



MEMORY AND MEDIA
RESEARCH NETWORK

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Kommunikationswissenschaftliche Erinnerungsforschung:
Medienbilder in öffentlicher und privater Erinnerung

Mapping the field: Visual communication and collective remembering in the everyday

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Zum Netzwerk „Kommunikationswissenschaftliche Erinnerungsforschung: Grundlagen und Arbeitsfelder

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Dazu unterstützt das Netzwerk eine ortsübergreifende themenbezogene Kooperation. Im Zeitraum von 2018 bis 2021 wird die in unterschiedlichen Bereichen der Kommunikationsforschung und Medienanalyse stattfindende Auseinandersetzung mit kulturellem Gedächtnis und sozialem Erinnern gesichtet, verglichen und als Elemente einer kommunikationswissenschaftlichen Gedächtnis- und Erinnerungsforschung dokumentiert. Dafür ist der fachübergreifende Austausch mit anderen sozial- und kulturwissenschaftlichen Disziplinen in internationaler Perspektive ein wichtiger Bestandteil des Netzwerks.

Das wissenschaftliche Netzwerk wird durch die Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft gefördert (PE 2436/1-1). Es wird von Christian Pentzold, Universität Leipzig, und Christine Lohmeier, Universität Salzburg, koordiniert.

About the “Memory and Media” research network

The aim of the scientific network is to explore, systematize, and develop the nascent field of communication memory studies. It elaborates its fundamentals in different areas of social sciences and cultural studies, maps its pivotal areas of inquiry as well as its analytical perspectives.

The network fosters the translocal, issue-driven cooperation in order to survey and compare the disparate theoretical and empirical strands of research on cultural memory and social remembering in communication studies. They are critically reviewed, conjointly documented, and further examined as the constitutive elements of the emerging area of communication memory studies. Due to the variety of paradigms and approaches it is necessary to work across disciplines and interact especially with the social sciences and cultural studies as well as to take an international perspective.

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Abstract

The paper explores the relationship of visual media and collective remembering in everyday contexts. In identifying and reviewing particular strands of prior research situated at the cross section of visual communication and memory studies, the paper maps a particular interdisciplinary subfield of remembering with and through visual media technologies. The systemizing overview carves out three research areas concerned with visual media and collective memory in the everyday. (1) Reception of mass-mediated images of the past, (2) the aesthetics and formal characteristics of visual media as memory texts and objects, and (3) personalized visual media practices as acts of collective remembering. These areas represent meta-perspectives that lie across the study of single media technologies. In the wake of digitization and the convergence of media technologies, developing crossmedia and multimodal approaches to visual memory research remains a major challenge and future task.

Key words

Collective memory; visual communication; visual memory; visual technologies of remembering; vernacular memory; family communication

1. Introduction: Linking visual communication and collective memory research

In memory studies, the idea of a "collective visual memory" is often traced back to early 20th-century art historian Aby Warburg and his work "Mnemosyne" (Warburg, 2000). Warburg identified recurring visual and aesthetic patterns across epochs and cultures. In his theory, the repetitive usage of the same symbols and pictorial constellations across various paintings of different eras constitutes visuals' mnemonic value (Erl, 2017, p. 16-18; Olick & Robbins, 1998, p. 106). While these origins of visual memory research largely concern visual objects as products of high culture, memory and media scholars alike have increasingly voiced the need to account for popular and everyday culture in collective memory research (Popular Memory Group, 2007 [1982]; Jacke & Zierold, 2015, p. 85). In postmodern societies, people's lifeworlds are pervaded by artistic, standardized, commercial or personal images. Just think of the plethora of digital images we encounter during our daily screen time. In converging and mediatized environments, individuals have become "memory prosumers (productive consumers)" (Reifova et al. 2013, p. 207) who actively engage with images, also producing and curating their own visual contents as mnemonic objects. The multitude of mobile and networked media devices and apps such as smartphones and social media platforms have created wide-ranging potentials for individuals to "communicat[e] in and through pictures" in their daily lives (Schreiber, 2017, p. 37). That includes communicating about collective memories. This paper zooms in on this particular intersection of visual communication and collective remembering in the everyday, tracing the contours of an emerging field in memory and media studies.

