Seismo

Media persistence: Theories, approaches, categorization

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1 Introduction

Despite the fact that new media are continually seen as "natural born killers" of old media, old media rarely die and very often persist. In what is alternately called the "age of the Internet," the "digital revolution," the "metaverse," the era of "artificial intelligence," old media such as books, cinema, radio, television, landline telephone, and several others are still in use. Moreover, there is a kind of re-emergence of "the analogue" in various forms and for different incentives, including nostalgia. See for example Polaroid or Lomo in the realm of photography or vinyl and cassette in music.

This Thematic Section is the outcome of an intellectual journey that the five editors undertook first separately and then combined. The occasion for bringing together prior interests and combining theoretical and empirical understandings of the reasons why and the different modes how media persist over time was facilitated by the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA) virtual post-conference (co-)organized jointly by three ECREA sections in September 2021: the Communication History section together with the sections of Radio and Sound, as well as Television Studies. It is no coincidence that these three sections are concerned with old media, which seem to decline but apparently also do persist, as those are the sections dealing with the mediated relationship of the old and

the new, the past and the present such as the viewing and screening practices of television, transformation of sonic environment from radio toward podcast, and in general old media remediating into new ones. Some selected papers of the conference were then combined with others submitted in response to an open call for papers. All in all, they provide empirical case studies on the meaning and appearances of media persistence in different contexts and sectors and contribute theoretically to our understanding of it. Besides providing an overview of the chapters, this editorial piece also theoretically maps out the field and poses a discussion on the categorization of media persistence.

The first question to be asked is: What does persistence mean? The word "persistence" has an interesting etymology, as it comes from Latin *persistere*, *per+sistere*. In Latin *sistere* (from the verb, *stāre*, "to stand") means "to cause to stand" and "to set something up in standing position." We can see, crudely, how *sistere* twins the base of *stāre*, *st-st-*, and we might imagine how this doubled "standing" conjures up something that means: "remains standing" (see Kelly, 2017).

This Thematic Section on persistence draws from the cases of media which *remain standing*. There are media which can be considered "ruins" of the past, are not updated, and can quickly become useless tools. But in this Thematic Section we emphasize another idea: To stand and remain, media have to adapt or, in other words, to change and

to evolve in changing natures, transforming themselves, and striving in the ecology where they are included.

2   Persistence in media and technology studies

This is not the first time that the concept of persistence has been addressed in media studies. With only a few exceptions, (digital) media scholarship has often focused on the disruptive and revolutionary power of new technologies, seeing them as opposite to analogue media (on this "newness ideology," see Balbi & Magaudda, 2018; as a notable exception see Van der Heijden & Wolf, 2022). Similarly, the still scarce literature on digital media history has often researched digital media in their early stages, focusing on the brilliant ideas of inventors and their ability to change established paradigms. The focus was and is typically on the new and the changes it will bring about. Elements of technologies, practices and functions of media that would not change but persist and be of continued relevance were conceptually and empirically neglected as compared to the new (Driessens, 2023).

Yet, several approaches in media and technology studies in the last decades have proposed a different perspective. Within media studies, we can identify at least two main fields which have dealt with persistence. Firstly, media archaeology has often underlined how past objects and technologies still matter in contemporary culture. Erkki Huhtamo (1997) has focused on the idea of *topoi* to mean topics of media culture that are recurring, cyclical, and always at disposal to be used over time. Parikka, Schneider and Jucan (2019, p. 9) in their book entitled *Remain* claim:

> The remain is not merely secondary but the primary entry to a different temporal regime that is still, oddly enough, persistently here as a thing but also as something more. The emergence of the *re*-main is to be taken as primary even if one would be tempted to think of it as a trace that is not fully present.

Media archaeology, in sum, has focused on the material persistence of media forms.

