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HD's Invention of Continuity and SD's Resistance? A Historiography of Cinema and Film to (Be)come and Formats to Overcome

Oliver Fahle and Elisa Linseisen

In our paper, we propose the necessity of implementing the concept "format" to reflect on the correlation between cinema, film, and the digital, which currently finds its film-theoretical condensation in the notion "post-cinema" and the (problematic) interdependence of "the analog" and "the digital." We want neither to deepen the historiographic ditch by talking about "revolution" or "paradigmatic changes" nor to overcome the threshold by seeking continuity between the analog and digital. Rather, we would like to explore cinematic development in terms of its change and modification, or, in other words, its *becoming*, which is, after all, a genuinely cinematic category. Therefore, we will proceed in the three following steps: First, we want to outline that, from a film-philosophical perspective, a development from analog to digital would count not as problematic but rather as a genuine cinematic form of modernization. Second, we would like to use the current post-cinematic debate and Francesco Casetti's model, his "seven keywords for the cinema to come" (2015), on the subject to expose two interconnected historiographic tendencies of cinematic persistence and resistance. We would like to cut them down to the notions "medium" and "format." Taking David Joselit's efforts into account, we understand formats and formatting in the context of motion pictures as "image-power." The latter, we would like to argue, would offer a historiography that does not claim paradigmatic changes or inventions of continuity. Third, we would like to exemplify this using the case of high-definition (HD) digital imagery,

in correlation with and in contrast to other digital formats, here recognized through standard definition (SD). At this intersection of two digital formats, we recognize generation loss, the loss of quality when copying digital data, as a form of historiographical resistance that continues to write a history of cinema and film to come, but also of formats to overcome.

I.

The historiography of film can be showcased through its own discussion with other media, by integrating the latter into film's techno-aesthetic configurations. These inclusions can be named as an increase in complexity of what can be defined as cinema or film. Complexity then would not only put a distinct ontological status at stake but also take this signifying fragility as a recursive "offer" to develop even further. That is what we call cinematic becoming. The questions "What is cinema?" and "What is film?" reoccur as film-philosophical questions, posed by the medium itself. Film answers with new aesthetic forms, namely breaking with existing norms and perpetually reinventing itself under the strain of other media influences. We identify a development in cinema and film that occurs exactly at the moment when cinema is challenged by other media. But we understand this "collision" as necessity for film and cinema to evolve further (Fahle 2011). What we infer is that cinema and film only reflect their own mediality if they are able to reflect about other media or problematize their relation with them. By establishing these relationships, cinema and film refer to what cinema and film are not. But we cannot understand this mode of differentiation as a distinct media threshold. On the contrary, defining what cinema and film are not is an inherent part of cinema and film itself (Fahle 2015).

With the help of Gilles Deleuze, we can detect the dynamic of cinematic becoming. Deleuze describes a setting that reveals itself in a highly medialized form as cinema and film rival with the whole world: it is a "world which looks to us like a bad film" (1989, 172). In a letter to Serge Daney, Deleuze specifies his disfavor: "that's just what television amounts to, the whole world turning to film" (1995, 78). When "the world itself is turning cinematic, becoming 'just an act' directly controlled and immediately processed by a television," then cinema and film have to take "the battle to the heart of cinema, making cinema see it as *its* problem" (Deleuze 1995, 76, 75). For Deleuze, therefore, cinema and film are "*pure immanence*" (2005); they are what they are and what they are not at the same time. Deleuze expresses this paradox as a demand: "Cinema ought to stop 'being

cinematic,' stop playacting, and set up specific relationships with video, with electronic and digital images, in order to develop a new form of resistance" (1995, 76).

Malte Hagener uses Deleuze's idea of immanence for his concept "media-immanence" (2011, 51; Medienimmanenz)[1] to describe current media constellations under digital influence. Here, we observe the same situation that Deleuze describes as "bad film": media do not simply represent a world; instead, the world is made by media. Hagener points out that no distinction can be drawn between cinema, film, and reality because cinema and film have interwoven deeply into the texture of daily life (2011, 52). In a time of media-immanence, there should no longer be any doubt that audiovisual media have become ubiquitous, or, as Hagener argues, that "our perception and our thinking have become cinematographic" (2011, 52).[2] Whatever we experience is always already mediated, "so that we are, in a certain way, in the cinema, even if this is (physically) not the case" (Hagener 2011, 52).[3] Media-immanence describes a state of dereferentialization that makes it hard to distinguish already fragile media identities such as video, electronic, and digital images and therefore disperses not only cinema and film but also the term "media." As we have pointed out, in film philosophy and film theory, this state of media-immanence is not seen as a problem for film and cinema in that they vary, modify, and readjust, thereby describing an infinite state of becoming.