Visual communication as a subfield of communication and media studies examines the creation, distribution, selection, presentation, reception, appropriation, and meaning of visual media in people's lifeworlds (ICA Visual Communication Division; DGPuK Section Visual Communication, 12 Aug 2020). In everyday life, the boundaries of these research areas conflate as people themselves become producers, distributors and curators of their own contents through personal uses of media technologies.

Besides clarifying the general meaning of visual communication in people's everyday lives, this paper discusses how theorizations of collective memory particularly contributed to the exploration of "the visual." The paper identifies three strands of research at the cross section of visual communication and memory research and discusses a selection of exemplary studies. These research areas concern (1) the reception of mass-mediated images of the past, (2) the

aesthetics and formal characteristics of visual media as memory texts and objects, and (3) personalized visual media practices as acts of collective remembering. All three strands represent meta-perspectives that lie across the study of single media technologies. Such meta-perspectives are deemed important given the convergence of media technologies in the wake of digitization and an evolving "new memory ecology" (Hoskins, 2011; 2018) marked by hyperconnectivity. In the following, all three of these research areas will be reviewed in order to map the field of visual communication and collective remembering in the everyday.

2. Conceptualizing visual communication and remembering in the everyday

While the history of the visual is almost as long as humanity itself (Fahmy et al. 2014, p. 7), visual communication studies is a relatively young subfield within communication research. It did not become institutionally established until the 1990s (Perlmutter, 2014, p. xi). Ever since, this "meta-discipline" has been preoccupied with the "creation, deployment, effects, and argumentation about visual images" (ibid.). Visual communication scholars consider images crucial in the construction of social reality and the understanding of the everyday as they record, fashion, and mediate knowledge, experiences, and events (Geise & Lobinger, 2012, p. 319; Raab, 2008). "Everything we do and have done [as human beings] has a visual component" (Perlmutter, 2014, p. xii). Images and visual media are therefore an integral part of people's lifeworlds and today's modern media environments that deserve as much scholarly attention as verbal and written texts (Geise & Lobinger, 2012, p. 319). "The visual can be understood as a specific mode of production, communication, function and effect" (Geise & Lobinger, 2012, p. 320, transl. cs) that requires distinct conceptual and methodological approaches (ibid.; van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2010; Smith et al., 2005).

Since the visual does usually not occur in isolation, the field of visual communication research is known for its transdisciplinarity and multimodal approaches. The visual in communications has been researched as material media objects and visual technologies such as still images, particularly photography, motion pictures, artistic images, and typography (Fahmy et al., 2014, p. 22-26). Since the advent of digitization, the convergence of media environments, and the pervasiveness of mediated images in the everyday, visual communication research started to widen its scope from images as mere representations and texts to questions of how people act with, through and on images. The latter goes beyond an analysis of production processes, aesthetic characteristics, or reception but explores what people actually do with images in

varying social contexts on a daily basis (Lobinger & Geise, 2012, p. 20; Jurgenson, 2019). In this work, "[e]veryday life presents itself as a reality interpreted by men [sic!] and subjectively meaningful to them as a coherent world," as originally set out by Berger and Luckmann (1967, p. 19). It is marked by "immediacy" (Krotz & Thomas, 2007, p. 34) and thus represents "the primary sphere" for human beings to experience social realities (Lingenberg, 2015, p. 110). With this in mind, this paper scrutinizes which role visuals and vision play in experiencing these social realities.

Analyzing the quotidian usage of images, Geise and Lobinger (2012, pp. 320-323) argue that visuals carry and thus externalize subjective meaning through their material and imaginary qualities. As material objects, visual media make subjective meanings potentially sharable with others. The manifestation of the acts of communicating such subjective meanings through visual media to others on a regular basis that happens irrespectively of the "here and now," is a process Berger and Luckmann (1967, pp. 34-37) call the "objectivation of social reality". On this note, Geise and Lobinger (2012, p. 322) argue that especially images' potentials of depicting segments of reality with great precision create an even stronger sense of immediacy and witnessing of events and phenomena, including those people have not experienced themselves. In a similar vein, Allan and Peters (2020) put forth that digital news imagery engages the "visual citizen" in everyday public life and politics. Visual media, however, are not only material objects that take the form of pictures, but they also take shape as mentally imagined images that indicate how objectified meanings are perceived as social reality (Geise & Lobinger, 2012, p. 323).

