Introduction: Archive and Method(s)

By
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I am writing this introduction in October 2019. From time to time, I rest my eyes on a picture that is pinned to the wall by my desk. It is a photo depicting the twentieth-century photographer Gunnar Lundh. He is standing in a garden, touching a blue flower, a lupine. The wide cuffs of his grey jacket, the hat model and something about the colour palette tell me that it is a photograph shot in the 1940s. The sun is shining, he directs his gaze straight into the camera. When I look at him, he looks back and, despite the time span, our eyes meet. The photograph makes it possible for me to encounter the past.

Fig. 1. A photograph of the photographer found in his own archive. Even though the label says "Photo: Lundh, Gunnar", we don't know who was actually holding the camera (NMA.0061944).

When you, valued reader, read this text, you will be able to look at the same photo and meet the gaze of Gunnar Lundh in the same way. From my perspective, this will happen in the future. Perhaps you, as I, get a feeling of meeting the past, looking the photographer of bygone times in the eyes. Possibly you will even get a double image of the past, thinking both of me sitting in my office writing this, and of Gunnar Lundh posing by the lupines in the 1940s. The photograph becomes a time-dissolving point of contact, connecting you, me, and Lundh for a moment.

Pictures of the Past

This themed issue of Culture Unbound is about ways to get to know past times through pictures and documents. More precisely, the purpose is to explore and develop ethnological and cultural historical methods for research in folklore archives, with special attention paid to photographs as source material. To fulfil this purpose systematically, the concept of "method" has been stretched along three branches. First, method has been understood as a series of steps to approach, handle and understand the archive as an infrastructure of knowledge. How should a researcher navigate, both practically and intellectually, to get into the archive? Secondly, method has been applied as a series of steps to analyse and interpret the fragments, pieces and sections in the archive as sources to information of the past and present. When in the archive, how can the researcher bring the different sources to speak? Finally, method has been conceptualised as a series of steps to connect the knowledge in the archive with other forms of knowledge in academia and society. How can a researcher evaluate and use the knowledge produced in, and by, the archive? All three branches are touched upon in each article, some in greater depth than others.

The national context is Sweden. A great deal is known about the history of the Swedish folklore archives, their scientific background and the research that has used folklore archive sources (Bringéus 1988, Nilsson 1996, Snellman 2010, Nagel 2012, Gustavsson 2014, Nystrand von Unge 2019). While giving this body of scholarly works its due credit, much of the research has focused on the historical background of the archives and the history of the collections (with some exceptions, see Klein 2003, Silvén 2004, Thor Tureby & Johansson 2017). We will focus instead on methodological issues. The contributors will discuss topics such as political bias built into archives, how new groups can be made visible and researchable in the collections and how it is possible to ask new questions of old source materials.

Historical processes are multileveled in their temporality (Koselleck 2004). This becomes evident when using photographs as sources in historical research, as in the opening chronological exercise with the photo depicting Lundh by the

lupines. In that example, the past, the present and the future were more than separated dots on a time line. Rather, the time layers occurred as different surfaces of the same prism, breaking the view in several angles: every time layer was mixed with reflections of the others. Gunnar Lund was posing in front of the camera on one occasion, I am writing about it on another, and you will be reading on a third: past, present and future at the same time.

To meet the epistemological challenge of simultaneously analysing several layers of time at once, the researchers in this issue depart from ethnological or folkloristic standpoints; positions that include an outspoken self-reflective approach (Sandberg & Jespersen 2017: 7ff). Recognising that images of the past are constantly produced and reproduced in the archive (Ketelaar 2012), we understand that through working in the archive, we have taken active part in the process. Performing the research, the authors have thus had a double scholarly focus, by both scrutinising the historicity of the archive in itself and critically reflecting on the practical procedure of conducting research in that archive. In other words, the contributors not only critically review the historical period they are studying, but also discuss their own research practice and methodological procedures, and how they affect the result. In this way, we hope to display the multileveled temporality of any historical process, and perhaps most importantly, of any historical narrative and historicity.

