will be kept in uncompressed digital form, and, depending on the financial means also in the form of film negative and copies in all formats. According to the plan, all the films, video and audio materials will be adequately kept and given archival care, and for the needs of scientific research and program, digital copies will be prepared of all the archived units. Archive will also do scanning and digitization of classical photography material and documents related to the pieces and authors from the domain of alternative media. In apprehending new practices, it is planned to establish more intensive collaboration with Slovenian Center for Contemporary Art⁶⁹.

Considering the intention of the Archive to achieve the reputation of an institution which above all takes care of the work and the author, it will make sure that all the best conditions will be guaranteed to the authors as they deposit the films, and that will be enabled by signing the contract in which, beside the general conditions of preservation quality, special conditions could be defined on the request of the author. In 2006, majority of the archive of Low-Fi Video movement was deposited into the Archive of alternative film and video. There is a possibility to launch the first online video base which would consist of the Low-Fi Video archive, when necessary preparations are done concerning clearing rights and technical equipment purchase. Therefore, the way of collecting the films and their further use in the frame of the program activity of the Archive will never be damaging to the author, even when the condition posed by the author will be a restriction of any public screening, or holding the ownership rights.

In the frame of primary activity in 2007 the attention will be directed towards two segments, without which the Archive can't keep on with the work and contact with the public, and to provide the conditions for the research work in the frame of the Archive's collection. The fulfilling of the detailed and complete list of the films and video pieces

⁶⁹ SCCA is now member of GAMA network. In their study video & audio (analogue and digital) archive one can find video works of Slovene and foreign artists as well as programmes and archives of similar organisations and media centers. Ever since 1994 SCCA-Ljubljana systematically deals (collects, documents, researches, reflects and presents) with the video production in Slovenia. www.scca-ljubljana.si

contained in the Archive, in the printed and digital form, will be continued. Each unit would consist of, in the first phase, the general data (titles, authors, year of production, format, duration, producer), and in the second phase, additional data would be attached (the texts about the film and the author, the photos, etc.). This will not be easy task, since many of the material don't have the credits, some of them are incomplete and some of them are only in the negative. The main catalogue will be available in two formats: computer and card index. Parallel to the realization of the catalogue of the collection, digitization of the film and video materials will be continued, according to the significance of the particular pieces and authors and current technical and financial possibilities. The work on films and video material which are saved in complete form, but need technical restoration of the image or, often, complete synchronization of the sound (majority of the films have the sound recorded on a separate magnetic tape) will also be continued.

The Archive also possesses a large collection of over 1000 significant and rare films and video materials of professional production on Beta and VHS tapes. Since this technology will soon not be useable any more, it is necessary to digitize the films (some of which can be rarely found on DVD format), and make them available to a larger number of film lovers.

Extended activity

In the frame of this segment, biggest attention will be directed to the maintaining and renewing the collection of the library of the Archive and mediatheque of the significant works from the history of film and video, necessary for the comprehension of the alternative production. Until now, over 2000 titles on video tapes were archived and catalogued, out of which, by the value parameters, digitization is performed.

In the library of Archive, beside significant books, publications and magazines, and also various festival catalogues, bulletins, posters, photos and other materials are kept. Special segment would be collecting, treating and keeping all the film, video and audio recordings made in program activity of SCCC. The other part would be publishing activity, where the central place is taken by the edition *Contributions for the history of*

alternative film. The special project of the Archive and its first of the kind project in promoting digitization of the films is digitization of the Živojin Pavlović's „The Triptich On Matter and Death“, which is planned to be published on DVD, with additional texts and photo material. In the Small Cinema of SCCC – Alternative Cinema venue, it is planned to have occasional screenings to introduce the significant achievements of alternative media to the wider audience.

DiViteka

Part of the Archive fundus would be available in a special terminal in the Library of SCCC, where the students could also have access to the relevant pieces from the Archive (selection) and also relevant film production (with cleared rights) and theater pieces video documentation, art and music programs.