A second tradition in media studies touching the issue of persistence is the literature devoted to the relationship between old and new media. Again, the focus on new media is much more prevalent than the focus on the old, with the old often being regarded as what the new helps to advance from. Old media are then seen as the embodiment of old obstacles and limitations that can be overcome and made obsolete by the functionalities of the new (Menke & Schwarzenegger, 2019; Scolari, 2013). But several authors have tried to define the persistence of old media in different ways. According to Bolter and Grusin (1999), *remediation* is the process through which old media are embedded and integrated into new ones, and so persisting over time. Charles Acland has used the expression of *residual media*: Quoting Raymond Williams in *Marxism and Literature*, Acland (2007, p. xxi) defines the residual as something that "has been effectively formed in the past, but it is still active in the cultural process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present." Similarly, residual media are media of the past, but still affecting the present: media whose relevance and activity persists. *Reconfiguration* is how Gabriele Balbi (2015) called the process of old media changing in order to react to new media. Old media, to save from extinction and so to persist, sometimes change *because of* new media: the telegraph changed because of the telephone, radio and cinema changed because of TV, analogue media are changing because of digital ones. Reconfiguration is a strategy of persistence used by old media. The same author has introduced the concept of *co-existence*: this is a "golden rule" of media history, in which new media and old media live together, they do not kill each other. Berber Hagedoorn has used the concept of *rescreening*. The medium of TV has evolved into a constellation of dynamic screen practices affording *rescreening* (Hagedoorn, 2017, 2020) – i. e., the vast access to a (digital) repertoire of previously transmitted TV images in today's multi-mediated landscape – for instance through re-use in programming on TV and streaming media, but

also in online networked television archives. Philippe Theophanidis and Ghislain Thibault (2017) have used a concept taken from hard sciences (*media hysteresis*), referring to "phenomena where effects persist when causes have disappeared" (p. 9). The two authors define "'media hysteresis' as the persistence of effects at the cultural level even after the causes have disappeared at the technical level" (p. 9) and, more specifically, "It can be the persistence of media forms, functions, and configurations, or media discourses, imaginaries or otherwise" (p. 12). Finally, Carlos A. Scolari (2023) resorts to biological metaphors and arguments to explain the life cycle of media in the context of media ecologies. He introduces several terms and phases of media life which can be considered close to persistence: defensive resistance, adaptation, convergence, and obsolescence. All these terms indicate that media technologies are part of a struggle to survive, to adapt to new circumstances and environmental impacts in order to prevent getting extinct. To persist, in other terms.

The persistence of the past and its continuous relevance for understanding processes in the now has always been challenging for media and communication studies. In history and media history a focus on what was is the essence of academic practice. However, media and communication research are importantly driven by the ever new, fascinated by and obsessed with change. Against this backdrop the idea of persistence is simultaneously an important reminder and a provocation for the field. Over time, the delay between new media entering the media ecology, and media studies turning to them as a new main area of investigation has grown shorter and is almost nullified (Wilke, 2019). The focus on change is, as Oliver Driessens (2023) has put it, a gene in the DNA of communication studies, that immediately stands out. Here, a problematic circle begins, as Driessens argues: the focus on change, from now on forward, causes an abandonment of historical continuities and persistence of the old, the neglect of what persists amount to exaggerated claims of change. To them who ignore what was there before, everything will appear as new and changing.

To remain standing, i. e., to persist, in the media ecology is to adopt and evolve, to change with changing circumstances. Furthermore, persistence is not opposed to change, but rather change is a constituent for media's ability to persist. At this point, we can recall Simone Natale (2016) who argued that there are no old media, highlighting that the old is always rejuvenating, adapting and changing.

In technology studies, technological persistence is centre stage. David Edgerton (2007), in his seminal book, has argued that old technologies matter for a long time and, often, they matter more when they disappear from the public discourse. He calls this "the shock of the old." It is not only a matter of persistence, then, but especially of *relevance*: Persistent technologies are often more relevant than breakthroughs. And they are more relevant if they get older and older in a version of "Lindy effect" applicable to communication technologies – the so called "Lindy effect" is a theory according to which the future life expectancy of some non-perishable things (like a technology but also ideas) is proportional to their current age, so that every additional period of survival implies a longer remaining life expectancy (Goldman, 1964).