Gunnar Lundh in Focus

The man in the photo in the opening example, Gunnar Lundh, is a central figure in the context of this issue, since it is the offspring of the research project Images and Stories of Everyday Life (Vardagens bilder och berättelser), which revolves around his photographic collection, that is found in the archive of the Nordic Museum in Stockholm.[1] Gunnar Lundh was a professional photographer, active during the first half of the twentieth century. When he died in 1960, he left a collection of approximately 300 000 photographs that was eventually donated to the Nordic Museum.

Gunnar Lundh worked mainly as a reportage and press photographer. Three factors made him especially interesting. Firstly, he was very early in using a small-screen camera; he got a Leica in 1927 while other professional photographers still worked with large or medium format bellows cameras. The small camera made it possible for him to take many shots and to move around quite freely (even though he often carried both the little Leica and bigger cameras on missions, and you find the same motive both in medium and small format in the archive). Secondly, Lundh was early in starting a photo agency of his own, in which he gathered almost all the photos he took. At the photo agency, which he kept in

his house, there was a huge selection of paper copies organised under different headings that customers could choose from. Lundh also kept a systematised archive of the contact sheets, as well as of the negative rolls. He kept the agency until his death in 1960. Thirdly, Lundh was interested in the everyday aspect of life and society and always carried his camera with him. You find motifs from all kinds of social milieus and situations in his production, and as he saved most of his photographs—no matter the technical or artistic quality—the collection is a broad and deep documentation of everyday life in Sweden, as well as other countries, during the period.

The research project also looks at the answers from the Nordic Museum's questionnaires during the period Lund was active. The museum has been engaged in sending questionnaires to a number of designated informants since the 1920s, as a way of collecting everyday life experiences. The questionnaires have been referred to as a kind of "interview by mail" (Österman 1991:9) and the archive today contains more than 460 different questionnaires (Nordiska Museet 2018).

Gunnar Lundh was working as a photographer from the 1920s to the late 1950s. This was a socially and politically vibrant period in Sweden, which is generally regarded as the dynamic and formative years during which the Swedish welfare state emerged. The Social Democratic Party was in office from 1932 to 1976, except for a few years during Second World War, giving the Government an opportunity to form a strong and progressive welfare policy aimed at health care issues and social security. Sweden was spared military battles and bombings during Second World War, and had a good economic starting point after the war. The public sector grew strong and the Swedish Cooperative Union (KF) was a solid player in society.

Functionalism and social engineering became cornerstones in a growing welfare state. In what has come to be known as "The People's Home Speech" (Folkhemstalet) in 1928, Prime Minister Per Albin Hansson launched the concept "the people's home" as a metaphor for a society where everyone was equal and worked together as a family. In this rhetoric, striving for a welfare state was a leap from an old society characterised by poverty, filth, darkness, inequality and tradition, into the new society characterised by welfare, hygiene, light, equality and modernity. In parallel, industrialisation reached Sweden quite late and the contrast between the modern cities and undeveloped rural areas was striking. This contrast is reflected in the work of Gunnar Lundh, and the photographic archive includes motifs from old-fashioned farming, where horses draw the ploughs, to newly built high-rise buildings in suburbs, and modern facilities such as public swimming pools.

Not everyone was included in the egalitarianism of the "people's home", and depending on context, race, class, gender and physical or psychological ability people could be excluded by the welfare state (Broberg & Tydén 1991, Svensson 1993, Catomeris 2004). Another critique of the period concerns what is perceived as the socio-cultural effect of the central government's efforts to rationalise every trace of misery out of people's lives with rational scientific methods. It has, for example, been argued that the robust and supervisory politics of the "people's home" resulted in a society characterised by both widespread social trust and deep-rooted individualism. The relationship between the individual and the state was privileged at the expense of kinship and other group relationships; a system, which, on the one hand, contributed to material security at an individual level, but on the other hand, could serve as a breeding ground for social alienation (Hirdman 2000, Berggren & Trädgårdh 2006).