Funding of activities

As a part of „Students' City“ Cultural Center, which is an institution of Student standard, under the responsibility of Ministry of education of Serbia, funds for basic needs (employees, administrative costs, material, equipment) are distributed through monthly rate for SCCC. For special projects (digitization of specific films, publishing activity), the Archive is fund raising through concursus for projects in culture established by the Republic of Serbia and city of Belgrade. In the plans of digitization of the Archive's collection, I would point to a potential project of creating database of Low-Fi Video archive, now joined to the collection of Archive of alternative film and video. It is a kind of analogy to the previous example of NVIM and Park 4D TV, but also shows the possible model of both deepening and transcending of local context using a basic idea of the Archive.

Example of a digitization project: Low Fi Video online video base

Short history of Low-Fi Video

After the crisis of video production in late 1980's and early 1990's, thanks to an inspirative social and media environment and availability of video technology, one of

the most interesting phenomena in Serbian alternative culture of the 1990's occurred: Low-Fi Video movement.

Low-Fi Video⁷⁰ started in 1997 as an open call for applying films and videos for screenings without selection on special evenings called Low-Fi Video Sabor (translation: *Assembly*). It was established as a platform for promoting video as a tool for democratization of film and arts, for supporting experimental and alternative in film and video production and new approach to cinema. The founders: Miloš Kukurić, Aleksandar Gubaš and Igor Basorović, all were under the influence of the ideas of Yugoslav cine-amateurism. Unexpectedly impressive response initiated growth of this organization and numerous events, and soon it was evident that it was taking the dimensions of the movement. Due to the availability of the video production and postproduction technology, a new approach to video was articulated and spread throughout all Serbia in a short period as an alternative to a common media forms on television and official culture. Organizing the screenings in Cultural Center Rex, based on the principle of no selection and careful collage programming, Low Fi Video was soon a platform for gathering several aspects of alternative culture: author' comics scene, computer demo scene, etc. In collaboration with Kljun in Subotica, the main festival manifestation of Low Fi Video movement was established in 1998: Yugoslav Cheap Film Festival. Thanks to its strong concept relied on the principles of cine-amateurism, inclining to destabilization of old conventions in film production and local inadequate cultural system, LFV became one of the most cultural authentic phenomena in Serbia of the 1990's, and was also recognized as such on the international scene. Thanks to the collaboration with Microcinema Inc⁷¹. organization based in Seattle, sharing the idea of the *microcinema* approach to the film and video culture which understood dislocation of cinema event into alternative venues and converting conventional screenings into interactive events, LFV became a part of an international microcinema network. Soon, this communication enabled huge response to the international short film and video festival in Belgrade Mikrokino Fest, organized by LFV since 2000 to 2003. LFV became one of the most invited representatives of Serbia in international film and video scene,

⁷⁰ <http://www.crsn.com/low-fi>

⁷¹ <http://www.microcinema.com>

which brought it a reputation of a bridge between Serbian alternative culture and international centers in the fields of contemporary art, film, new media, etc⁷². Simultaneously with numerous international presentations, LFV organized tours through Serbia, establishing an association Zadruga (with the members: Striper, Our Pictures, Corrosion) which contributed to the animation and recruiting a new generation of authors and establishing local scenes. With the appearance of B92 TV, LFV started a TV series *Low Files* and organized the first LFV festival on television in 2003, creating and performing a new festival concept in Serbia. In 2003, the LFV project was closed by the decision of the founders, due to the lack of support of cultural establishment which could have endangered the concept, the model and the quality of the organization and compromise the whole idea. After the closure of the project, the archives of the Low-Fi Video programs, production, festivals and all the screenings was kept in Remont gallery until 2006, when it was moved to Archive of alternative film and video, where it is deposited with the verbal agreement on the conditions regarding preservation and distribution. Even after the closure of the project, it was presented on several occasions as the Low-Fi Video Afterlife selection or a retrospective⁷³.

In embracing a whole collection of Low-Fi Video into a “friendly” context of the Archive of alternative film and video, we can see the first step towards its inclusion into a wider (and proclaimed in their manifestos and announcements) continuity of the cine-amateurs’ tradition of experiment and breaking the conventions, in this case reaching the dimensions of movement, and thus re-enacting the idea of “democratization of arts” and promoting alternative culture. The powerful potential of video for that purpose, enthusiastically announced in the 1960’s got in the case of LFV a local fulfillment. In its concept of *microcinema*, an atmosphere of interactive screenings with involving the audience, collage programs and synthesis of various components and media, in the