Visuals' qualities of temporal transcendence and immediacy in the everyday are key for exploring the intersections of visual communication and memory research. Memory and media scholars who have considerably contributed to this marginal transdisciplinary field with their theorizations are José van Dijck, Annette Kuhn, Alison Landsberg, Michael Pickering, and Emily Keightley. Van Dijck (2007, 2008) provided one of the early definitions of the everyday relationship of media technologies, including visual media, and collective memory in her concept of "mediated memories". She maintains that

"mediated memories are the activities and objects we produce and appropriate by means of media technologies, for creating and re-creating a sense of past, present, and future of ourselves in relation to others." (van Dijck 2007, p. 21)

In regard to the previous brief review of visual communication as a research field, it is noteworthy that van Dijck's (2007, 21) definition offers an understanding and integration of the visual as media technology, object, and activity that create and evoke senses of time on the one hand and help to navigate social relations in people's lifeworlds on the other hand. Annette Kuhn (2010) also suggested two dimensions of studying the visual in memory research that partially cover van Dijck's (2007) conceptualization. These two dimensions refer to the (1) material and the (2) performative qualities of the visual. The first dimension involves the visual as the representational mode and features of a material media object that conveys mnemonic meaning. The visual media object in this regard is understood as both a material mnemonic object and a memory text (Kuhn, 2010, p. 299) – collective memory is then studied as visual representation or narrative of events and phenomena in media. The central concern of this conceptual and analytical perspective is then to inquire what is actually depicted and how "the past" is represented along certain aesthetic or narrative conventions. The second dimension in Kuhn's (2010) work is a practice-oriented one. The subject of research from this perspective are memory acts as performances of memory with visual media (ibid., pp. 298-299). This second dimension of the visual has been the core of Kuhn's (2000, 2010) widely received concept of "memory work" which she defines as such:

„memory work is an active practice of remembering that takes an inquiring attitude towards the past and the activity of its (re)construction through memory. Memory work undercuts assumptions about the transparency or the authenticity of what is remembered, taking it not as 'truth' but as evidence of a particular sort: material for interpretation, to be interrogated, mined, for its meanings and its possibilities. Memory work is a conscious and purposeful staging of memory“ (Kuhn, 2010, p. 303).

This second perspective is concerned with what people actually do with visual media in order to remember. It therefore ties in with a more recent trend in practice-oriented approaches in visual communication research (Lobinger & Geise, 2012, p. 22; Lehmuskallio & Gómez Cruz, 2016; Schreiber, 2017; Burkey 2020).

A third major memory-concept that is situated at the intersection of visual communication and memory research is Marianne Hirsch's (2012) "postmemory." Akin to the previously discussed concepts of "mediated memories" and "memory work," it stresses the materiality of the visual object but also emphasizes the imaginative processes involved in the engagement with visual media, particularly photographs. „Postmemory is a powerful and very particular form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not

through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation." (Hirsch 2012, 22) With reference to Mitchell, Hirsch (2012, 22) understands memory as an "imagetext, a double-coded system of mental storage and retrieval" of images and narratives. According to this line of thought, memory always consists of visual and verbal dimensions embodied and mediated in pictures and narratives.

The appropriation of collective memories through media images and verbal narratives about times and events not experienced directly has similarly been addressed in Alison Landsberg's (2004) prominent work on "prosthetic memory." It suggests that mass cultural technologies such as cinema and film allow for the appropriation of "deeply felt memories of a past event through which he or she did not live" (ibid., 2). "[T]he experiential" nature of viewing movies is regarded as "an increasingly important mode" in acquiring collective memories other than one's own (Landsberg, 2004, p. 33). In both, Hirsch (2012) and Landsberg's (2004) memory concepts, the quality and material specificity of still images and motion pictures respectively facilitate the access and imagination about a time not lived.

While Hirsch (2012) and Landsberg (2004) concentrate on the visual as text and representation of collective memories, van Dijck (2007, p. 21) stresses the agency of human beings in utilizing the imaginative quality of visual media in "recreating a sense of the past". This aspect of imagining past times through images is also examined by inquiring how people read and make sense of, e.g., photographs and films in their interaction with and uses of visual media. This creative and imaginative momentum in collective remembering was conceptually developed further in Keightley and Pickering's (2012) work on "the mnemonic imagination." In reference to photography, Keightley and Pickering (2012, p. 112) argued that it is "mnemonic imagination" that allows "the integration of personal experience with social frameworks of remembering and cultural forms of expression." In other words, imagination allows us as viewers to relate our own (individual) experiences to what is depicted. The visual representation as such, however, underlies certain social conventions which create the connection between individual and collective in remembering (see also van Dijck, 2007; Kuhn, 2002).