The Swedish welfare state and the "people's home" are concepts that bear a strong symbolic meaning in the historiography of twentieth-century Sweden. Today, groups of different political orientation, from left to right, are claiming the legacy of the social and political structure of that era (Norocel 2013). This ongoing struggle for priority of interpretation highlights the palpable political aspects of the understandings and uses of the archival material from the period. In several of the contributions in this issue, for example Hörnfeldt, Larsson, Hylten Cavallius & Fernstål, Bäckman, the relationship between the archives and the political and cultural developments in society is highlighted.

Ways to Remember Collectively: Heritage, Museums, Photographs

> Photography, archive and memory are intimately connected. Memory and photography both involve the process of recording images that may be used to recall the past. Memory itself is often characterized as an archive: a store house of things, meanings and images (Cross and Peck 2010:127).

Photographs have, for a long time, constituted an important source for cultural historic research and are consequently considered a vital category in a museum's collections and archives. Large parts of Gunnar Lundh's photographic archive have been donated to the archive of the Nordic Museum (see Steinrud in this issue for further details about the donation). Today, many of the photos are available on the Internet. Gunnar Lundh's photographs can be considered as part of a Swedish visual heritage.

With the last decade's introduction of a vivid and critical heritage discourse in mind (see for example Hewison 1987, Anselm 1993, Harrison 1994, Brett 1996, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, Lowenthal 1998, Hall 1999, Aronsson 2000, Blake 2000, Graham, Ashworth & Tunbridge 2000, Harvey 2001, Eriksen, Garnert & Selberg 2002, Holtorf 2005, Smith 2006, Harrison 2008, Winter 2013) it may be worthwhile to place a marker on what definition is employed here. The analyses are inspired by a perspective where heritage is seen as a process (Harvey 2001, Harrison 2012) in which objects and ideas of the past become resources for, and in, the present (Smith 2006, Graham & Howard 2008). Heritage will consequently be interpreted as an arena for societal and political negotiations. A key concept is heritagisation, which refers to the processes whereby certain objects, landscapes, traditions, et cetera, are framed as particularly dense symbols of shared characteristics or values.

An important concept in comprehending heritage is the notion of collective memory. The theory of collective memory was developed by the French philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, in academic dialogue with historians like Lebvre and Bloch (Olick, Vivitzky-Seroussi & Levy 2011) during the first decades of the twentieth century. However, it was in the middle of the century, when his essays were posthumously published on various occasions, that the concept started to become a prominent feature in the academic discussion (Halbwach 1992). Since then, the collective aspects of remembrance and forgetting have been both contested and developed (Connerton 1989, Assman 1995, Ricœur 2004). Borrowing Goffman's notion of (social) frames, Irwin-Zarecka has showed how public "frames of remembrance" influence individual understandings of past events (1994). Astrid Erll also departs from the Halbwachian premise that memories arise from social frames that are both functional for, and reproductions of, the distribution of power. However, Erll also shows how, in a globalised world, those social frames are in constant flux, causing collective memory to change over time and space.

Without doubt, the idea of a "collective memory" has spread widely and the concept is often referred to, both within and outside of academic contexts. However, the concept has also been criticised for being too vague and too sweeping. Among other things, Wulf Kansteiner (2002) argues that the metaphor is often taken too literally, and that "collective memory" is analysed as a kind of "individual memory", albeit on a larger scale. This threatens to lead the investigation in the wrong direction, and away from the communicative ways in which collective remembrance work.

Memory, whether it is individual or collective, is a complex concept. On an overall level, memory has to do with how the past is perceived. It can be understood as an ability (a person or a computer can have a good memory if able to store a lot

of information over time) or as a noun (I have this great memory from my latest vacation). However, from a constructivist perspective, memory is conceptualised as a verb, something that takes place. One way to put it is that memory is the past as it is carried, preserved and transferred over time by man. Keeping in mind the collective character of memory, the carrying, preservation and transference take place in social processes.