II.

Suddenly, this story of discontinuous continuity seems to be convulsed by another "rhythm." With the millennium, a media-historiographical, allegedly insurmountable classification enters cinema and film's becoming: digitality. The phenomena that can instantly be summarized under this notion were endowed with the great promise of modernization and development: there were so-called "*new*" media (Manovich 2002, most prominently), and all analog media, such as cinema and film, were downgraded as "old," despite their capacity to modernize. This disfavor addresses analog cinema and film, which prompts a number of theoreticians to proclaim that cinema and film have to be something different now, but not in an immanent but dissociative, deconstructive way (Rodowick 2007, most prominently).

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1   All translations by Elisa Linseisen.
2   "sind selbst unsere Wahrnehmung und unser Denken kinematographisch geworden."
3   "so dass wir in gewisser Weise im Kino sind, selbst wenn dies (physisch) nicht der Fall ist."

Post-cinema is a reaction to a particular form of media historiography, one that considers the introduction of "the digital" as a paradigmatic shift, shattered by the ontological uncertainty of what cinema and film actually *are.* To distinguish itself from these first euphemisms, a still ongoing discourse about the latest state of cinema and film has run underneath this notion for nearly a decade. Post-cinematic film theory tries to adjust and match the indicated capacity of cinematic becoming and the capacity of a specific form of digital modulation (Linseisen 2018). As an important position in the post-cinematic discourse, Francesco Casetti's book *The Lumière Galaxy* shall be named here. Proposing seven key concepts for a cinema to come—"relocation," "relics/icons," "assemblage," "expansion," "hypertopia," "display," "performance"—Casetti outlines a way to think of cinema and film's transformation and by doing so reaffirms our suggested film-philosophical understanding. Casetti points out that under digital circumstances cinema relocates itself within media-immanence but does not dissolve. Several cinematic characteristics are saved, even when cinema and film show up in formerly "uncinematic" environments. His post-cinematic statement is to think about the continuity of cinema in the interplay of media persistence, which would not be a fixed "dispositive" named cinema, but rather multiple cinematic configurations enabling a cinematic *experience* across various media and formats.

His concept of relocation allows Casetti to abstract from a media-technical fixation on film and cinema. To do so, Casetti uses Walter Benjamin's idea of "thin media" (Benjamin 1991, 126).[4] Here the characteristics of mediality lie not in an ontological density but in its potential to *effect*. These effects or impacts come into being when the medium liberates itself from its historical confinement. Some characteristics of mediality shine brighter as a "thin layer" and help to specify what a medium actually is far away from its original context, object, and related "topological ballast." What does that mean for the identity of film and cinema? As an answer, Casetti reveals his heuristics:

> The relocation of cinema triggers a discursive strategy aimed at rendering the past and the present instrumentally compatible. In reading current situations in light of what cinema has been, we interpret in a somewhat forced way not only what we find before us, but also our point of comparison itself. In this manner, we seem to "invent" continuity. (Casetti 2015, 210–211)

4   Benjamin writes: "Immer aber ist dieses Medium verhältnismäßig dünner als das-jenige auf das diese Werke zur Entstehungszeit auf ihre Zeitgenossen wirkten" (1991, 126).

 Cinema and film in Casetti's post-cinematic approach aren't historical, nor material or concrete results, but discursive strategies of "thin media." They have to lose their "ontological density" to live on as a media ideal. Why is this necessary? Post-cinematic media-immanence seems to depend to a certain degree on media idealization to develop in line with a historical continuity. And this is related to what we would like to implement as cinema and film's formats. To catch up with Casetti's dynamic of expanding cinema, some stable ideas of cinema and film have to remain. Otherwise, their identity would fade into the plurality of its formatted existences through relocation. If, for example, William Wyler's *Ben-Hur* (1959), shot with an MGM Camera 65 using 65mm film stock with an aspect ratio of 2.76:1, were to be relocated to television, then it would be necessary to think about the serious stylistic interventions involved, such as pan-and-scan procedures and letter- and pillar-boxing, which reframe the image to fit either PAL or NTSC frames. Image formats constitute the link between material individuality in shape, size, and proportion and its infrastructural adaptability. Formats stand for distributed conspicuity, which in the case of *Ben-Hur* meant hazarding film aesthetic consequences.

