

Time maps Memory, Archives, Future

One thing is sure: we live in the age of archives, although this definition is up for interpretation. Archives do influence every aspect of our daily life, often without us being aware of it. First of all we need to take into consideration what we define as the “internet effect”: since its creation, the web has been radically changing the idea of what an archive is, starting with the quantity of data that it can store. Since the Nineties we have been dealing with the meaning of having access to such a never-before seen amount of information, as well as with the constant blending of real and virtual, of what is reality and what is manipulation. Everything is there, available to anyone, it seems, but with limitations due to security, privacy, available technology. We talk about *Big Data*, sure, but available to whom? For what purposes?

We cannot talk about the “internet effect” without taking the concept of globalization into account: the web certainly contributed to its causes, as well as to its effects, like the alteration in sense and interpretation of history, past, identity, community and individualism.

For us, focusing our quest on the interpretation of archives naturally means asking questions about imaging, about photography. Again: are these pure documents? Recordings? Pieces of data? Interpretations? Expressions? Imaginations? Transfigurations? Does all this belong to the past, the present or the future? Nowadays, when we file photography into an archive, we often deal with digital data, something immaterial, no film rolls or prints are involved. No more photographic albums to archive our memories: just a folder on our desktop, ready to be shared with tens of thousands of people, friends and strangers alike. Going through archives, a photographer finds his inspiration through images: these images from the past change, once pulled out of an archive, and become part of a more or less plausible story, of a more or less applicable utopia. Stating that the archive is a deposit for individual and collective past is just a self-evident starting point. On one hand, the way we build, organize and manage archives tells us a lot about how memory works and about our vision of our past. On the other hand, by researching archives we are able to discover and identify lost moments and events that have been forgotten, removed or censored, thus showing new pathways of interpretation that might change our ideas about our history, our present, and our past. The title “**Time maps**” points directly at this power that images have to draw the topographic chart of our memory, as well as the representing a proposal for the future. This edition of *European Photography* wants to work with these ideas and apply them to factual current issues: forgotten roads, menacing situations, the search for alternatives. We envision the concept of archive not in terms of a space behind closed doors, of a conservative place: on the contrary. This is about a spread-out place where stories and images can be found and used to help us understand our present and imagine our future. This is no retention exercise; this is the activation of our present through our memory.

Elio Grazioli, Walter Guadagnini, Diane Dufour