⁷² The impressive polyvalent profile of this movement opened a possibility to bridge the different fields in Serbian, but also on international scene. More in: Sekulić, Aleksandra: „Low-Fi Video – Bildungsroman“, *PRELOM – časopis za savremenu umetnost i teoriju*, No. 5, Centar za savremenu umetnost, Beograd, 2003

⁷³ It was presented in the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade, as a part of the exhibition “On Normality. Art in Serbia 1989-2001”, September 11 – November 20, 2005

archive presentation of this phenomenon, its performativity will not be possible to capture and display in its authentic form. There is a way, however, to initiate a new model of actualization of this specific archive: the online database. The interface of the database in its design and concept should be adapted to the specific need to establish communication with the new generation of viewers and possible authors, to provide them with knowledge of the context of the movement, but also its actuality in the current video production, giving an impulse for the new response. In opening the space for the dynamic two way communication, it could be a pioneer model of the new in this region of an archive with an initiative to involve new participants into re-reading its collection.

Discussion of data and suggested practices

From their appearance, the archives of video were closely involved with all other cultural activities, because of the specific reproducible nature of video and its production process, so those centers and institutions already present a whole cultural branch in one: production, dissemination, preservation, education. The establishment of NBK or NIVM was largely supported by the constant flow of artists and ideas, forum, production and programs, and showed the importance of an international collaboration from the start, due to the novelty of such practice and its specific development. The example of IMAI online catalogue or Park 4D TV platform proves the potential of video bases to easily grow from previous video archives or media models, relying on the new demands of international scene and possibilities offered by internet and new technologies of video. We can observe how the merging of two concepts of archive: online and depository can open a path to a new comprehension of archives overcoming the closed system and opening to the model of an wide accessibility, thus meeting some of the priorities of the global (UNESCO) and European policies.

NIVM is a center which covers all the aspects of new media in its activities, offering a scheme of a socio-cultural cycle for new media cultural branch: production, presentation, distribution and dissemination, archiving, education, research, setting standards in

technological video preservation. Developing through the shifting socio-cultural situations, also offering a positive example of adaptable management, this center managed to accomplish various levels of collaboration on the regional and international level and to establish and support different initiatives which will induce innovative and progressive approach to the treatment of new media in culture. Its positioning within the national cultural scene allowed a systematic building a valuable archive of video in Netherlands, but due to its long term planning and activity on international level, it has credibility for larger international collaborative actions. Wide dissemination of its program is also an example of a fruitful and dedicated work on presentation of video and new media achieving high standards in curatorial competence and management.

Archive of alternative film and video is an institution grown from a movement of cine-amateurism, which determined its scope of activity to a specific film and video production. Thanks to its background, one of its main advantages among other institutions is credibility among artists which is proved in its growth of deposited works, and legitimacy in their continuity to a tradition of avan-garde, experimental and alternative, given by the successors of cine-amateurism and later movements in alternative culture. Even the now existing collection gives to a certain extent insight in wider contest of this specific field of production. Numerous researchers who already used this resource were in the position to get not onlu particular works, but also related documentation and works for a comparative approach, and were able to spot relations and links between various fields of art and culture of the period or phenomena they studded. I would like to stress some of the specific aspects of this archive in relation to analogue institutions and initiatives.

The Archive of alternative film and video is one of the first institutions in Belgrade which comprised media archaeology model of inclusion of marginal and context-driven material. Since it is not strictly oriented only to collection of film or video art, but also, due to its background of a center of exchange and interaction with the authors of AFC SCCC, all related material, there is a potential to establish a model for future initiatives and general approach in treating this dynamically developing field of production. In the program cycle „Media archaeology“ initiated and realized by AFC SCCC since 2006, it