A chapter of Edgerton's (2007) book is entitled "maintenance." *Maintenance* made persistence a key topic of discussion. Maintenance theory has emerged in the last decade, but so far it has been rarely associated to media and communication studies (Balbi & Leggero, 2020). Nevertheless, in order to launch a theory of media persistence, focusing on maintenance is crucial because it means focusing on how old technologies can be kept in function, and so can persist over time (Russell & Vinsel, 2018; Weber & Krebs, 2021). Maintenance is an effort that helps media to persist and to prevent uncontrolled, chaotic change, the withering away or decay of technologies. Again, if we see persistence not as a form of stasis, maintenance can be considered as a way of managing change in order to allow for persistent use and continuity.

Path dependency is another theoretical tradition in technology studies linked to the idea of persistence. The famous case of the

QWERTY keyboard (David, 1986) is one of the best examples to illustrate the persistence of old ideas into new and digital technologies. The QWERTY keyboard was invented in the 19th century and its intermedial persistence across times and cultures is very surprising: from mechanic to electric typewriters, from computers to smartphones. The motto of path dependency is "History Matters!" and, in this case, the persistence of a keyboard is mainly a cultural rather than a technological fact. One could learn to use another keyboard, of course, but to change media habits a strong effort is needed. So, persistence is also a theory of habits that cannot be changed so rapidly and research on user practices has found that some practices are more persistent than the technologies they are performed with. Even when media users own the latest devices that would allow for different modes of use, they might pertain to old and established patterns rather than swiftly adjust (Menke & Schwarzenegger, 2019).

We have reflected on topics including topoi, remains, residual media, media hysteresis, reconfiguration, co-existence, rescreening, but also the need for maintenance and the relevance of path dependency of old media. All these (and probably many other) topics are connected to media persistence, and, in some cases, they can also be considered synonyms. So, what is new in our contribution? With this Guest Editorial and Thematic Section, we aim to advance a new research agenda for historians of digital media and technologies and, more in general, for digital media and digital technology scholars. Instead of focusing on the early histories of digital media, we propose to study the persistence of old media in the digital age and against the backdrop of digital media environments. More specifically, the reasons why old media persist over time, how they are part of new media and shape them, how digital society was and is strongly influenced by old ideas, imaginaries, and preceding visions of the future. Jussi Parikka (2012, p. 34) has proposed that the concept of *remain* can help expand the "media-archaeological agenda." We do think, similarly, that persistence can change the way we approach media studies, and digital media especially. On the one hand, with the concept of media

persistence, digital media can be re-imagined: They are not always disruptive technologies that have changed the past completely, but they often have connections with previous media forms. On the other hand, this can be also considered as a new way to understand (digital) media history, since the field does not have to deal with the past anymore, but with the present: Today, digital desktops resemble physical desktops, old telephones are embedded in the logo of WhatsApp, and old infrastructures are used for transporting new digital data. Persistence of the analogue and of early digital media imaginaries in the contemporary digital era is not history, but it is an attempt to better understand present times and how present times are full of old things. Interestingly, some of the persistent technologies and practices that echo in current digital icons surpass the time when they still relate to the actual practice and will become unfamiliar to younger generations of users, who will learn to invoke functions demarked with the icon, but without relating their sense making to the old technological roots the symbolism refers to: For example, we have saved this Guest Editorial clicking several times on an icon resembling a 3.5 floppy disc – a technology which we have used and also reveals our age –, but the same icon is clicked by people who have never user a floppy disc. Hence, persistence emphasizes the material, functional, and symbolic entanglements between old and new, the past, present, and future of media.

