

Community-Based Photographic Archives and “Potential” Histories of the Cold War in Eastern Europe



Fotografski arhivi
utemeljeni u zajednici i
„potencijalne“
povijesti hladnog rata u
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SAŽETAK

U članku se predlaže da se na digitalne fotografske arhive koji su se nedavno pojavili u Istočnoj Europi gleda kao na oblik digitalnoga zajedničkog dobra. Najveći dio fotografija u tim arhivima su vernakularne, obiteljske ili amaterske fotografije, odnosno žanrovi koji se uporno opiru uvrštavanju u povijesti fotografije. Digitalni arhivi o kojima je ovdje riječ, Fortepan iz Mađarske i Karta/CAS iz Poljske, ignoriraju uvrježene podjele između fotografskih žanrova, čime omogućavaju ponovnu konfiguraciju hijerarhija i vrijednosti koje perpetuiraju drugi arhivi i muzejske zbirke. Ono što je još važnije jest da svojom pristupačnošću i oslanjanjem na doprinose svojih korisnika digitalni arhivi stvaraju novu publiku. Cilj ovog članka je istražiti mogućnosti tih arhiva u stvaranju novih fotografskih povijesti hladnoga rata. Odabranim fotografijama kolektivnih manifestacija i uličnih prosvjeda u članku će se prikazati preslagivanje privatnoga i javnoga u tim arhivima.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI

digitalni arhivi, arhivi utemeljeni u zajednici, digitalna javna dobra, vernakularna fotografija, obiteljska fotografija, hladni rat, svakodnevnica, revolucija, prvomajska parada

ABSTRACT

The article proposes to look at the recently emerged online photographic archives in Eastern Europe as a form of digital commons. The bulk of the collected photographs in these archives are vernacular, family or amateur photographs, the sort which obstinately resists being included in the histories of photography. The online archives under scrutiny here, Fortepan in Hungary and Karta/CAS in Poland, disregard the established divisions between the photographic genres, allowing the reconfiguring of the hierarchies and values perpetuated by other archives and museum collections. Most significantly, by being accessible and relying on the contributions of its users, the online archives also forge a new public. The aim of this article is to investigate the affordances of these archives in constructing new photographic histories of the Cold War. Looking at selected photographs showing collective manifestations and street protests, the article will demonstrate the realignment of the private and the public in these archives.

KEYWORDS

digital archives, community-based archives, digital commons, vernacular photography, family photography, Cold War, everyday life, revolution, May Day Parade.

Katarzyna
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The conference from which this article originates called for “bringing down the archive fever”.¹ Since Jacques Derrida published his widely discussed thesis on the fever of archiving,² the understanding of what archives are and of the ways they operate seems to have shifted significantly. This shift aligns itself with the advent of the digital commons, which are based on a free exchange of digital information and on collectively creating and altering digital content.³

For Derrida, “the archive fever” was just one possible and incomplete translation of the French *mal d’archive*. It meant a form of passion that affected those who compulsively archive the traces of their lives because they are consumed by the ever-present yearning to return to the past.⁴ As such, this passion is not necessarily a negative thing and perhaps there is no need to ever bring it down. Yet, there is another meaning of the *mal d’archive*, which appears, for Derrida, in the constitutive moment of storing and safeguarding documents according to a set of rules. This unavoidably leads to the creation of hierarchies and unequal power relations.⁵ The sentries of the archive yield control over not only the archived documents but also over those about whom the documents are and who might want to but are not fully allowed to access them. It is there that Derrida discerned the “violence” of the archive.⁶ Since the publication of his *Archive Fever*, many scholars tackled this issue and proposed various ways of reading the archive against the grain or reversing its “order of things”.⁷ However, in the age of participatory media,⁸ a radical change seems to occur within the archiving practices themselves. This participatory model entails that those who archive and those who use the archives are no longer distinguishable from each other. As Jussi Parikka and others argued, digital archives became seemingly borderless and fluid, not limited to any physical space and not restricted in use.⁹ Digital and participatory archives thus undermine the elementary tenets of archival theory, which hold that archived documents are stored and kept away for a controlled and regulated retrieval as historical evidence. This does not imply that the power structures associated with the institution of the archive are entirely removed or that new “troubles”—to use a Derridean term again—have not emerged. Yet the changes the online cultures introduce in the archival practices are significant and still largely unexplored.