has been established that, in communication with younger generation of audience, it is one of the imperatives to address them in a language which is close and interesting to them, and it turned out that it can be a video collage of media forms which, represented as „lessons“ in a cycle of thematic presentations, in a form which is close to a TV talk show. It is often forgotten that in cultural programming of the cultural centers which target younger generations (which is the case in SCCC) that educational system doesn't support them in comprehending more complex programs in the field of art and music, and often it is the history of Yugoslavia which is an obstacle for them to understand many of the demanding art works or other programs. Thanks to the Archive of alternative film and video, and its continual practice of collecting the video material even remotely connected to the main scope of the basic mission, it was possible to offer them an original approach to these „missing studies“ of history, through the insight into media forms like commercials, music videos, TV shows of a country they don't remember, and whose history is mediated through instable history curriculum and media discourse. Here we meet the innovative practice which throws a light to a problem of context, especially in the region of ex-Yugoslavia. The current use of the term „media archaeology“, according to Eric Kluitenberg⁷⁴ mainly denotes method of constructing a diversified historical apprehension of media and technology culture by uncovering material lineages of apparatuses. Relying on Foucault's description of archaeology, he finds that archaeology means the systematic description of discourses as practices specified in the element of archive, the term coined “as an alternative approach to historical description”, where it does not have unifying but diversifying effect. Maybe it is by accident, in try to communicate with new generation, found that the new possible objective of this Archive to initiate more profound research on possible definition of media archiving. We can note that the specific location of this Archive, giving it a chance to open more intensive communication with students, draws it to the opening new practice and is immanently present in its plans (one of them is idea of DiViteka). It is this communicative channel which can allow this Archive to have two-way information flow.

It is the research and mediation of the specific film and video production which brought up another specific quality of this archive. When Neil Cummings, a British artist, visited

⁷⁴ Eric Kluitenberg: *Delusive Spaces*, p. 42

the Archive, after his experience in preparing the project *Enthusiasm*⁷⁵, exploring the corpus of cine-amateurism production in Poland in the 1970s, he was surprised with the care and the status of cine-amateurism corpus of films has in the Archive of alternative film and video. Contrasting his experience of finding the films “under the beds” in the homes of amateur authors or struggling with Polish state film archives, finding no interest in public institution to display amateur film production unless it conforms the notion of “folk art”⁷⁶, the Archive as he perceived it was treating this corpus of production with utmost serious attention, actually it was the focus of its scope of interest. This points to the specificity of the relation towards a certain history period which is in Eastern Europe mainly marked, in the wave of transitional anti-communism, as an unwanted relict, so it is more a repressed cultural memory, symbolically found “under the bed”. This image inspires me to again turn to the speculations about a cultural tourist looking for authenticity which he/she hopes to find in the revival of pre-modern identity and sentiment, particularly in ‘the former East’⁷⁷. The specific importance of this Yugoslav cultural memory corpus actually enables this Archive to try something different, transcend the regionalism and promote the historization on a more universal level, especially by emphasizing this difference: self-awareness in mediating a tradition of concepts of enthusiasm, experiment and counter-culture, with presented social contexts. Using the possibilities of program and production of AFC, a more open structure could be achieved, relying on the basic principles of cine-amateurism, in structuring more intriguing and active presentation models and curatorial practice, establishing a new interface: online video base. There is an opportunity for the first such project to be

⁷⁵ This project is interesting for this comparison, not only as an example of the archive form, but also in treating cine-amateur movements, as stated by the curator J. Vesic, Cummings and Lewandowska’s project *Enthusiasm* is an exhibition and evolving archive of films produced by amateur cine clubs of socialist Poland between 1950’s and 1980’s. “Our experience of working with and struggling to release material from Polish state film archives, or from many public film and television archives in Britain, encouraged us to establish a ‘critical’ creative archive of amateur film, which would – to use a term from recent software development – be ‘free’ or ‘open source’”. *Breaking step*, Museum of contemporary art, Belgrade, 2007, catalogue, interview with Neil Cummings, p.66

⁷⁶ Ibid. 66

⁷⁷ Rastko Močnik harshly estimates this relation as colonial conquest of the East by the Western institutional apparatuses and art markets, and people from the East naively took part in this project: “The consequence of this is a new old system and a novel canonization of the Eastern art by standards of the Western markets, Western museums and the archives”; “On the Margins of Europe”, an interview with Rastko Močnik, *PRELOM – Journal for images and politics*, Edition in English, No.8, Prelom kolektiv, Beograd, 2006

realized, using a collection already deposited in the Archive, based on the same ideas and already having all the elements in its own structure: Low-Fi Video online database. This could also lead to a realization of a new model of synthesis of production, diffusion and animation of this cultural branch, promoting a rising potential of new media.