The review of these major memory concepts that situated their theorizations at the cross section of visual communication and memory studies reflects three main strands for researching "the visual" in processes of collective remembering. The visual has been conceptualized first, as sensory mode, second, as representation or text, and third, as practice.

The following section presents each of these research perspectives and exemplary empirical studies in more detail.

3. Studying visual communication and collective remembering: Three strands of research

The previous section outlined how theoretical concepts of memory and media research approach visuality in relation to collective remembering in everyday contexts. This section elaborates on previously reviewed research angles in presenting empirical scholarship that is led by cognate conceptual perspectives. The summarizing review presents three major strands of research in studying visual communication and collective remembering.

1) The visual is considered as sensory mode or feature of sensual experiences and its cognitive processing. From a visual communications' point of view, the visual is then examined as a stimuli bringing forth particular media effects in the course and after media reception. This strand is particularly concerned with the relations of memory, mind, and imagination.

2) The second strand treats the visual as text, representation, or formal feature of material media objects that carry mnemonic meaning. The research subject is memory as produced and mediated by as well as represented in visual media.

3) The third strand investigates the visual as practice and asks how people act on and with images in order to remember.

These three main strands of researching visual communication and collective remembering correspond to Reinhardt and Jäckel's (2005) description of memory and media relations. Dimensions of memory are in this sense considered "in, through and with media" (ibid., p. 96). Similar to their classification, the three main research areas of visual communication and remembering in the everyday coincide with particular subfields of communication and media studies, namely (1) audience research, (2) media analysis, and (3) media practice research.

(1) How do people perceive public images about the past? Lessons from audience and reception research on mass-mediated images

The review of conceptual scholarship on collective memory has shown that one major analytical perspective treats the visual as input and sensory trigger thus evoking memories of images and events as shortterm or longterm media effects. At the micro-level, that includes the examination of how visuals affect individuals' perceptions of collective pasts. At a macro

level, it addresses the question of how visuals are appropriated in the larger context of public memory (Volkmer, 2006). This research perspective has predominantly been explored in mass communication research. From an everyday angle, we are particularly interested in findings from audience studies. In this view, mass media technologies such as press photography or film enabled an "unprecedented circulation of images and narratives about the past" (Landsberg, 2004, p. 2) that found their ways into people's homes in a large variety of formats. In a sense, "the human memory is constantly bombarded with images and information." (Teer-Tomaselli, 2006, p. 226) Such publicly circulating images have been described as "vehicles of memory" (Zelizer, 1998, p. 7). Media and memory scholars focusing on the visual took great interest in exploring the impact of widely distributed news photographs, television shows and (historical) movies. Impact, in this regard, often denotes longterm media effects measured by people's ability to recall and sense-making of past events.

For example, Cohen et al. (2018) explored the perception, recognition, and meaning-making of iconic news images in the context of domestic and international media events. While it is generally assumed that higher media attention and acclaim increases the recognition of past events (Corning & Schuman, 2015), Cohen and his colleagues (2018, p. 474) made contrary observations for the case of news photographs and related events. Images that had been considered iconic photographs were not necessarily recognized as such by the participants of their study. Nick Ut's Pulitzer Price winning image of Kim Phuc's escape from a napalm attack in South Vietnam, for instance, was among the five least recognized international photographs among their Israeli respondents (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 474). The result contradicts earlier studies in which the same image featured prominently in collective memories of the Vietnam War across different cultural groups (Teer-Tomaselli, 2006, p. 244). The lack of temporal and spatial proximity as well as personal relevance are likely to have factored into these diverging findings on the memorability of such media events and related images (ibid., p. 241). The research team concluded that iconic news images were hardly shared across age groups (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 472). The most recognized images depicted conflict, trauma, and triumph and thus were the ones provoking negative or positive emotions (ibid., p. 474). Generally, older, more educated, and more historically interested respondents scored higher in recognizing images whereas those who used social media as their main news source scored low (ibid.). Across cultural and generational groups, Teer-Tomaselli (2006, p. 233) similarly found that traumatic events were particularly remembered when related to elite persons such

as J. F. Kennedy (see also Zelizer, 1992) or Princess Diana. The affective dimension of visual reception therefore seems to be a decisive factor for the ability to recall, the shared imagination of the past, and the perpetuation of collective public memory across generations. In the Global Media Generations Project (Volkmer, 2006), other prominent images that were remembered internationally, were depictions of the Berlin Wall, the protester in Tiananmen Square known as "Tank Man", as well as Mandela's release from prison (Teer-Tomaselli, 2006, p. 244). Moreover, newsreel images were of particular significance for elder respondents (ibid., p. 243). In Cohen et al.'s study (2018, p. 466), the most recognized international news images by their Israeli informants were depictions of 9/11, the capture of Saddam Hussein, the Munich Olympic Massacre, and the Fall of the Berlin Wall (in that order).