The camera is often seen as an objective witness, simply capturing what happened in front of the lens at the moment the photographer pressed the shutter button. However, a photograph is a cultural product as much as any other artefact. The photographer constructs the photo, even if unconsciously. Still, as memory mediums, photographs are persuasive, as they not only show a recognisable situation, but also give the viewer an experience: a photograph makes you feel and relate to what you see in a special way. Consequently, the photographic medium has played a crucial role in the construction of collective memory (Edwards & Hart 2004:6ff). Photos, with their putative ability to freeze moments and carry them over time, in conjunction with their affective qualities, are often treated as a kind of high-density memory entity within memory institutions. Erll illustrates how the photographic medium's role in collective memory processes increases in a globalised world, when iconic and widely shared images from historic events "links each individual representation of the past with the history of mediated cultural memory" (2011: 142f). The contributions in this issue show that photographs are a complex source material. Photographs can both affect images of the past in certain ways, as in the examples given by Bäckman, but they can also contribute to a deeper understanding and a broader knowledge of the past, like the examples contributed by Steinrud and Gustavsson demonstrate.

Cultural heritage is a word that relates to collective memory at an overall level, and museums and archives are prominent institutions at its service. Based on this perspective, photographs and photographic archives are prominent elements in the construction of a collective memory:

> Charged with documenting and preserving that which is considered valuable, the museum has also become the institutionalized arbiter of value, determining what is worth collecting and saving for the future. Because photographing and archiving are primary ways of assigning value, they often occupy a central position in the museum's task of constructing and perpetuating a shared conception of a collective past (Becker 1992:3).

In an article from 1992, media scholar Karin Becker explored the role of the Nordic Museum's photographic archive in the construction of a common Swedish cultural heritage. She demonstrated how criteria for assessing the credibility of photographs in the archive had fluctuated over time, and concluded that the archive had "entered the ideological domain with the power to show us the way things were" (Becker 1992:17).

In most respects, Becker's analysis is still accurate. The photographic archive at the Nordic Museum is still to be regarded as an authority and main actor in the formation of a public idea of what history we share and with a structure that "maintain[s] a hidden connection between knowledge and power" (Sekula 2003:447). However, technical developments since 1992 have added a new dimension to the photographic archive's process of constructing a collective past, namely digitalisation. Today, the Nordic Museum's archive, along with practically every other museum and archive, does not merely "determin[e] what is worth collecting and saving for the future", but also selects what is worth publishing on the Internet. The archive is thus no longer only part of the museum's back stage, but is constantly on potential display and accessible to anyone who is online.

Archives and museums are "memory institutions", or in Jan Assmann's words "mnemonic institutions" (1995), that is to say bodies where collective memories take place. It is commonly recognised that heritage, as a form of collective memory, should include as many citizens as possible. In democratic nations, authorities and other controlling stakeholders have therefore striven for a democratic heritage. In the last decades, the main aspiration in this democratic endeavour has been digitisation and digitalisation (Dahlgren 2009:81). Confidence in digitalisation's ability to create a more inclusive heritage has been overwhelming, and without doubt, there have been many successful digitisation and digitalisation projects (Henning 2006, Waterton 2010, Wasserman 2011, Strandroth 2012).

However, there is reason to maintain a critical stance towards the trust in digitalisation as a one-way street to an egalitarian and inclusive heritage. As Tayler and Gibbon, researchers in areas of digital heritage, put it, digitalisation projects "are not inherently democratic", but may on the contrary "reinforce non-democratic structures" (2017:406). Digitalisation is certainly an effective tool when it comes to reaching a larger number of users and is used as a kind of heritage amplifier. However, as much as this amplifier may enforce positive aspects of heritage, it may also strengthen imbalances in representation and re-produce historically embedded disproportions in the museums' record and collection (Macdonald 2006:3).

In the broad notion described by Foucault, archives constitute a system with bearing on what is comprehensible in a general sense; the archive stands out as the very "system of discursivity" (Foucault 2002, see also Manoff 2004). In addition,

an archive is an apparatus for organising power and structuring power relations. In the archive, the past, present, and future are related to each other, as the potentials of the past and the present are linked to the future (Derrida 1996). It is thus by managing the traces of what has been that the archive becomes an authority: the power stems from a capability to shape the conditions of individual and collective memories. However, as the contributions by, for example, Ekström and Nylund Skog in this issue show, archives never develop in a cultural vacuum, but are both shaped by, and reproduce specific ideologies and scientific paradigms.