Writing on these bottom-up and dispersed archival formats, Ariella Azoulay recently argued that, rather than being brought down, the archive fever should be extended.¹⁰ She proposed to allow the fever to spread among those who place a claim on the archives and wish to be involved. Those new users demand access to the archives for anybody who feels a need to explore them. Their claim is thus placed in the name of those burned by the fever of knowing. Azoulay contended that one should investigate the archives from the position of their users. The approach from below allows moving beyond the top-down conceptualizations of the archive proposed by, for example, John Tagg and Allan Sekula.¹¹ Azoulay stated that “[new archival research] is motivated by the understanding that that which has been

¹ The international conference *Bringing Down the “Archive Fever” — Opening and Collaborating on Photography Archives and Collections* took place in Zagreb from October 20 to 22, 2021.

² Derrida, *The archive fever*.

³ Stallabrass, “The digital commons”; Fuster Morell, “Digital commons”.

⁴ Derrida, *The archive fever*, 57.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 12, 53.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁷ Moser, *Developing historical negatives*; Stoler, *Along the archival grain*; Azoulay, “Archive”; Azoulay, *Potential history*.

⁸ Jenkins, *Confronting the challenges of participatory culture*. See also Barney et al., *The participatory condition in the digital age*.

⁹ Parikka, *What is media archeology*, 52–58; Beer, *Popular culture and new media*, 40–62.

¹⁰ Azoulay, “Archive”.

¹¹ Tagg, *The Burden of representation*; Sekula, “The Body and the Archive”.

¹² Azoulay, “Archive”.

¹³ Derrida, “Archive fever: a Freudian impression”, 57.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Sarkisova and Apor, *Past for the eyes: East European representations of communism in cinema and museums after 1989*, vii.

¹⁶ Snyder et al., “Politics of history in Eastern Europe”.

¹⁷ Sekula, “Dismantling modernism, reinventing documentary (notes on the politics of representation)”, 863.

¹⁸ Virágvölgyi, *Every past is my past*.

¹⁹ Török, András (local historian and archivist at Fortepan). Interview with Katarzyna Ruchel-Stockmans, Budapest, February 4, 2020.

institutionalized as the order of things is not merely upsetting but reversible”.¹²

Writing in the mid-1990s, and despite his interest in new media formats such as email, Derrida might not have been able to predict these changes. However, he already pointed to another ambiguity of the archive, its other “trouble”. In a passage which is itself opaque, he named the “trouble of [...] half-private, half-public conjurations, always at the unstable limit between public and private, between the family, the society, and the State, between the family and the intimacy even more private than the family, between oneself and oneself”.¹³ It is this amalgamation of the private with the public sphere that also appears crucial for the archival commons of the digital age.

The digital photographic archives established in recent years in Eastern Europe are particularly pertinent here as they allow us to reassess those global changes in the context of the continually unsettled (photographic) histories of the Cold War in this region. In an analysis of two grassroots and community-based archives in Eastern Europe, Fortepan in Hungary and Karta/CAS in Poland, I examine the affordances of these emergent archival practices for photographic knowledge production. In this investigation, I will ask what knowledge of photography is made possible through these archives and, following Derrida’s intuitions, what knowledge is being “inhibited”.¹⁴ Given the strong presence of the vernacular or private photographs in these collections, it is pertinent to see what happens when they are transferred into the common archives. I will first consider the historical contingencies of the photographic archives in Eastern Europe to subsequently address several theoretical questions that have arisen around archiving practices, especially pertaining to the role of amateur and vernacular photography in the digital age. This will allow me to approach the issue of the private and public character of the online archives on the threshold between the domestic and the public, as demonstrated in a series of photographs of public manifestations, protests, and revolutions.