Conclusion

As video made a change in contemporary art exhibition practice with opposing existing practice of lightened static display by its darkened time based display demands, its challenges to archiving institutions can be seen also as dramatic. It is transforming the practice of collecting and cataloguing finished artifacts into a dynamic process of constant reproduction. It is this field of artistic production of growing intensity that provokes some of the more general questions, and the flux of digital technology and culture makes various dilemmas visible and discussable. In osmotic processes in digital era, the need for re-formulation of the existing institutional archival practice faces the needs of effective transformation into a more active role.

As we can observe in the experience of the archives presented in this study, the questions of preservation of video is now extended and conditioned by adequate response from wide range of instances in cultural policy. The adequate approach to this complex field shows an overall image of a state in question, if it is ready (or open) to new challenges in digital era in culture or not. Making strategies in this field is only following the initial decision of taking such corpus of cultural memory as an important part of heritage. Therefore, a long term policy is necessary in the situation when preservation starts with prediction, in constant race with technological obstacles and changes in the disposition of relations in cultural production. The priorities of national cultural policies in this respect should be:

1. Articulation of a national definition of culture that will contain new media fields for cultural production and communication.
2. Articulation of a strategy of gradual promotion of digital forms of the archiving and

presentation of heritage, along with its introduction in education system.

3. Proposal of a legislative basis for the development of the specific field of digital media concerning copyrights, academic status of this field of arts.

4. Establishing network of centers for promotion and presentation of digital culture all over the country, including existing new media art centers (with support for coordinated programs and technical updates).

It is then a responsibility of cultural policy makers to enable the development of archives as research centers, providing those institutions with adequate legal regulations, technical infrastructure and support in wide collaborative actions in coordination of the archival strategies. It is this point of local cultural policy background where we can find the two archives described in opposite situation: NIVM built continuity in this practice supported with adequate cultural policy measures on a state level, while Archive in Belgrade still has to wait for such turn in the policy towards new media in its local level. But the point where we can recognize essential resemblance is the initiative which came from enthusiasm. Recognizing its importance for future, but also for present comprehension of culture means taking a serious step towards historization of a practice which will for new generations be a *tradition*, and for such a responsibility, all functions of archive: selection, presentation, preservation technology should be constantly adapting to new circumstances. It is necessary to follow this need and perceive archives as research centers, enabling them to develop flexible, responsible approach to defining their role.

In rethinking archival practice, there is also a new prerogative, imposed by the database logic of today: enabling users to access in a way they can approach to the complex field of video adequately. Finding new interfaces, new communication channels and to learn from the growing number of new models in new media practice is one way. There is also a matter of providing insight into a context and artist's intention, so metadata management is necessary to improve, also extending the archival scope into a kind of media archiving, or at least take advantage of merging media fields and taking similar steps in coordination with other institutions. Coordination is emphasized in many aspects of archive management as necessary action in constant adapting to new conditions, making it easier to achieve adequate articulation of standards of this practice. We can see

that NIVM is leading in this activity in the Netherlands, also making a bridge towards wider international networks. This institutional responsibility towards knowledge transfer and circulation is contributing to the establishing a strong front in struggle with various problems and getting the adequate response from cultural policy makers. The positioning of an archive inside the local cultural scene implies its orientation towards improving overall situation and making a positive example for such practice. The Archive in Belgrade can recognize its potential to lead in defining the new model of archive not only regarding its specific scope of work, but in establishing a model of active practice in mediating a tradition (still not widely recognized) of innovation and experiment it was initiated from through the new models of display and presentation, programming and opening to the new language of generations now coming. It is the idea of a movement it grew from that gave it a credibility and competence to build a collection of this production, it has an opportunity to take a lead in the mobilization of new generation of authors and public to read it in new times and “build upon”. In the situation of a lack of the overall plan in cultural policy adoption to a new situation in digitization process, it is necessary to establish a communication of such institutions with cultural policy decision makers to be able to articulate demands emerging in the field of action and possible strategies. The advance made by particular centers can be taken as an advantage in slowly developing cultural policies.

The field of discussion over the role of archive and its defining will be dynamic in turbulent in the time ahead, but the experience from the practice can point to some priorities. Archiving institutions are now re-examined with the rise of institution of archiving, now within digital culture more than ever encouraged and enabled on independent and individual level. It is then matter of recognizing possible points of collision and intersection of those activities, matter of introducing cross-over forms and retreating to a safe “unreal” behind the border of archived past.

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