How do these aesthetic changes, which are brought up by the relocation of film and cinema, have an impact on what can be understood as their identity? Do these moments of reformatting comply with cinematic becoming? First, we note that in times of media-immanence forms of reformatting increase, as cinema and film relocate across a widening range of media and platforms. Müller (2015) identifies the introduction of digital computers as the moment when formats and formatting become ubiquitous. Here, formats describe not only the physical materiality of storage media but also the cultural techniques involved in the digital practices that make media readable and accessible and its content organizable. The notions "format" and "formatting" therefore seem to develop, first of all, specifically in relation to digital phenomena and, second, display this relation as widespread mediality, or, in our words, a form of media-immanence.

Post-cinematic digital media-immanence seems to be highly influenced by steady processes of reformatting.[5] From that point of view, a certain amount of idealization seems necessary to think about mediality. The

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5   Florian Krautkrämer extends Malter Hagener's concept of media-immanence into "post-cinematic media-immanence" (2014, 124; Postkinematographische Medienimmanenz). He creates a setting that allows one to watch audiovisual material from different sources on different screens and to de-locate media from their context as well as relocate them.

cinematic way of becoming therefore cannot be thought in combination with an excessive way of reformatting. The identity of cinema and film had to be stabilized. This could be done, as Casetti suggests, with the help of discursive strategies, that invent continuity and think about cinema and film as an overexposed idea of the medium's present and past. Furthermore, as we would like to suggest, the plurality of formats also supplies a solution. Formats do not feature characteristics of historical persistence and invented continuity; rather, they resist development. This means that formats are not easily transferable from one historical context to another. They would not appear as "thin formats" in Benjamin's sense. Formats rely to a certain extent on the media-technical surrounding in which they circulate. If this network is left out, incompatibilities have to be taken into account. The resistance of the format also can be understood as a supportive facility to stabilize the invented continuity of media historiography. It does so by setting up historical push-backs and media-technological confines that prevent thin media from fading into oblivion.

The resistance of the format also enables a new perspective on the idea of media-immanence. In the following, we branch off into art theory to explain how this could work. David Joselit seems to have listened to Deleuze's demand to look for a new form of resistance by amplifying the range of avant-gardism with what he calls "image-power," a new wave of "modernization" in art that is "devoted to seizing circulation as a technology of power" (2011, 94). Joselit's idea of image-power centers on the concept "format," as distinct from the notion "medium," because of its "capacity to configure data in multiple possible ways." For Joselit, format "is a more useful term than 'medium,' which, all heroic efforts to the contrary, can seldom shed its intimate connection to matter (paint, wood, lead, paper, chalk, video, etc.)" (2011, 82). In art theory the correlation between medium and matter is strongly in place in Clement Greenberg's ([1939] 1989) classical-modernistic understanding of "medium" as the material specificity of art, particularly of painting, and Rosalind Krauss's (1999, 2000) postmodern understanding of mediality. Krauss (2000, 5) emphasizes the ideas of modernization and dereferentialization that we sketched above in discarding the notion of medium, which is so bound up in Greenberg's restriction of media essence based on materiality.

Joselit denies the notion "medium" *explicitly* because of its connotation of materiality by using the notion "format." "Format" then could not, as we recognized in the case of *Ben-Hur*, be understood as the pure material property of mediality. Joselit develops his idea on formats, first, by taking the high potential of *circulation* into account, "where value is purposely

diminished as opposed to accumulated through the dissemination of images" (2011, 84). Arriving at meaning not from a fertile act of production but in its aftermath, Joselit labels image-power as *effects*, an "almost pure transitivity in the absence of a direct object" (93). As "consequences that cannot be fully anticipated during the phase of aesthetic production" (93), derivations are possible and introduce counter-distributions that won't follow the predefined path of circulation and attest the potential that "any quantum of data might lend itself to several, possible contradictory, formats" (82). The solution to facing this erratic aggregation of definitions is to find tools to encounter a vast form of medialization, or, with Hagener, we might say, a media-immanent world.