EASTERN EUROPEAN HISTORIES AND ARCHIVE DISCONTENTS

It has been noted that the histories of the socialist period in Eastern Europe are incessantly being rewritten as archives are lost, found, declassified, or discredited.¹⁵ The intensified debates and struggles around the communist period, often steered by a politics of history,¹⁶ render the past unstable and prone to readaptations. To paraphrase Allan Sekula’s reflection on the photographic truth, one can say that, in these archives, the past itself is up for grabs.¹⁷ If this is valid for all kinds of archives, the photographic archives are a special case and a particular challenge. Compared to other items stored in archives, photographs are more contingent and, at the same time, less delineated as an object and as a document.

Photographic collections are held in art museums, historical archives, libraries, cultural institutions, and, relatively recently, in museums dedicated to photography as such. The concept of photographic archives is still a vast and ill-defined category. The online archives entered this already diverse archival landscape with a new set of rules and practices, offering new potentialities and, unavoidably, demonstrating their specific limitations. These archives are very diverse, which also means that they follow the principles of digital commons to varying degrees. Zooming in on two archives with different origins and histories, I will attempt to uncover their common traits and differences with respect to contents, accessibility and user involvement.

RECLAIMING THE PAST: FORTEPAN

“Every past is my past” was the motto of the 2019 exhibition of Fortepan photography at the Hungarian National Gallery in Budapest.¹⁸ It was the first such large presentation of the Fortepan archive in an art institution. The motto conveys the idea of an archive which is created by everybody and for everybody. At the same time, it hints at the promise and possibility of reclaiming the past for each of its users.

Fortepan was established in 2010 by Ákos Szepessy and Miklós Tamási as an online database of historical, pre-1990 photographs. At its commencement, it contained 5000 photos. At the time of this writing, its collections exceed 150,000 items. Based on a small group of volunteers, Fortepan digitizes photographs that are either donated, found, or salvaged from debris. All its collections are accessible under Creative Commons 3.0, which means that they are viewable and searchable online; they can be used and reused, as well as re-published, provided that the credit is given to Fortepan. Free access is also an absolute requirement for potential donations to be accepted.¹⁹

This accessibility of the archive is also reflected in the way it is organized. The photographs are arranged on a timeline which can be navigated using a slider. Additionally, all photographs are searchable by names, keywords, or tags. Any search results are also visualized on a similar timeline slider, making it an easy tool for browsing chronologically through the collections. Every photograph is captioned by year and donor and has a unique identification number. The year and the donor’s name can be clicked on to visualize either all photographs of a particular year or all photographs donated by a particular person. Registered users have an option of adding tags, although a large part of the archived photographs still has no tags attached. The existing tags vary from “bathing suit” to “revolution”, echoing the interests and knowledge of the archive’s users.

The archive exists solely as a digital database, and the original prints or negatives are not stored by Fortepan. Most of them are only scanned and returned to their owner. Exceptions are

made for particularly valuable collections, which are deposited in the Budapest City Archive.²⁰ As the collections grew mainly by serendipitous findings or donations, they, for the most part, contain what Mark Wallis called “polite social fictions”.²¹ In other words, the biggest part of the photographs are various vernacular or private images showing smiling children and family vacations. This imaginary of fictional happiness is sometimes interrupted by tumultuous events and unrest. This is particularly the case with the photographs from the revolution in 1956, some of which will be discussed below. Suffice it to note here that the presence of many photographs from these turbulent events is less a matter of contingency of photography than a result of choice by the archive directors. After a few years of collecting various photographs, they realized that the “fictions” emerging from private and vernacular photographs do not give the whole picture of the 20th-century history. Consequently, the photographs from the revolution are actively sought for and curated.²²