Apart from news images, other audience studies in the memory field researched the reception of fictional formats (Hofmann et al., 2005; Reifova et al., 2013). In a study on a commemorative popular Czech TV show about state-socialist times (*Vypravej*), Reifova and colleagues (2013, p. 207) found that the audiovisual mix of fictional and non-fictional elements in the series produced two different reception effects among viewers: while the non-fictional documentary elements produced authenticity and credibility of the historical framework that viewers compared to their own autobiographic memories, the fictional part of the family story in the television series triggered personal identification with the show's protagonists (ibid.). Other studies particularly examined long-term media effects of fictional historic movies on historical consciousness and attitudes. German scholars Hofmann et al. (2005) for example investigated German highschool students' reception of the German war drama "Downfall" (*Der Untergang*, 2004). They found that the group of students who saw the film showed fewer negative emotions towards Hitler as the movie's protagonist and foregrounded his human characteristics more than those who had not watched the movie (ibid., p. 141). While the authors note that the motion picture film presents a realistic and humanizing depiction of Hitler as main character (ibid., p. 133), the study does not provide a detailed analysis of visual elements of the movie. It is important to note, however, that the research team argues that the movie possibly updated narratives from family conversations and brought them back to students' historical consciousness (ibid., p. 142). In this regard, the study supports earlier memory research by Welzer et al. (2002, p. 199), suggesting that mass-mediated representations of history such as films usually complement family conversations and histories about the same time period. Images therefore enable the visual imagining of family

members' narrated stories about the past. Overall, Welzer (1995, p. 8) argues that memory relies on images. Without illustrations, memories would remain abstract and fuzzy (ibid.). In line with this assumption and on the basis of empirical findings, Welzer et al. (2002, p. 199-200) maintain that the more detail and the more impressive particularly films were for respondents, the richer and more vivid were also the personal accounts of perpetuated family histories about the same time period.

In Welzer and colleagues' (2002) research on National Socialism in Germany, the use of such a visual repertoire was not confined to post-war generations, but also commonly occurred in narrative accounts of witnesses of Germany's Nazi past. This finding suggests that the imagination of collective pasts on the basis of visual media does not only supplement accounts of non-experienced events, but that is also integrated into own autobiographic life narratives. During this process, images are usually decontextualized from their original production contexts and conflated in people's imagination, perception, and articulation of the past. Welzer et al. (2002, p. 200) call this process "iconification of visual elements." Similar decontextualizations of images have occasionally been observed in respondents' accounts in the Global Media Generations project (Teer-Tomaselli, 2006, p. 244). In these cases, informants had a particular image in mind but did not associate it with the original historical event. The historical context can remain vague altogether (ibid.).

Besides these empirical studies, Gilles Deleuze (2005) devoted an entire philosophical work on the relation of images of the mind, memory, and cinematic images. Whereas Deleuze (2005) and Landsberg (2004) both refer to cinema, Garde-Hansen (2011, p. 63) adds that digitization and the use of online media intensified and multiplied experiential and thus visual encounters with the past. This development makes the "prosthetic" nature of memory potentially more complex since our brains are required to process ever more images in shorter time periods and irrespective of spatial distances in our everyday lives. The scholarship reviewed so far concentrated largely on the cognitive and affective processing of images about historical events and time periods, their meanings for perceptions, and the appropriation of collective pasts. The second research perspective presented in the next part concerns the relationship between visual aesthetics, materiality, as well as formal characteristics of visual media and remembering in the everyday.