A pedagogic way to place the contributions in this issue in relation to the archive as an apparatus of power is to use the French historian Pierre Nora's theoretical distinction between the concepts of history and memory as a point of departure. In Nora's terminology history demarks a society's established narrative about its past and describes past times from a bird's-eye perspective. History is about relations between entities such as kings, armies, authorities or nations, in other words abstract units. Memory, in contrast, is images of the past as applied by people as they live their everyday lives. Unlike history's solid version of earlier periods, people's notion of the past as memory is moulded in a dialectic movement between what is remembered and what is forgotten, and as memory lives in the minds of and communication between people, the picture of the past changes over time. While memory is concrete and lived, history is symbolically encapsulated in so called lieux de memoire, sites of memory, a concept that signifies any corpus that expresses the nation's shared past.

Nora's critical stance is that the dynamic and creative potentials of people's understanding of their past as memory threatens to be circumscribed by an authoritarian effort to create a unifying narrative of the nation's history (1989). Nora can of course be criticised for making a rather coarse division between official history and individual memories, and for building his theory on a romanticised comprehension of a pre-modern way of life, as well as utilising a western perspective. A range of scholars have offered both harsh critiques and developed his thinking in different ways (Assmann 1995, Ho Tai 2001, Kansteiner 2002, Assmann 2006, Erll 2011).

Even if Nora might seem a bit outdated, his discussion on the mutual relationship between people's memory making and society's history writing is still valid and illuminating. The articles in this issue direct their search light toward typical memory sites in Nora's sense, such as museums and archives. The original task of these institutions was to gather artefacts and stories of the past, and to unify them in a greater narrative, to form collective memory. However, our aim has not been to capture the grand narrative in the archive, but the opposite: to search for fragments and pieces of individual stories, what could be called petite

narratives. In other words, we have been looking for the memories in the archive of which history is assembled. In the contributions by, for example Gustavsson and Steinrud, it becomes evident that even seemingly static and well-organized memory institutions, such as archives, are formed by people's work, which entails the mistakes, chance and occasional lack of attention of everyday life.

If archives can be considered sites of power that organise individual and collective memories, photographs have been described as cornerstones in this process (Cross and Peck 2010). To a large extent, we are looking for the petite narratives by investigating the photographs in Gunnar Lundh's photo collection. Photographs have been regarded as a popularised memory process that can offer an alternative to the official history, even if motives often become absorbed by the dominant narrative (Samuel 2012). Bearing this in mind, we have approached the photographs with the intention of keeping their potential intact in order to add ambiguities to official history.

The Contributions

The lion's share of the contributions to this special issue emanates from the project Images and Stories of Everyday Life. When the same material base has been examined from different perspectives, the nuances between different approaches become clear. As researchers with diverse interests and prerequisites are processing one collection, there is a resonance between the articles. However, three articles provide relief by dealing with similar issues, but based on material other than the Nordic museum's archive material. The contributions discuss the problems of how to interpret archived sources from different points of view, scrutinising a variety of materials. However, even if questions, materials and perspectives change, the need for well-founded contexts, developed contextualisation and elaborate reflections return in all articles.

In her article, Marie Steinrud grapples with the biography of Gunnar Lundh. Steinrud shows how data from different sources and archives can be combined to deepen the knowledge of a collection or a single record. Applying this biographical method, Steinrud demonstrates how a broadening of the personal and professional context of a photographer can help a researcher to extract more dimensions from photographic images as a source of knowledge about the past.

Also using the photographs of Gunnar Lundh as a point of departure, Maria Bäckman directs the searchlight towards how a specific motif, the "contract labourers" (statare), which has travelled in and out of different media contexts during the last century. The pictures of the "contract labourers" were used for designated political purposes during the modernisation of society, a circumstance that affected how the category was later interpreted. Another theme of the article is

the intertextual relation between the driving actors in the process, Lundh and the author Ivar Lo Johansson, and the collective memory process of the conception of "contract labourers" in Sweden. Through a close reading of Lundh's photos of statare, Bäckman argues that contemporary museum settings illustrating the life of the group (for example the Farm Labourer's Cottage at the Skansen open-air museum in Stockholm), to a large extent, are inspired by Lundh's compositions.