Apart from that, there are no strict criteria or acquisition policies. The decisions on particular acquisitions are made by the directors.²³ Although a large majority of the photographs pertain to the life of the Hungarians or cover events in Hungary, there are also exceptions to that rule. One such example is the collection of photographs by the recently rediscovered Moldovan photographer Zaharia Cusnir.²⁴

The most significant aspect of Fortepan is that it has become an incentive for the emergence of a virtual public space. An online community of viewers spontaneously attributes locations and dates, comments on and narrates histories of the photographs available in the collections. This community is active on the online forum and through regular articles.²⁵ Recently called Hungary’s most popular photo archive,²⁶ Fortepan actively forges its public, encouraging contributions from its viewers. The title of a more recent exhibition during the photo festival in Łódź states that, with the Fortepan collection, *the past is yours!*²⁷ In the current climate of restricted political freedom, the archive became an opportunity to debate historical issues from the perspective of personal memory.

As Fortepan is growing exponentially, some assemblages are passed on to other archives. In 2018, a sister project Azopan was established in Romania, with a bulk of photographs from Fortepan being transferred to that site.²⁸ Founded by Lőránd-Félix Furó, Lőránd Fülöp and Edgár Szócs, the Azopan archive currently holds over 14,000 photographs. Sharing similar principles to Fortepan, its aim is to collect and make accessible “the analogue photographic heritage of Romania”.²⁹ An analogous archive has been created in Iowa under the name Fortepan.us. Its aim is to collect and display vernacular photographs made or owned by people from the region.³⁰ It can be expected that similar initiatives will emerge in other countries or regions. However, Fortepan’s model is not the only one in the region currently on the rise. In Poland, a different online archive of photography has emerged as part of the Karta Centre (*Osrodek Karta*).

KARTA’S MULTIPLE ARCHIVAL ENDEAVORS

The Karta Center Foundation Archive equally puts emphasis on the writing of history from below. The non-governmental organization Karta Centre (*Osrodek Karta*) was established much earlier than Fortepan, namely during the Martial Law in Poland, and had as its main aim to promote independent culture. After initial experiments with theatre, it started publishing an underground magazine with the same title.³¹ This magazine still exists today, even if it underwent many changes over the years. In the late 1980s, the Karta members founded the Eastern Archive (*Archiwum Wschodnie*), which became a documentation center for the histories of Poles in the Soviet Union and in the Eastern Borderlands.³² Among other documents, the Eastern Archive encompassed collections of — mainly private — photographs accompanied by the biographies of their owners.

The photographic archive as a separate entity within the center emerged in 1996 and currently holds 500,000 photographs. It continuously grows through — again mainly private — donations consisting of family albums and photographic collections. Aside from the family photographs, it also manages collections of about 40 professional photographers. Its stated mission is to assemble and disseminate photographic collections pertaining to the history of Central and Eastern Europe.³³ A large part of the archive is digitalized, but unlike Fortepan, Karta mainly collects physical photographs — only around 70% of its collections are available in the digital format.³⁴ Some collections are free of copyright, some are only available to be viewed but not to be reproduced. The digital images in the online catalogue are viewable in small resolution and with a watermark. In general, the archive accepts all donations and makes no distinction in terms of value or relevance of the acquisitions.³⁵

Some of Karta’s collections are historically significant, for example, the assemblage of photographs from the Solidarity movement during the Communist period. Other ones simply document the everyday lives of people in small localities. Karta also holds extensive assemblages of photographs documenting the life of Poles abroad, notably those deported to the gulags. It equally collects digital reproductions of photographs belonging to various Polish institutions abroad. One example of that is the photograph from the polish library in Buenos Aires, showing a protest action of a local Polish choir against the persecutions of the protesters in 1956 in Poznań.³⁶

In 2020, together with the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, Karta established the Center of Community Archives or CAS (*Centrum Archiwistyki Społecznej*). The main mission of CAS is to support independent, bottom-up archiving practices. It trains volunteers to become archivists and oral historians while it also gives visibility to the