(2) What makes images mnemonic? Aesthetic and formal features of visual media as representations and texts of collective memories

Humanities-oriented research on the visual and memory usually approaches visual media as texts (Kuhn, 2002a, p. 3) and representations of collective pasts. Yet, what are the cues and characteristics of visual media that are related to senses of the past? In fact, images, moving or still, do not necessarily need to depict historical events in order to create mnemonic value in the eye of their beholders. Empirical research, however, suggests that certain aesthetic and formal features and elements of visual media can facilitate and evoke connections to shared pasts. Reifova and colleagues (2013, p. 207), for example, found that visual elements of television series often serve as "retro-signifiers." Such visual elements signify the time in which the series was historically set. Besides depictions of actual historical events, these visual "retro-signifiers" were also found in depicted everyday objects such as clothes. Visual "retro-signifiers," in this sense, allow for a temporal placement of the represented objects and events during the viewing experience (ibid., pp. 206-208).

Apart from the media analysis of specific television series or movies (e.g. Lunt, 2017; Landsberg, 2004), photography and family photography in particular has gained most scholarly attention in this second strand of research. Photographs are understood as record and evidence for the existence of the family (Kuhn 2002b, p. 49). They are visual forms of self-documentation and self-objectivation of family life (Keppler, 1994, pp. 187-188). Often, family photographs present snapshots of family life or significant events such as family vacations or festivities (ibid., p. 186; Rose, 2010, p. 11; Pickering & Keightley, 2015, p. 2; Lehmuskallio & Gómez Cruz 2016, p. 1). They are selected documents of self-experienced memory and "postmemory" (Hirsch, 2012, pp. 21-22). Yet, in the context of memory research, photographs as the object of visual analysis are not treated as one-to-one visualization of a lived reality, but as a construction (Garde-Hansen, 2011, p. 34) prone to manipulation (van Dijck, 2008, p. 66). In this respect, memory scholars usually draw on Barthes' (1981) and Sontag's (1973) theorizations on photography to point out its "ghostly quality" and "fleeting nature" (Kuhn & McAllister 2006, p. 1; also Hirsch 2012, p. 19; van Dijck 2007, pp. 99-103; Lagerkvist, 2018). There, the volatility of life experiences is opposed to the seeming endurance of the materialized visual object (Hirsch, 2012, p. 23). Similar to Aby Warburg's (2000) work "Mnemosyne" that is often connected with the idea of "visual memory," photographs as mnemonic objects and representations of past moments are seen as being socially and

culturally embedded thus adhering to certain social, technological, and aesthetic conventions (van Dijck, 2007, p. 103). In reference to family photography, for example, Kuhn (2002b, p. 48-49) notes that pictures of newborns, although individually taken and personally different, are similar in their format, aesthetics, and display. Social categories of gender, race, class, and nation and their ideological attributions become visually materialized in such family pictures, too (Kuhn, 2002b, p. 1, p. 60; Rose, 2010, p. 11).

Another strand of research within humanities-based media and memory research explores the visual in the context of "retro-cultures" (Parikka 2012) and nostalgia (Niemeyer 2014). In Niemeyer's (2014) edited volume, visuals' mnemonic value is mainly analyzed in terms of the aesthetics or the materiality of analogue media. Schrey (2014, p. 28), for instance, sees the popularity of films such as *The Artist* (2011) or *Hugo* (2011), their use of aesthetics of early cinema and celluloid filmstrip as indicative of these retro-trends in the wake of digitization. Besides classic flashback episodes (Niemeyer & Wentz, 2014, p. 135), contemporary television series such as *Californication* (2007-2012) use digital means to imitate the flaws of analogue technologies as aesthetic elements, including scratches, lense flares, black intervals, or smaller frames as typical for 8mm home video (ibid., pp. 33-34). These aesthetic imperfections add an temporal imprint to the visual representation that is usually not inherent in the ever reproducible digital images (ibid., p. 35).

The return to analogue aesthetics has also been observed in contemporary digital family photographs and videos (Sapio, 2014, p. 40; Bartholeyns, 2014). Having scrutinized a range of photo apps, Bartholeyns (2014, p. 65) concludes that "the goal of imposing a backward-looking aesthetic is to provide a visual sensation of the atmosphere attached to the photographed object or moment." Such technologically afforded abilities of visual manipulation, remediation, decontextualization, and remixing of visual materials that evoke senses of the past have increasingly become a focus of scholarly attention (Garde-Hansen, 2011; Huttunen, 2016). For example, Boudana et al. (2017) examined the web circulation, decontextualization, and alteration of iconic press photographs as digital memes, arguing that their "historic authority" and significance can be undermined. In an analysis of the USC Shoa Foundation's Visual History Archive, Frosh (2018) further investigated how computer interface aesthetics encourage particular moral user responses. In this study, he (2018, p. 360) recognized an epistemological shift away from what images mean to the question of "how will

this text or image respond?" In response, Frosh (2018, p. 365) regarded the browser and video interfaces of the Visual History Archive as "sensorimotor invitations into the page design."

