

NECS 2022 Conference
Epistemic Media: Atlas, Archive, Network

Bucharest, National University of Theatre and Film
22-26 June, 2022

Keynote speakers:

Georges Didi-Huberman (École des hautes études en sciences sociales, Paris)
Sybille Krämer (Freie Universität, Berlin)
Lev Manovich (City University, New York)

Artists talk:

Radu Jude & Susana de Sousa Dias

Graduate Workshop keynote speakers:

Samaneh Moafi & Stefanos Levidis (Forensic Architecture)

The 2022 NECS Conference invites scholars to reflect on audiovisual media's capacity to organize, create and challenge human knowledge. The conference aims to scrutinize the traditional historiographies surrounding audiovisual media and question the relationship between audiovisual media's operative and spectacular qualities, pondering the wider implications of the juncture between audiovisual culture and epistemic practices.

By the 1950s, cinema as spectacle had become the dominant form of filmic discourse, undercutting the potential that the medium afforded the sciences, as imagined by pioneers such as Muybridge, Marey or Demenÿ. However, cinema never severed its epistemic ties completely, since film has always functioned as a vehicle of knowledge; whether as an expression of popular science, as a means of articulating historical narratives and confronting national traumas, or as a resource for sociological, psychological, or anthropological study. By the same token, public television has helped shape national identities and facilitate (or perhaps hinder) intercultural exchange. Video games - and the ensuing process of gamification - have become increasingly important forms of knowledge production and circulation. In light of such issues, this conference aims to assess the multifarious epistemic potentialities of film and audiovisual media in contemporary culture.

One of these potentialities was prophetically pronounced by Bolesław Matuszewski in 1898 when he described illustrated celluloid documents as “a new source of history”. For more than a century thereafter, audiovisual recordings have not only been presented as evidence, but also re-edited, digitally processed and self-reflectively altered to expose implicit meanings. However, the digital age has cast serious doubts over the “indexicality” of audiovisual evidence, which had initially been considered comparatively objective and tamperproof. In view of such concerns, the 2022 NECS Conference seeks to question how the indexical function of audiovisual material has been transformed in the era of deepfakes, vocal modulation and real time post-production. In doing so, the conference seeks to foreground emerging research initiatives that counter the loss of indexical faith in audiovisual media by contemplating novel techniques of working with visible evidence.

Research focusing on scientific audiovisual works has highlighted the vast array of disciplinary contexts in which the medium serves as a facilitator of public knowledge. Moreover, film and media has also been utilized within scientific research proper, as an operative tool for capturing and processing data, as well as serving as an instrument of observation and intellection. Indeed, ever since Plato’s diagrams, visual representations have been a fundamental tool within the sciences, employed as a means of coming to terms with abstract concepts and complex ideas. To this day, the contemporary sciences confront us with an abundance of audiovisual instruments designed to facilitate the intuitive grasping of abstractions, to visualize what eludes the naked eye, as well as to articulate predictions, detect patterns and calculate regularities. Such audiovisual application challenges contemporary media scholars to expand our understanding of the epistemology of media production and consumption by inquiring into the multifaceted mediality of our epistemic practices.

Early synoptic installations like the atlas and cinematic procedures such as montage can be seen as precursors to the myriad of contemporary audiovisual techniques and technologies, all of which, with their novel functions and operations, provide new ways of visually processing, gaining and structuring knowledge. At the same time, they afford innovative modes of working with archives, assembling information and sharing insights. By moving beyond an aesthetic approach to audiovisual representations and instead positioning them as the practice of reframing, unframing, reconfiguring, reenacting, and re-organizing knowledge, the 2022 NECS Conference seeks to examine techniques and methodologies like operative images, immersive technologies, automated images, functional images, image processing, cultural analytics, machine learning, artificial neural networks (AI), digital modeling, as well as analogous innovations within sound and sound design. The conference equally aims to question how these technologies affect our present day modes of audiovisual media production, distribution and consumption by looking, for instance, at how they reshape the screen industries or the festival circuits.

Many of these media practices have long moved out of scientific laboratories and increasingly pervade our everyday life in countless ways, while our dependence on them has been brought into sharp relief by the recent pandemic. When shopping, navigating the city, using household appliances or even looking up words in a dictionary, one feeds a massive apparatus of data mining and processing. Our ubiquitous use of media also implies an ongoing anonymous work of data collecting and analysis, which is profoundly linked to the economic interests of corporations (see discussions on immaterial labour) and to the political interests of the powers that be. As such, the NECS 2022 Conference aims to analyze the episteme that dawn within these contemporary transformations: a configuration of media, politics and economics, which one might describe as a new *pouvoir-savoir*.