This "shift from producing to formatting" is what Joselit calls the "epistemology of search," "where knowledge is produced by discovering and/ or constructing meaningful patterns—formats—from vast reserves of raw data" (2011, 82). Resistance with the help of formats can be seen in their unpredictability. Variety and modification would lie, then, not so much in media materiality or its aesthetic contouring as in its handling and processing. These "vast reserves of raw data" seek and ask for a critical handling, which would demonstrate how patterns of links generate formats. What Joselit seeks with his idea of formats is overcoming the commonplace to understand art as object:

> In mediums a material substrate (such as paint or canvas) converges with an aesthetic tradition (such as painting). Ultimately, mediums lead to objects, and thus reification, but formats are nodal connections and differential fields; they channel an unpredictable array of ephemeral currents and charges. They are configurations of force rather than discrete objects. In short, formats establish a pattern of links or connections. (2013, 55)

Taking Joselit's understanding of format and putting it into relation with post-cinema, we see that media-immanence shows an excessive dynamic that, in our opinion, perpetuates cinematic becoming and the effects of thin media. It seems that some sort of divergence is needed to stop a supposedly boundless expansion, an exponentiated effect and an undifferentiated form of development. This can be realized by the understanding that there is a difference between formats and media grounded in their modes of processing and handling. Formats also include thinking about a wide range of loss—of falling into oblivion and into the media-technical cleft of incompatibilities. From a format perspective, generation loss is always already taken into account. Every digital action demands a

reconciliation of formats and their incompatibilities. This specific media setting would ask for different correlations of a cinematic historiography of derivation and modulation. A new resistance through image-power, therefore, could be regarded as similar to what Deleuze wants when he asks for cinema "to stop 'being cinematic'" (1995, 76): there is a specific form of loss to consider. In the case of the format, this would imply not merely a reflection based on a structural idea of boycotting certain media-specific qualities of aesthetic forms. Rather, it would imply relying on the potential to circulate, redistribute, and counter-distribute them. We will understand the above by taking an in-depth look at the moment when cinema, film, and digitality first met.

III.

According to Simon Rothöhler (2013), digital cinema begins with "digital rollout," the moment when all cinematic phases, from production to distribution, occur without having any photographic exposure as an intermediate stage, such as projecting film in the cinema. For Rothöhler, from that moment on, digital cinema can be understood as an aesthetic and media identity. Therefore, what can be called digital cinema would not start with the "dawn" but with the "high noon" of digital image quality and the corresponding media-technical "network" that is in most of its parts defined by the initialism "HD." High definition, which phenomenologically stands for supposedly super-sharp and detailed imagery, describes pixel proportions, for example, 1280 x 720 pixels, but does not name an accurate technical specification. Yet it is used as an umbrella term for different aspects of digital mediality. Rothöhler speaks of HD as a "meta-label" that could be attached to a range of digital audio and image formats, such as the 2K and 4K standards for the digital image package DCP, the HDMI transmission interface, and the grid of CCD sensors, as well as the formats for iPad screens, smartphone displays, monitors, television screens, and digital light projectors. In the case of digital cinema, HD therefore not only outlines the dispositive in the movie theatre but also constitutes a "career" of film in a technical way that leaves out the dark rooms of the cinema and introduces, in Casettis words, its relocation. The term stands for a decentralized image network in which the digital image circulates and therefore displays some conditions of media-immanence.

It seems that HD brings the digital and cinema into a mutual agreement and even makes a historiographical promise: it offers "continuity" as we came to identify in Casetti's heuristics. This theoretical implementation can be

recognized through aesthetic reflections in cinema and film that playfully show the material idiosyncrasies of analog film reels through reframing and combining different aspect ratios, as in *Mommy* (2014, dir. Xavier Dolan) and *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014, dir. Wes Anderson), or taking up their signature scratches, fuzziness, and color grades with the help of digital filters, as prominently applied in *La La Land* (2016 , dir. Damien Chazelle). HD places *Ben-Hur*'s nine galloping chariot-race horses horizontally in one single widescreen. Offering a brilliant restoration, with praise for being the first format to present *Ben-Hur* as it was shown in movie theaters and thus assumedly satisfying all aesthetic and formative demands of the film shot in 1959, HD suggests a smooth continuity between the analog version of the original and the 8K-restored version on Blu-Ray released 2011.

If HD enables a consistency of cinema between analog and digital, then, we argue, there is a blind spot, respectively a gap, in this linear narration: this post-cinematic reflection may be confident about cinema and film's analog past but not at all about its digital history, so it seems. Considering digital cinema and film starting with HD implies denying the whole phase of experiments that came before HD. What we can see here is that post-cinema's invention of continuity presupposes the a-historicity and idealization of "the digital." Inversing the focus, we look not so much at the relation between the analog and digital as at another, apparently insurmountable, threshold, the one between SD, the standard-definition digital video format, and HD, or the distinction between two digital formats.