For now, it remains a future task to further explore the ways, aesthetics and design facilitate everyday engagements with the past. Such a perspective also includes questions of how particular user experiences are created by means of digital technologies and thus interlink issues of reception research discussed previously and of practice research outlined below.

(3) What do people do with images? Visual media practices as acts of collective remembering

The previous two parts discussed research on visual media as representations of particular pasts as well as their aesthetics, their materiality and performativity as memory texts and objects. In this last section, we turn the focus on practices or acts of remembering with, through and on visual media in the everyday. Prior scholarship in this area has largely zoomed in on personal or amateur uses of visual media such as photography and home video. In that regard, Pickering and Keightley (2013, p. 98) remark that

"[d]espite this longevity, turning scholarly attention to these personalised uses of visual technologies of remembering has been slow and gradual, not least because it has had to counter the blanket assumption that home-made photos and recordings are inherently trivial in social, cultural and political terms when compared with mainstream visual media."

Personal memory, however, is also charged with political, historical, and global significance, e.g., in personal documentaries that recollect times in exile (Garde-Hansen, 2011, p. 37). Personal uses of visual media are often linked to concepts of "vernacular memory" (Bodnar, 1992) or "personal cultural memory" (van Dijck, 2007, p. 6). In contrast to reception studies, the visual here is not only regarded as input or stimulus of mnemonic acts, but also as output of people's own media practices of creating and employing images.

The here discussed practice-based approaches to visual memory in everyday contexts can be situated in the field of media appropriation. On these terms, the visual is understood as visual media plus their appropriation and uses so to make sense of the self in relation to others in time and space (van Dijck, 2007; Keightley & Pickering, 2014). The focus here is on the various communicative practices done with visual media rather than the media content or text as such. Photography again features prominently within this third research area. In a pilot study on the technologies of remembering, Pickering and Keightley (2015, p. 1) found that analogue and digital forms of photographs and recorded music were the most relevant media for

remembering in peoples' everyday lives. People hence constructed their life narratives in and with photography (Pickering & Keightley, 2013, p. 105). In that regard, Keightley and Pickering (2014) discern four basic types of everyday photographic uses in relation to remembrance: photo-taking, photo-viewing, photo-storing, and photo-sharing. Other scholars such as Keppler (1994; 2001), Langford (2008), and Hirsch (2012) also scrutinized communicative practices in particular social contexts that produce narratives surrounding photographs, e.g., in family conversations and during reunions.

Home-mode videos are another research subject in family communication and amateur-produced visual media in the context of memory research. The notion of "home-mode" goes back to Richard Chalfen (1987) who researched family photography and filmmaking in middle-class US families in the 1960s and 1970s. He found that family videos were shot mostly on the occasion of familial celebrations such as rites of passage or special events in order to act as a future record for their children (ibid., pp. 137-139). The uses of video technologies in the family were therefore highly selective. Usually, families engaged in viewing these videos on subsequent familial occasions. In contrast to photographs, the motion pictures of home video record larger detail and sequences of an event. Consequently, they are often taken to be "fuller" mnemonic accounts (Pickering & Keightley 2013, p. 99). Pickering and Keightley (2013, p. 101) therefore regard video-taping "an integral part of the processes of shared remembering and reflecting on the passing of time," that is, "of re-experiencing feelings and emotions," providing self-assurance and continuity. In addition, van Dijck (2007, p. 147) emphasizes the prospective aspects of shooting home videos as they depict what and how family members want to be remembered in the future according to social role models and norms.

"Cinematic constructions of family-life-in-review are the result of concerted efforts to save and shape our private pasts in a way that befits our publicly formatted present and that steers our projected futures." (van Dijck, 2007, p. 147)

In that sense, home video and photographs are always also subject to social and cultural conventions reproduced in public representations of family life. However, moving images in the context of visual communication and memory in social groups are still less well researched than photography. The "home movies project" (e.g. Aasman et al. 2018) is an example for current and on-going research in the field of home movies and memories.