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Török, Interview.
21
Wallis, “Why vernacular photography? The limits and possibilities of a field”, 19.
22
Török, Interview.
23
Török, “Thinking — in three ways — about the Fortepan Online Community Photo Archive”, 26–27.
24
Zaharia Cusnir collection: <https://fortepan.hu/en/photos/?q=Zaharia%20Cusnir> (date of access September 19, 2022).
25
Campbell and Fabos, “Innovation and ingenuity in the Fortepan Digital Photo Archive”, 174–175.
26
Cseresyés, “‘I Hunt for Photos Where the Photographer Captured Their Own World’ — Interview with Fortepan Founder Miklós Tamási”.
27
Fotofestiwal: 20th International Festival of Photography, “The Fortepan Collection, The Past is Yours!”.
28
“Photoarchive”, *Azopan*. <https://www.azopan.ro/> (date of access September 20, 2022).
29
“About the project”, *Azopan*. <https://www.azopan.ro/about-the-project> (date of access September 19, 2022).
30
“About”, *Fortepan.us*. <https://fortepan.us/about/>.
31
Gluzza, *Odkrycie Karty*, 25–26.
32
Ibid., 97–110.
33
“O nas”, *Fotokarta*. <https://foto.karta.org.pl/o-nas/> (date of access September 19, 2022).
34
Bujnowska, Agata. Interview with Katarzyna Ruchel-Stockmans. December 10, 2019.
35
Ibid.
36
I am referring here to the photograph by an unknown photographer made in Buenos Aires on July 14, 1956 and stored there in the collection of Biblioteka Polaca Ignacio Domeyko (no. BPID_1024_005). The photograph is available on <https://www.foto.karta.org.pl/nasze-zbiory/kolekcje/argentyrna,100679,zdjecie.html>.
37
In the original Polish: *Otwórz archiwum, uruchom społeczność!* IV Congress of Community Archives (IV Kongres Archiwów Społecznych), September 24–25, 2021.
38
Community Collections. <https://zbioryspoleczne.pl/> (date of access September 19, 2022).
39
This is a project by the Oral History Archive in collaboration with the History Meeting House, which encompasses interviews and documentation of Poles living in the Eastern Borderlands or in the Soviet Union. Cf. <https://audiohistoria.pl/projekt/19-prezentacja-polacy-nawschodzie> (date of access September 19, 2022).
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The CAS photographs are available under several different Creative Commons licenses: CC-BY-NC, CC-BY-NC-SA, CC-BY-NC-SA, CC-BY, and CC-BY-ND; some are in the public domain and yet others are under copyright, reflecting the diversity of many local initiatives included in the archive.
41
Sandbye, “Looking at the family photo album: a resumed theoretical discussion of why and how”; Batchen, “Vernacular photographs”.
42
Boogh, “Samtidsbild/Contemporary Images — a method of collecting vernacular photography in the digital age”; Batchen, “Snapshots”.
43
On the conventions in vernacular and family photography, cf. Bourdieu, *Un art moyen*.

existing local archives. As the title of the 2021 edition of its congress stated, the idea is to: “open an archive, start a community”.³⁷ The organization thus underscores the formative role of the bottom-up archives with respect to communities. It invests in sharing knowledge about archiving techniques and stimulates local initiatives. The most important result of its endeavors is the Community Collections portal, which gathers all the photographs and related documents described through the Open Archiving System.³⁸ As a side note, Karta and CAS have common aims and projects, but they remain to a certain extent two separate entities. Some collections of photographs can be found in both online databases, for example those belonging to the project *Karta with the Poles in the East*.³⁹ In general, however, the more recent collections of CAS contain many photographs under the Creative Commons license, which means that similarly to the Fortepan archive, they are available for unrestricted reuse.⁴⁰ The collections of Karta, on the other hand, can be viewed online, but generally cannot be freely reproduced without authorization.