Submissions may include, but are not limited to, the following topics/research fields:

- **historical accounts:**

- early screen media practitioners and science
- film, history, new film history, cinema history
- histories of research film
- audiovisual media and scientific progress in State Socialism
- media histories

- **morphologies of epistemic media practices:**

- scientific audiovisual media, research film, educational film as useful film
- elaborative practices of existing footage: found footage, remix practices etc.
- film genres and knowledge: documentary film, essay cinema, science-fiction, horror or detection

- **audiovisual media, spectacle and the epistemic:**

- audiovisual media and pop-science
- audiovisual media as vehicles for historical narratives
- audiovisual narrative fictions and the scientific realm
- film as a resource for socio-historical studies
- video games and processes of cognition
- screen industries & film festivals, epistemic perspectives

- **epistemology of media:**

- montage and seriality
- mental operations as media operations
- audiovisual media and abstraction
- synoptic media
- collaborative media and the intersubjective production of knowledge

- **methods of knowledge production in media studies:**

- participatory filmmaking and film pedagogy
- media ecologies
- media archaeologies

- lab research as situated media studies
- cultural analytics
- digital humanities and media studies
- forensic architecture
- **visual media as operative tools for science:**
- filmic microanalysis of body motion
- immersive psychotherapies
- communicating science audiovisually
- digital modeling
- organizing knowledge audiovisually
- video analysis in interaction studies
- ethnographic film, visual anthropology
- working with archives, open/interoperable/live archives
- **mediated forms of digital knowledge:**
- participatory culture and its impact on media production/circulation
- datafication, media and everyday life
- machine learning and working with artificial neural networks
- postprint science
- citizen science and the media
- digital media activism and research; tactical media
- database aesthetics; media appropriations of scientific imagery

Scholars from all areas of cinema and media studies, whether previously affiliated with NECS or new to the network, are invited to submit proposals, but NECS membership is a requirement.

FORMATS

When preparing submission for NECS 2022 please keep in mind the following restrictions. Individuals may submit only one proposal, either as an individual presenter or as part of a pre-constituted panel or workshop. Conference participants may only serve in a **MAXIMUM** of two capacities. These might be:

- deliver a paper and serve as a chair of either a panel or a workshop
- deliver a paper and participate in a workshop
- deliver a paper and serve as a respondent on another panel
- chair a workshop and serve as a respondent on a panel
- chair a panel and participate in a workshop

Individual papers

Individual presentations last a maximum of 20 minutes. Individuals wishing to submit a proposal are required to provide their name, email address, the title of the paper, an abstract (max. 300 words), key biographical references (max. 200 words), and a short bio of the speaker (max. 150 words).

Pre-constituted panels

We support the submission of proposals for pre-constituted panels containing 3 or 4 papers (3 papers only if there is a respondent) in order to strengthen the thematic coherence of panels. Furthermore, several thematically related panels may form larger clusters. We strongly encourage members of the NECS workgroups to put together pre-constituted panels, but we also welcome submissions from academic research project teams, museums, archives, and other institutions. We highly recommend no more than two speakers from the same institution with a maximum of 20 minutes speaking time per paper. Panel organizers are asked to submit panel proposals that include a panel title, a short description of the panel (max. 300 words) and information on all of the individual papers of the panel, as described above.

Workshops

Events such as workshops, roundtables or seminars – both pre-conference and conference – concentrating on more practical aspects within the field, e.g. teaching, research methods, publishing, or networking with the media industry are also welcome. Speaking time should be limited to 10 minutes per participant. Organizers are asked to submit workshop proposals that include a title and a short description (max. 300 words) with a list of participants.

Workgroups

The NECS workgroups will have the opportunity to meet during the conference. Please notify the conference organizers if you wish to hold a workgroup meeting: necs2022bucharest@unatc.ro.

Please submit all proposals before the 31st of January 2022 using the submission form available at: <https://necs.org/conference/proposal-submission-form/>.

The submission form is only open to registered NECS members who have paid the membership fee. For instructions on how to become a member of NECS and how to pay the membership fee please consult our website: <http://necs.org/faq>.

Travel information

Participants are required to cover their own travel and accommodation expenses. A list of local hotels as well as information regarding additional events will be posted on the NECS conference website in Spring 2022.

A wide range of possible COVID-safe scenarios and social distancing solutions are under consideration. While there is still significant uncertainty regarding the safe organisation of a large-scale academic event, the local team is optimistically and mindfully working to set up the best and safest possible conference.

Travelling regulations are subjected to the applicable law. We encourage members to check the updated information available here before travelling:

https://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/travel/travel-and-covid/romania/index_en.htm;

<https://www.mae.ro/en/node/2084>.

Please email all inquiries that cannot be answered by the FAQ to: necs2022bucharest@unatc.ro.

ACCOMPANYING EVENTS

The 19th NECS Graduate Workshop

The NECS Graduate Workshop has been designed to give early-career researchers a platform for networking with established European film and media scholars. The 19th NECS Graduate Workshop in Bucharest (22 June 2022) is dedicated to the topic of “Private and Public Mediated Knowledge”.

The online CfP for this event will follow shortly.

Please send your submission by January 31 2022 with an abstract (max. 200 words) and a short bio (max. 150 words) to: graduates@necs.org.

ORGANIZERS

NECS Conference Committee: Luca Barra, Alessia Cervini, Michele Cometa, Grzegorz Fortuna, Daniel Kulle, Marta Maciejewska, Raphaëlle Moine, Michał Pabiś-Orzeszyna, Stefania Rimini, Antonio Somaini, Salvatore Tedesco, Jan Teurlings.

NECS Conference Local Organizing Team: Christian Ferencz-Flatz, Andreea Mihalcea, Andrei Rus, Gabriela Suci, Irina Trocan, Andrea Virginás.