SD, in comparison to HD, stands in for analog PAL and NTSC signals but also describes the first digital transmission rates and digital video formats beyond television, which, as we may soon recognize, cannot be as easily converted into HD as it seems when dealing with not yet digitized pictorial material, such as *Ben-Hur* showed. Manuals on video technology determine SD as a pixel proportion of digital imagery that by definition would not be HD (see, e.g., Schmidt 2013, 15). Both SD and HD describe resolution capacities that can also describe analog signals. They subsume a plurality of different technical specifications and formats but in the end tend to be utilized to underline the difference between "the analog" and "the digital," even in Schmidt's manual for video technology. Here he writes that, although HD can be analog and SD can be digital, SD is explained in the chapter on analog signals and HD is discussed in relation to digital video formats. One way to feign a "clear cut" between "the analog" and "the digital," at least through numbers, is to draw a line between the highest digital SD signals and the lowest HD resolution, the aspect ratio 4:3 (SD) vs 16:9 (42:32), in pixels: 960 x 720 vs. 1280 x 720.

What we can see through the history of digital video formats is that in the moment of its obsolescence, SD is defined as "standard," when actually HD should be established as the prevalent resolution. SD therefore can be described as a retronym specification that is provided with an identity after its existence. In this way, the constructive nature of standardization, as "any set of agreed-upon rules for the production of (textual or material) objects" (Bowker and Star 1999, 13) is easily laid open. The relation between HD and SD points to the problems that arise when media-ontological clas- sifications (What "is" digital cinema and film in contrast to analog cinema and film?) attempt to set "clear cuts." To overcome them, we expect to trace down two tendencies of film historiography that nonetheless depend on each other. We would like to differentiate between a history that tries to eliminate these clear cuts by "inventing continuity" and a history that looks at what falls victim to those cuts, in other words, what "resists" an idea of further development. We would like to break these two histories down to the notions of "medium" and "format." Digital cinema's media historiography starts with HD and the relation between "the analog" and "the digital" and its post-cinematic tendency to invent continuity. Digital cinema's format historiography starts with SD and the problem of where to draw the line between different digital formats. Here, the pursuit of continuity is replaced by questions of in/compatibility, which we identify as a resistance to develop. On the one hand, film and cinema as medium seek historiographical *persistence* that, on the other hand, is kept running by the historiographical *resistance* of the format.

What is compatible and was is not? On a media-technical level, the format resists the historical flow of continuity. In the case of the SD format, this means that great efforts have to be taken in order to liberate it from a specific media-historical context—to relocate it. The resistance of the format represents a historical incompatibility that can be found when we return to the origin of the technology: The allegedly first fully digital produced film, and therefore coming fairly close to the "digital rollout," *Windhorse* (1998), directed by Paul Wagner, had to be photographically exposed to be shown in theatres. Yet this pioneering status didn't provide it with an outstanding position in cinema's historiography. *Windhorse* used digital technology for one reason specifically: it was shot in parts on location in Tibet, where, due to heavy political restrictions, the film team had to mime tourists using cameras that looked like small amateur recording devices. Those eventually did offer a sufficient quality to show the images on the big screen. The digital footage furthermore was cut and post-produced with digital equipment.

This initiation of a "digital cinema to come" wasn't meant to be a paradigmatic change. In the same year, however, an aesthetical rethinking, triggered by the same technical features at the basis of *Windhorse*, took hold: the films of the Dogme 95 movement used digital cameras to express their lasting critique of the film industry and Hollywood imagery. Lars von Trier's film *The Idiots* (1998) was shot using the same camera used for Wagner's *Windhorse*: the Sony DCR-VX1000, the first digital camera that combined the MiniDV format with a CCD chip. In this specific case, the reason for its use wasn't the delivered quality, which far exceeded analog video. On the contrary, having a shaky hand for transforming their jittery video image into a political statement and adhere to their "vow of chastity," Lars von Trier and the Dogme 95 movement initiated a persistent way to voice criticism. They used heavy pixilation, overcharged auto-focus, intentionally blurred images from excessive whip pans, noise from poor lighting conditions, and overexposures from too fast light changes. Here, and unlike the aspiration for using digital cameras in the *Windhorse* production, the creators used digital techniques purposefully to create low-resolution images, with poor quality not being something to overcome.