Both Fortepan and Karta/CAS collect family, private and domestic photographs. Including these private collections in an archive means that they become part of collective memory and history. The transfer from a family album to an open archive entails a transition from the private to the public sphere. Without essentializing the distinction between the public and the private in photography, it is worth dwelling on the presence of family and domestic photographs in the digital archives.

GLOBAL FAMILY ALBUM

Until recently, vernacular, family and private photographs rarely featured in museums and photographic archives. In the more traditional, art-oriented institutions, this is only slowly starting to change.⁴¹ Some museums even begin to actively collect vernacular photography.⁴² Yet the way histories of photography are being written still must accommodate that change. The community-based, online archives only accelerate that process and make the need to expand the understanding of photographic histories even more pressing and indispensable.

Vernacular photographs are a difficult fit for the histories of photography because they seemingly lack some of the characteristics which are expected from photographs. They are repetitive and dull as if they were locked within the same conventions for prolonged periods of time.⁴³ This makes it impossible to register their stylistic evolution, something which seems essential for art historical discourses. Moreover, they often record private occasions such as birthdays, weddings and holidays in a manner which is obviously staged and performed for the camera. They habitually show happy moments and cherished occasions, which means their usefulness as an objective window into a historical time is rather limited.



Sl. / Fig. 1 Učionica u osnovnoj školi, Ulica Lajos 34, Budimpešta II / Classroom of a primary school, 34 Lajos Street, Budapest II, 1956. Fortepan / Lencse Zoltán.

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Sl. / Fig. 2 Pročelje osnovne škole, Ulica Lajos 34, Budimpešta II / Façade of the primary school, 34 Lajos Street, Budapest II, 1956. Fortepan / Lencse Zoltán.

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Sl. / Fig. 3 Križanje Ulice Sándora Bródyja i Ulice Szentkirályi, Budimpešta VIII / Corner of the Sándor Bródy Street and Szentkirályi Street, Budapest VIII, 1956. Fortepan / Berkó Pál.

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BRINGING DOWN THE “ARCHIVE FEVER”



Sl. / Fig. 4 Oktogon (Trg 7. 11. / November 7 Square), Budapest VI, 1956. Fortepan / Berkó Pál.

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The vernacular and private photographs might still be what Batchen called “art history’s worst nightmare”,⁴⁴ yet they have sparked interest from scholars in anthropology, visual studies, visual history and postcolonial studies.⁴⁵ The most significant change of approach in these studies has to do with a shift away from what these photographs show or how they show it towards what they do. The name “private photographs” can be misleading here, as these snapshots are made to be viewed by quite a few people. Habitually, they are kept as markers of domestic memories and are shown to family members or within a close circle of friends. Therefore, these photographs can be seen as having agency in the sense that they are — in the words of Mette Sandbye — “a means to engage with other people”.⁴⁶

As Gillian Rose noted, family photographs function similarly to public speech. Referring to Michael Warner, Rose argued that they forge their own community.⁴⁷ Whether small or large, this community is being established in the daily performances of photo taking and sharing. It is this web of performances and “doings” of photographs which should be taken into account in the theoretical discourse.

In her analysis of domestic photographs, Mette Sandbye suggested that family albums could be seen as *local archives* “negotiating between globally circulating forms”⁴⁸ and local traditions and conventions. At the moment when family and vernacular photography enters online, broadly accessible archives, yet another process of renegotiation is being established — that between a certain domestic community and a newly forged online public. By entering these photographs into their collections, community-based archives make them publicly accessible and, in many cases, available for reuse. Some knowledge may be lost in the process. Often, the names of the people represented are not known, exact locations have to be searched for, and dates can only be approximated. Yet, in place of this intimate knowledge, new connections between and by the archive’s users can be established. Michael Warner’s insights into the formation of a public through a public speech can be relevant here. Public speech, which for Warner can include visual works of art or photography, should be seen as addressed simultaneously to “us”, particular individuals, and as addressed to strangers.⁴⁹ This “personal and impersonal”⁵⁰ aspect of the public address can also be found in the act of making public of the vernacular and private photographs. The private lives of people captured in the photographs are made part of — and formative of — a larger community of archive users.