Beside a literature review on the topic, the Guest Editorial aims to categorize media persistence, discussing the main reasons why, according to us, media persist over time. This typology can then be discussed or applied both to the case studies in this Thematic Section and hopefully to further case studies in various other contexts.

3   Categorizing media persistence

In this part, we will try to categorize and discuss persistence at four main levels: technology, management, user practices, and metaphors. Of course, other dimensions may be added – in some ways, this is our hope because it means that a reflection on media

persistence has started in different fields –, but we decided to focus on the most relevant ones in our research, on the most representative in the Thematic Section, and the ones emerging in the scientific literature.

3.1 The persistence of technology

Technological persistence, as the first category of persistence, deals with the material, physical, and tangible persistence of media, that is evident in media infrastructures. At the macro level, the development of telecommunications networks from the 19th century to the present shows a surprising continuity: The intertwining and structure of the global networks of submarine cables that carry Internet data, for example, are incredibly similar to those of 19th century submarine telegraphy and, in some ways, of wireless telegraphy in the first decades of the twentieth century (see for example Starosielski, 2015). Secondly, as Christian Henrich-Franke (2019) has shown, Internet networks are often based on previous networks, like the telegraph and telephone. Telephone networks in copper have been the backbone of the Internet and, thanks to them, millions of people have accessed the net. Telephone networks are indeed very difficult to be changed completely (for example you must dig up streets and change cables in the houses) and their persistence is quite symbolic of the quasi-irreversible nature of large technical systems, as path dependency and STS studies have shown.

Some technologies will persist longer than we aspire to keep them. Another interesting case has to do with pneumatic tubes. Pneumatic post was one of the most popular new media of the 19th century and several big cities in Europe decided to dig and to place this network of tubes under their roads. It was the fulfilment of an old dream: the instantaneous transportation of goods from one point to another in the city. After some decades, those tubes were abandoned and, for example, today in Rome an Internet operator has bought tubes and filled them with Internet cables. Like the telephone cables, also the persistent tubes changed their usages and pass from transferring goods to support the Internet (Balbi, 2017).

There are persisting media which are simply technologically better than new (and maybe digital) ones. As Lisa Gitelman and Geoffrey Pingree (2003) claim, we tend to consider new and digital technologies simply better than old and analogue ones. This is a teleological, linear, and evolutionary view of the history of communication from the oldest and worst medium to the newest and best one and can be considered a huge mistake when studying technologies. A paper book, as an example, is a technology "invented" centuries ago and which was transformed thanks to the printing press in the 15th century and by new technologies for mass production like the steam power and the linotype in the 19th century. Despite several attempts and forecasting on the disappearance of paper (books, newspapers, but also ephemerals), this technology has not been replaced by its digital form (epubs, ebooks, etc.) but, on the contrary, the publishing and selling of the paper products globally are in its highest numbers ever (Pimlott, 2011). This is a form of "shock of the old" in Edgerton's words: When digital media seem to be the crucial and more relevant technologies today, paper books proliferate. This phenomenon is not only persistence, but also proliferation of the analogue with digital platforms: in the booming of paper books, for example, Amazon or similar digital platforms which allow to buy and distribute books play a relevant role.

Another case of technological persistence is the forms of analogue media which are not used anymore but they are still "preserved" in private or public spaces, such as archives. It is the case of old telegraph or telephone networks which nobody wants to dismantle (because it is too expensive for public companies or the responsible private companies failed, for example). Paolo Bory (2020) has shown how cabinets of high-speed Internet in the 1990s are still visible in several roads of Italian cities, sometimes reused for new generations of Internet cables, sometimes simply abandoned. Then, on a smaller scale, think of how homes are full of unused analogue and digital media: VHS recorders, Walkmans, Discmans, old mobile phones, not working stereos, gramophones, old consoles for computer gaming, old MP3 players, DVDs, CDs, floppy discs, and many

other technologies. Why don't we throw away old technologies which do not work or we do not use anymore? Because analogue and digital technologies can also change their "functions" over time. Media are relevant not only when they are in use, but also when they are *not used*. They become decorative objects and modern antiques which are also sold and bought in markets. Media we own and showcase are telltales of our identities, who we are, want to be seen and recognized as or, especially with older media, of who we were in our past. Hence, we also do not throw old media away because we attach to them powerful feelings of memory and nostalgia (Niemeyer, 2014). These feelings attached to objects persist over time and they are a material memory of each person (Menke & Schwarzenegger, 2016) and sometimes even survive the first owner (Bodei, 2015).