Helena Hörnfeldt offers another entrance to the Lundh collection. She examines what happens if the research is guided by a search for an unmarked category, in this case children and childhood, in such an immense and diverse photographic material. Being a researcher with documented knowledge about children and childhood in Sweden during the twentieth century, Hörnfeldt reveals how Lundh as a professional photographer both contributed to, and was influenced by, the new idea of the child, as it was formed during the period in question. The methodological stance is used to illustrate how an initial understanding of a field can lead the researcher to become analytical, productive and generate new insights.

By combining several different categories of source materials, Marianne Larsson illuminates how significant changes in society are not only important for the answers to the museum's questions, but also have a bearing on the questions that have been asked. Larsson's example is the thorough reform of the statutory annual leave that took place in 1938. Her method is to use three different sources —public reports, photographs and questionnaires—showing how the sum produces a more dense description than the separate fragments.

Simon Ekström discusses how a part of an archive, in this case the Nordic Museum's collections of excerpts, can be read as a materialisation of a certain scientific approach. Ekström follows how the information collected by early folk life collectors about beliefs in folklore creatures has found new ways out of the archive to inspire new popular expressions. The transforming pendulum movement continues as these new expressions become the subject for contemporary collecting actions by the museum. The argument is that the knowledge of yesterday may be considered obsolete from a present-day academic perspective, but that the excerpts in the folk life archive have kept attracting interest, thus producing (old) knowledge that has transformed into modern vernacular folklore expressions.

The archive's, and not least the archivist's, role in establishing social categories are the central points of analysis for Charlotte Hyltén-Cavallius and Lotta Fernstål. The authors scrutinise the archive as a power instrument, illustrating how the twentieth-century archivists perceived the folk life archive as a community-building institution, and collaborated with other authorities, such as the police, in the mapping of specific groups in society. The article does not address the Lundh collection, but focuses on archival collections relating

to "tattare" and "zigenare", and shows how these categories became part of the archives as documentation of the majority society's prejudices.

Karin Gustavsson tries, based on her own work with a collection from the 1940s, to verbalise the silent knowledge that experienced archive researchers use to orient themselves through archival material. Departing from Barthes' concept of punctum Gustavsson describes a both physical and mental ability to perceive minor disturbances or deviations in the scheme, which leads to new constructive traces.

The folk life collector Karl Gösta Gilstring's collection, today found in the archive of the Department of Dialectology and Folklore Research in Uppsala, is the subject of the article by Susanne Nylund Skog. Nylund Skog develops a discussion about the connection between a place and a person in an archive. By applying a narrative analysis to the correspondence between Gilstring and one of his informants, Carl Nelson, who lived in Manistique, Michigan, USA, but provided Glistring with stories of his birthplace in Småland, Sweden, Nylund Skog shows how places are socially and culturally constructed in the archive.

Instead of solely studying what the photos in Gunnar Lundh's archive describe, Mattias Frihammar's approach is to search for both articulations and silences in the photographic archive. As a method, Frihammar is trying out the concept of visual silence in the analysis of photographs from three different occasions. The analytical premise is that silences are socially constructed and culturally productive, and that attention to what is not said can give new entry points to an archived material.

As I finish writing this introduction, it is still October 2019. I do not know what date, year or season it will be when you finish reading it, just that it will be in the future for me, right now to you, and for later readers, in the past. However, no matter when, you will still be able to look Gunnar Lundh deep in the eyes in the photo on first page where he is standing among the lupines.

The past is always in dialogue with the present and the future, and this dialogue often takes place through material mediums. The archive is such a medium, and it is our hope that the articles in this issue will assist you by contributing analytical tools and methodological measures in the process of extracting knowledge from it.

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Notes

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