PUBLIC EVENTS, PRIVATE MEMORIES

As a way of bringing to light this threshold between the private and the public in the community-based archives, I will discuss selected photographs of popular events found in Fortepan and Karta/CAS. Consider the large collection of

1,121 photographs donated to Fortepan by Zoltán Lencse.⁵¹ Among the many posed family portraits, holiday snaps and views of sports events, there are two images of a destroyed window in Budapest. One was taken from the inside of a school classroom, the other from the outside showing the damaged façade of the building. (Fig. 1&2) The date of 1956 indicates that this is a trace of the revolution, which swept through the city in October and November of that year. This eruption of the violent images from the revolution amongst otherwise happy and predictable family snapshots is comparable to the visual data project by Lev Manovich on *The Everyday and the Exceptional*, which gathered anonymous photographs from the period of the Ukrainian revolution in 2014.⁵² This similarity is striking because the Fortepan photographs come from the pre-digital era and are simply transferred to — or remediated by⁵³ — the online environment. These two photographs were kept among many “conventional” family snaps as souvenirs of the fraught historical moment in 1956. They thus became part of the domestic memories. Similar intrusions of that history can be found in several other collections.

Another prolific amateur photographer, Pál Berkó, captured scenes of his family’s daily life interspersed with the historical events they were immersed in. In 1956, he took photographs from behind the window sill or from inside a car overlooking the streets of the battered Budapest. (Fig. 3&4) Similar strategy can be seen in the photograph donated by Ferenc Zajti, taken again in 1956. (Fig. 5) The photograph was made surreptitiously from the window of a building and shows a t-34 tank passing through the wintery street of the capital. There may have been different reasons why these photographs were taken. Some were made for private use while others were perhaps intended as an alternative document of this historical event. Knowing that official visual culture was strictly controlled, these family photographers assumed the role of citizen journalists in order to give a more accurate representation of the revolution. It is clear that they were cautious not to be visible from the street level. In the case of Zajti’s photograph, only a part of the tank can be seen, framed by the open windowpane of the apartment. This perspective from a private space of a home onto the turbulent events of the counter-revolution unfolding in the public space speaks of the migration of images made for private use into a public domain of the online archive.

An entirely different group of images emerges from the May Day Parades in Poland. The International Workers’ Day celebrations were a compulsory element of the public life under socialism. Adults and children were coerced to participate in them collectively, usually together with their co-workers, their schoolmates or colleagues. Factories, collective farms, or schools had to be represented in a festive street parade, often carrying banners and flags. There is a plethora of strictly codified photographs produced on such occasions. Professional photographers were commissioned to illustrate the celebratory marches, enthusiastic crowds of onlookers or solemn speeches of the party representatives.

- 44
Batchen, “Snapshots”, 121.
- 45
Pinney, “Introduction: how the other half... photography’s other histories”; Rose, *Doing family photography*, Pink, “Amateur photographic practice, collective representation and the constitution of place”; Hirsch, *Family frames: photography, narrative, and postmemory*; *Camp, Image matters. Archive, photography, and the African diaspora in Europe*.
- 46
Sandbye, “Looking at the family photo album”, 15.
- 47
Rose, *Doing family photography*, 77–78.
- 48
Sandbye, “Looking at the family photo album”, 11.
- 49
Warner, *Publics and counterpublics*, 77.
- 50
Ibid., 76.
- 51
Zoltán Lencse donation. <https://fortepan.hu/en/photos/?donor=Lencse%20Zolt%C3%A1n> (date of access September 19, 2022).
- 52
Manovich et al., “The exceptional and the everyday: 144 hours in Kiev”.
- 53
Bolter and Grusin, *Remediation. Understanding new media*.
- 54
These photographs, made in Vilnius in the 1960s, and identified with the signatures AHM_PNW_2087_0002_0009 and AHM_PNW_2087_0002_0010, are restricted by copyright and cannot be produced here. They can be viewed in the online archives of Karta or CAS: <https://foto.karta.org.pl/przeglad-wynikow-wyszukiwania/?allword=anpowska&exactmatchword=&anyword=&nthiswords=&imageselected=127345> and <https://foto.karta.org.pl/przeglad-wynikow-wyszukiwania/?allword=anpowska&exactmatchword=&anyword=&nthiswords=&imageselected=127345> (date of access September 19, 2022).
- 55
Anpowska. Recorded interview with Karolina Żłobecka, September 15, 2010, PL_1001_AHM_PnW_2087_0001, Karta Center.
- 56
The photograph with the signature OK_003497 can be viewed online: https://foto.karta.org.pl/nasze-zbiory/kolekcje/ok_1202_braun_grzegorz,30698,zdjecie.html (date of access September 19, 2022).