3.2　The persistence of management

The second category of persistence can be laid out under the *management persistence*. Politicians, private companies, and technicians regulate, manage, and create new media often in the contemporary (and old) media landscape. There are several examples of this form of persistence. It is surprising how political ideas and principles persist over time. Let's take the famous information superhighways (we will return on the metaphor of highways later) document written by the Clinton administration in 1993 (proper title: *The National Information Infrastructure: Agenda for Action*). It is a document full of persistent ideas on "communication revolutions" and on the impact of new media: Digital networks, like telegraphy and broadcasting in the past, will reduce distances, bring democracy, provide equal access to schools, and benefit people from economic to health perspective (Streeter, 2011). Another example is the World Economic Forum initiative "One Laptop per Child": Driven by technological determinism, the idea behind the project is to bring inexpensive laptops to children living in poor countries and, doing so, to give access to new forms of education and information (Ames, 2019). Giving access to media as giving access to new forms of culture is another persistent political idea: Radio and TV sets, VHS recorders, desktop computers, Internet connections and others were all used to spread culture among the young generations.

There can also be a persistence of business models and business mentalities as in the persistence of players and stakeholders. In the 1970s, the first personal computers were produced and sold by companies making electric keyboards. The management paradigm was the office. Companies like Motorola passed from producing portable radios (the so-called transistors), to beepers and pagers, to mobile telephones. The persistent management paradigm here was the portability. Leading companies producing batteries like Duracell in the United States have started to produce power banks for digital devices. They are indeed in the paradigm of recharging. In terms of distribution, there is the famous example of Netflix coping in the second half of the 2000s the renting model of Blockbuster. Instead of physical shops, Netflix allowed users to rent DVDs through an online platform and then they circulate through normal postal services (Lobato, 2019). This is a form a persistent idea of circulation of physical goods even in the digital age.

It is also interesting to note continuities and persistence in terms of space and place. Then, physical places have seen the birth and development of dozens of media, analogue and digital. At Menlo Park, a small town of just over 30 000 inhabitants located in San Mateo County, California, Thomas Edison established his headquarters for decades experimenting and producing technologies for cinema, sound reproduction, radio, and many other communication sectors. A few decades later, Menlo Park became one of the nerve centers of the Silicon Valley and of the so-called digital revolution: Here, Sun Microsystems developed the Java language in the nineties of the twentieth century and, since 2011, Mark Zuckerberg moved the headquarters of Facebook.

3.3　The persistence of practices and users

The third category deals with users applying similar practices to different media over time. Going back to their paper on media hysteresis, Theophanidis and Thibault (2017, p. 10) claim that users' expectations are "shaped by their experience of previous technology" and they

are actively seeking to recognize something that is familiar to them [...] they might attribute [...] past models of knowledge to new media; they might resist the prescribed usages in favour of older practices that they have become accustomed to; or they may cling to obsolete vocabulary to describe new technics. (Theophanidis & Thibault, 2017, p. 12)

This can also be read as a tactic to "temper the acceleration of technological evolution" (Theophanidis & Thibault, 2017, p. 12). Persisting is also tempering. Resorting to the allure of familiar old technologies and practices in the context of new technological frameworks helps us to cope with change (Menke, 2019) and reconnect current action with previous experience and knowledge: In other words, it is a form of persistence of practices. A telling example is the sound of the mechanical shutter in the smartphones: When we take a picture with our smartphone, we can hear the click of the old analogue camera. Why? Because this is the sound of cameras and it is a way to link old practices (taking a picture by clicking a button) to new devices (Henning, 2007).