With the Internet and web 2.0 entering family households, research interests in examining visual practices of collective remembering have extended beyond the domestic sphere of a place-bound home. Thus, Holloway and Green (2017) empirically investigated memory practices related to family photographs and albums on Facebook. The authors indicated that mnemonic acts of taking, posting, curating, and sharing family photographs on social networking sites (SNS) usually coincide with particular life stages such as new parenthood (ibid., p. 359). A difference in comparison to analogue photography was the "variety of screens" through which family pictures were made available and could be engaged, depending on mobility, devices, and contexts of use (ibid., p. 361). They (2017, pp. 361-362) found that viewing and sharing of family photographs was often a daily routine to connect emotionally with absent family members while posting was usually confined to special familial events that were meaningful to the familial community.

In prior research on photography and home video, scholars also pointed to the significance of positive biographic events and new life stages through, e.g., marriage or parenthood as drivers for visual practices of memory work (Garde-Hansen 2009; van Dijck 2007; Pickering & Keightley 2013). The experience of loss in life, however, also caught scholars' attention in researching the relation of images and mourning or commemoration practices in the everyday (Lagerkvist, 2018; Arnold et al., 2018). In their ethnography of a mourning Facebook page, Myles and Millerand's (2016, p. 239) found that visual online practices also drew from pre-existing norms and conventions of mourning such as keeping personal traces of the deceased in the form of photographs. In an Instagram study on mourning, Thimm and Nehls (2017, 346) argued that posting images of funerals helped young German mourners to cope with their grief beyond intimate family circles and to break the social taboo of communicating about death in engaging with more anonymous "mini-publics" via hashtags. Their study confirms earlier research on funeral selfies as ways of signaling presence and coping with emotionally sensitive situations in life (Meese et al., 2015, p. 1828). Such studies do not only scrutinize new socio-technological affordances of visual media but also re-assess socio-cultural conventions and ideological underpinnings of these visual memory practices.

4. Conclusion and outlook

The paper initially introduced visual communication as a relatively young subfield of communication and media research and discussed its relevance for understanding the social

realities of the everyday. In its overview, the paper has shown that the reception, appropriation, creation, and curation of images of and about the past is an integral part of making sense of oneself in relation to others in various contemporary social contexts. These multiple dimensions are reflected in previous conceptualizations of memory and media as well as in the three identified strands of research at the cross section of visual communication and memory studies.

The latest trends in our media environments of digitization and datafication have further complicated the task of providing a systematic overview of the transdisciplinary field of visual communication and memory research. More than a decade ago, van Dijck (2007, p. 51) envisioned "mediated memories" to become a "multimodal reservoir" in which visual memory objects cannot be confined to the "sensory mode inscribed in their enabling media." She assumed that even the sensory ways through which we construct memories may change (ibid.). As already applied in visual communication research generally, visual memory studies need to endeavor multimodal approaches to grasp the complexities of visual communication and collective remembering. Today, memory and media scholars have further theoretically described these complexities. Hence, Hoskins (2018, pp. 8-9) asserts that

"[t]he new memory ecology is an environment in which hyperconnectivity makes it difficult to reduce media and memory to a single or separate medium or individual, respectively. Instead the mediation of memory is seen as a matter of ongoing set of dynamics: remediation, translation, connectivity, temporality, reflexivity, across and between medias, and their multiple modalities and constant movements."

Yet, for the time being, we need to acknowledge that the majority of research on visual memory or visual remembering has largely been concentrating on particular visual technologies because applying multimodal approaches is also a methodological challenge.

While professional and amateur photography, its appropriation, and uses have been extensively studied within this transdisciplinary research field, everyday appropriations of moving images or the wide use of creative editing software and apps on mobile devices and SNS still requires greater scholarly attention. For now, it also still remains an open task to explore further how aesthetics and design facilitate everyday engagements with the past (e.g. Frosh, 2018). Such a perspective also includes questions of how particular user experiences are created by means of digital visual technologies and thus interlinks issues of reception research and of practice research. Future research in this sense needs to invest in developing crossmedia perspectives on visual memory that explore how multiple (visual) media practices

interact. While recent studies on visual practices of remembering are often tempted to study new technological features and affordances, it further remains a continuous task for scholars of visual communication and collective remembering to keep track of continuities in the appropriation and use of technologies of memory (e.g. Keightley & Pickering, 2014).

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