Also family and amateur photographers registered these events. On some occasions, they show official parades, but more often than not, they focus on small get-togethers or preparations. Not necessarily expressing identification with the communist ideology, they attest to these moments of conviviality. Some could have been made by a factory photographer, but they were nevertheless kept in family albums and donated to the Karta/CAS archive together with other private photographs.

Many of these photographs are now disconnected from their original domestic or other collections and the exact details of their provenience are difficult to establish. The family photographs made available by Longina Anpowska are an exception here. As these photographs were entered in the archive on the occasion of a recorded interview with Anpowska, there is more information available about their owner. Among ten photographs, most of them group or individual portraits of the immediate family, there are two made on the occasion of the May Day Parade.⁵⁴ Made in the 1960s, they show two groups of people, consisting of a little over a dozen men and women, posing with banners, balloons and flowers. They are Anpowska’s co-workers from the meter factory in Vilnius. In the oral account of her life, which mainly focuses on the period of the Second World War and the situation of Poles in Vilnius, she also briefly mentions these festive occasions.⁵⁵ Although it is clear from her story that she lived in fear of repressions and deportations by the Soviet authorities at the time, she nevertheless enjoyed the May Day Parades with her colleagues. These photographs, therefore, found their place in her private family album. In the archive of Karta/CAS, they become part of the charged history of the Cold War in the region.

A different renegotiation takes place in the anonymous photograph, again from 1956, which shows protesters in Poznań.⁵⁶ To the left of the image, a man is seen holding a partly visible banner: “We want bread”. The image is slightly blurred and awkwardly framed. The two main figures in the foreground are positioned in the corner of the image, and one of them is turning away from the camera. The upper corners of the image are shaded. This somewhat flawed photograph offers a particular view of the historical events of 1956, yet its sloppy appearance is less an index of amateurism than it is a token of the secrecy of the state surveillance. The photograph was taken by the Security Office (*Urząd Bezpieczeństwa*), and its aim was to identify and persecute the participants of the anti-government manifestations. In the Karta assemblage of documents pertaining to the struggle for freedom and independence, it became evidence of that struggle against its initial intentions.

CONCLUSION

Seen as community-based archives, Fortepan and Karta/CAS actively forge their new public. As they encompass many privately owned photographs, that which has been seen as vernacular and domestic is transferred towards the public sphere. It remains to be further investigated how this eruption of many hitherto unseen family snaps will transform the understanding of the historical period of the Cold War in Eastern Europe. However, when looking closer at selected examples, these vernacular photographic collections often already attest to many local renegotiations of that which is public into the more private sphere or the other way around. The short survey of different photographs from the public manifestations and festivities has demonstrated that the archives have become a site of multiple encounters between the vernacular and the global, exposing and redrawing the thresholds between the private and the public sphere.⁵⁷



Sl. / Fig. 5 Tenk viđen s prozora / A tank seen from a window. 1956.
Fortepan / Zajti Ferenc.

↑

BRINGING DOWN THE “ARCHIVE FEVER”

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