We have mentioned before how in the practices of users, well established habits, routines, and logics may persist even though the technologies in use would allow for other ways of engagement. Users however, when confronted with new media, will not simply start to use new devices as designed by their producers, but will eventually appropriate the use of technologies according to their preferences, needs, and previous habits (Oudshoorn & Pinch, 2003). How people make use of certain technologies in their lifeworld lies not so much in the technologies themselves but is formed and accustomed in a complex interplay of individual, social, and technological factors, along with infrastructures, availability and costs (Menke & Schwarzenegger, 2019; Naab & Schwarzenegger, 2017). People started for example to search their names in the electronic repository of the Minitel before they did it again on Google when it appeared on the Web and its messaging allowed users to connect, chat, flirt before the dating websites (Schafer & Thierry, 2012). Some practices span the media genealogy.

In the concept of media generations (Bolin, 2016; Hepp, Berg, & Roitsch, 2017) certain practices and uses are related to generational features: People belonging to the same generations are likely to have shared experiences and possibilities that will also impact how they make use of certain technologies including media. In a media generation approach, the younger age and times of growing up and adolescence are seen as formative years, which will later impact how all newer media technologies are used, made sense of, and valued against. The experiences made when people first become familiar with the then prevalent media of their time, will persist in how they make use of later technologies. Bolin (2016) as well as Hepp et al. (2017) alongside others have however criticized what could be considered a generational determinism of media use. It is not the generation that shapes how media are used but it is the likeliness of similar experience that define generations which will play out in how users make sense of media and integrate them in their everyday practices. Old media persist in the ways of how users engage with new media or technologies. Again, we can see the potential of emphasizing persistence over change. Rather than looking for what sets generations apart and how new technologies are carriers of change, persistence allows asking for what remains despite of technological innovation and how shared experiences, needs or similar patterns of use are established across generations. Before, we have named nostalgia one important factor of why old media and technologies persist as relevant for the life worlds of their users. But a lens on persistence also allows to identify motives, reasons, and modes of persisting media use that cannot be explained by nostalgia alone. Finally, while all eyes are typically on change and appropriation of the new, when it comes to media use, the concept of persistence helps to understand that not all and everybody will become a user of new technologies, but some (in fact many) people will just continue to use media as they did before, regardless. It is necessary to keep a focus on what people keep doing, avoid to do and do instead of taking up the latest fashions, and on media resistance (see on this concept Syvertsen, 2017). It also adds

some complexity to the studies of reception, adoption, domestication as well as to media studies in general.

3.4 The persistence of metaphors

The fourth and last form of persistence is *metaphoric*. Think of analogue metaphors and how much they are popular in the digital world and prove how there is a form of persistence of imaginary and ideas. Very often, digital media have been imagined as analogue media doing something better: This is an old media metaphor imaginary (Scolari, 2021). If we take, for example, the proposal of the WWW of Tim Berners Lee old media like phone books and libraries are the key inspirational tools to build the new system (Bory, 2018). Another example is the already mentioned superhighway metaphor: This is a transportation metaphor, which became quite popular to indicate high-speed Internet networks. In different countries, this metaphor took different names like autobahn of information or data in Germany or railway networks in Italy, but the analogy between the Internet and transportation of people and goods is a recurring and persistent topic. Jérôme Bourdon (2021, p. 211), in his analysis of "telepresence" notes: "With or without making a comparison with the digital world and connecting the past and present, some media and art historians also used expressions such as 'presence at a distance,' 'social presence,' 'electronic presence,' or simply 'presence' to discuss the power of technologies to 'transport' people to different spaces and to faraway people or creatures, not necessarily including interaction."

A second form of metaphoric persistence has an iconic character. Although landline telephone handsets are decreasing, the icon that distinguishes WhatsApp consists of a white telephone receiver in a green field. Similarly, the Instagram logo is an analogue camera. Most e-mail services on the Web continue to preserve traditional postal icons such as paper envelopes, carbon copy, paperclips for attachment. As mentioned, the universal icon of "save" is a 3.5-inch floppy disk used in the 1980s and early 1990s and which has become synonymous with conservation in the contemporary digital world despite having fallen into disuse. Think about the desktops of our laptops: They are still quite similar to physical offices and desks with bins, folders, documents, and word processing programs. As briefly touched upon above, it is also interesting to note how the youngest users of digital services have perhaps not sent any paper letters during their life, they have never taken a photograph with an analogue machine, they have never made a phone call through a classic receiver or used a 3.5-inch floppy disk. Nevertheless, they are able to recognize all these objects as media and relate them to their current practices: sometimes perhaps without grasping the historical core that persists through the symbol.

There is also a continuity in the way services are called. For example, the liquid or fluid metaphors are quite popular over time: Radio and TV channels became YouTube channels; the tube itself is a persisting container even at metaphorical level; even the network can be considered a persistent way to imagine media infrastructures and comes from fishing (Musso, 2017). There is room for a lot of discussion on the history of media metaphors and especially digital media metaphors: This would clearly show how topics, names, and metaphors persist over time, maybe they can change meaning, but they are still alive.

Of course, there can be several other forms of media persistence, but we decided to focus and to categorize the ones that look more evident. Of course, this is just a first and starting analysis of media persistence and several other categories and forms can be found in further studies on this topic, while the six papers in our special issue also illustrate the shared approaches as well as own definitions and understanding of media persistence by the authors, who challenge and enrich our typology. Under this respect, we hope to launch a new theoretical reflection on media persistence to be expanded later. This section is a first step to explore what old media persistence can add to our understanding of media (change) and which avenues for research it can open in the future.

4   This Thematic Section and media persistence theory

The articles in this Thematic Section cover some of the topics mentioned earlier. They are particularly sensitive to the nostalgic dimension of media persistence. The articles extensively explore the realm of audiovisual media and culture, by discussing VHS, vinyl records, film restoration, and how the platformization and on-demand distribution of films complement each other. Through the articles we contemplate on various relationships built with various media forms such as the practices of VCR collectors and enthusiasts in the context of Greece, the strategies of major media groups like Netflix or Disney+ in addressing the general public or the practices of collectively watching TV at night. One article addresses preservation and restoration efforts, while another one discusses the re-circulation of content through platforms such as social networks. The articles together therefore tackle various issues related to the production, re-circulation, preservation, reception, and participation of the public in media persistence.

The authors embrace complementary aspects of media persistence, including technical, managerial, and economic dimensions, entrenched usages, and forms of nostalgia. To capture this diversity, the authors use complementary approaches, with many leaning toward qualitative studies and emphasizing oral interviews to gather insights into the usage of older media formats. Some articles also employ platform studies and occasionally quantitative methods. All of them emphasize the complementarity of formats and uses, also highlighting the fluidity and some continuities of professional practices, user habits, and transitional phenomena that are far from radical. Keywords such as "reinvention," "resistance," "nostalgia," "memories," "media repertoires," "contamination" (the past strongly influencing the present) are all crucial in unpacking the concept of media persistence.

The first article by Michael Stamm, stands out in this issue, as it is not related to audiovisual content and artifacts, but focuses on the persistence of the book. The author invites explicit consideration of the perpetual reinvention of "the old," while underlining that "the printed book was not only perpetually present but also continually innovative, and manufacturers consistently have sought means of more sustainable manufacturing" (p. 318). Stamm highlights the constant evolution of the medium through examples of three books made from sustainable materials: David Brower's *Let the Mountains Talk, Let the Rivers Run* (1995), printed on paper made from kenaf, a sustainable alternative to wood-based paper; William McDonough and Michael Braungart's *Cradle to Cradle* (2002), printed "on a synthetic polymer that could be endlessly remade into other products" (p. 311); and HarperCollins's *Green Bible* (2008) printed on recycled paper and that used soy-based ink. Stamm suggests that the printed book was not only perpetually present but also continually innovative. And so, media persistence is not only a conservative act, a form of resilience, but more often can be a form of innovation and change.

Finding novelty in persistent practices is also at the core of the article by Zachary Karpinellison, who explores the restoration of celluloid film as not merely relegating old media but creating a renewal and coexistence between analogue and digital versions. The article challenges the relegation of celluloid film as old media and argues that distinguishing between digital and analogue *film-versions* gives rise to "a new kind of mediatised coexistence" (p. 321). The audacious proposal of not distinguishing between copies and originals and emphasizing the coexistence of both analogue and digital versions provides a stimulating framework, as is his proposal suggesting that "[i]n a way, it could be argued that the details drawn out by the restoration process, did not exist prior to the advent of digital technologies" (p. 328).

The reintroduction of past media content, mediated by audiovisual centers through social networks, to reach new audiences is also fascinating and finds resonance beyond the detailed case study provided by Juan Francisco Gutiérrez Lozano and Antonio Cuartero. In their article the authors analyze how Spanish public television archives use social networks, particularly through the production of memes, to connect with young people. While the Spanish strategy is rooted

in a local context (MemorANDA relies on the repetition of regional topics, and flamenco or copla – a more popular variant of the former), the article raises key questions about the mediation and contextualization of persistent TV content in the frame of digital sharing and circulation. One more time, here, media persistence is a form of change, of innovation, of recontextualization: What persist is constantly re-used in different media environments.

In terms of cultural practices, beyond the content itself, the article by Ursula-Helen Kassaveti highlights the importance of considering the intertwining of past content and its formats and devices. Her exploration of Greek VHS cultures, especially VHS collectors, delves into fan cultures and the question of nostalgia.[1] In particular, we find the expression of forms of nostalgia, resistance, and tangibility to which the author adds an interesting reflection on the fact that VCRs (Video Cassette Recorders) are situated (in space, context, uses, etc.).

Examining the space of practices as well as their temporalities, as Jutta Röser and Jo Marie Dominiak do in their article related to collective TV night practices, is stimulating. Another intriguing perspective is indeed presented in the latter by the authors who discuss collective TV night practices as well as vinyl uses, and explore nuances in the persistence and reinvention of media practices. The inclusion of second screens in TV viewing is an important point which they stress. However, what the authors emphasize is that persistence is not merely something that happens, but that requires effort and action. Also, what makes persistent practices relevant is that they become the expression of particular meanings and mediate relations, between users sharing the experience, but also between the persistent media and new complimentary practices and available services.

Similarly, the final contribution explores hybrid practices and continuity in the presence of platforms and media chronology in film and TV production, offering nuanced reflections on the shifts and continuities between the pre-Netflix and post-Netflix eras. Authors Éric George, Justine Dorval, and Édouard Germain underline a "certain 'contamination' of old practices originating from the organization of industrial channels ('filières') and forms in the mutations currently presented by these new intermediation services" (p. 369). By analyzing Netflix, Amazon (Prime Video Service), Disney+, and Apple TV+ they highlight forms of continuity in three fields: presence of platforms downstream but also upstream, the respect or not of media chronology in the case of film production, and the media coverage of TV series.

Collectively, the six articles in this Thematic Section offer a fruitful reflection on the dynamics and notion of media persistence. The authors of these research articles bridge the gap between "old" and "new," analogue and digital, past and present, and together they present a sensitive understanding of the ambiguities of novelty and persistence, while rejuvenating the understanding of media dynamics.

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1   The case of Greece resonates with Quentin Mazel's (2022) analysis of the consumption of "physical media" in the context of the video market in France.

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