Additionally, we can identify this by having a look at the archival procedure conducted at Zentropa, Lars von Trier's film company. The DV format of the VX1000 is a master format, meaning that all information collected during shooting is stored there. Rather than using this master DV format for restoration, Zentropa is using a 35mm negative that the film was transferred to. The restorer of *The Idiots*, Cecilie Rui, explains that the detour through film is necessary to provide a sufficient quality for distribution and preservation:

> In the case of *The Idiots*, it was originally shot on DVcam. A very bad starting point for restoration. All of Zentropa's final films have been transferred to 35mm original negative. We used that material as a starting point for this film. We can extract much more information in the picture from a 35mm negative. We do an *Arriscan* from 35mm to files. In this case, since it was shot on DVcam, scanning any higher than 3K is a waste of time and money—since we will not get any more information from the picture. (Email to Elisa Linseisen, November 11, 2017)

To store and restore a specific form of digital film, which is based on the technical specification of digital SD, the genuine material is transferred to 35mm so that it can then be transferred back to the digital, this time in HD. What we can see here is that continuity is only reached through the integration of film stock, the integration of the analog, to preserve the

aesthetic feature of the SD image. To add continuity to cinema and film's historiography, SD has to be detached from its existence as a format to circulate further as an aesthetic feature. The latter can easily be set in a specific tradition of style, related to the handheld cameras of the new waves in the 1960s and, from our perspective, now could easily be provided with a successor of pixelated digital images. Moreover, what we can infer is that cinematic continuity and the resistance of formats are both recognizable through forms of "bad quality," such as aesthetic or technical loss or media-aesthetic disruptions. But we think it is important to differentiate between a media-aesthetic idea of "low" and a media-technical "low" definition of digital formats.

Here we would stray from the path of invented film-historiographical continuity and suggest a differentiation between high and low formats, drawing on HD vs. SD. Two stories can be told. On the one hand, SD pixels saved on 35mm film, as in the blurred imagery of Dogme 95, should be identified as a *media-aesthetic form* of low definition. The latter would go along with what Marshal McLuhan describes in *Understanding Media* as "cold media" in contrast to "hot media," with the difference drawn explicitly in terms of "resolution," a difference between high and low definition. McLuhan differentiates the two on a phenomenological level. High-definition media offer their content sharp and noise free, while low-definition media appear blurry and pixelated. The breaking point the aesthetic would offer, its low definition, happens in perfect alignment with cinematic continuity, so much so, in fact, that the material base of the noisiness is discarded to save the phenomenological effect. It is lost from that point when the SD aesthetic is transferred onto the 35mm film stock. If SD had tried to catch up with the high quality of HD, not only would continuity have had to be invented but also pixels. With the help of upscaling, pixels can be doubled, repeated, or be blown up, meaning, in the case of Dogme 95, that the requested aesthetic specification would be lost if the format, in terms of continuity, were saved. Archival practice takes the detour through 35mm film solely because the quality of the SD image should not get better. SD on 35mm digitized in 2K therefore would in McLuhan's notion describe the paradox of *high low-definition imagery*.

On the other hand, SD pixels are saved as a *digital format* because of its supposedly good quality. For this story, we have to leave the path of cinema's continuity. If we follow the career of the Sony DCR-VX1000 and its MiniDV format, we see what a format derived from cinematic persistence could look like. Its irrelevance for production in digital cinema can be countered by its importance apart from cinema's narrative of continuity:

the SD aesthetic offered by the VX1000 and its MiniDV cassettes had an important heyday in a success story that continues to this day in the skateboard community. Right now, every recorded trick by the VX1000 is a question of format compatibility. SD stands for a specific form of digitality that is not at present set up for circulation. We could identify the technical context the SD image acts in using Haidee Wasson's idea of "networked cinema," which is an important step in the direction of a decentered form of image movement. The networked state of cinema relates low-definition imagery not to its compression, on account of excessive circulation, but to a specific infrastructural dependence, a relation between the image and a unique network where the aesthetic of the image and its content can be derived from the infrastructural requirements: "the exhibition of moving images is intimately tied to the material specifications of the networks through which they travel, their particular technological form, and the specific screens on which they appear" (Wasson 2008, 78).

If we consider where the SD images of the DCR-VX1000 appear nowadays, this tight relation between an integrated network and the quality of the image is torn apart. The internet delivers its content decentralized. Here, digital imagery heavily depends on its capacity to be compatible and flexible. This often leads to peculiarities of bad resolution, which can be described with what Hito Steyerl calls "poor images." Poor images are formatted images, being "uploaded, downloaded, shared, reformatted, and reedited" and offer a "digital uncertainty" (Steyerl 2009). SD images, as we have recognized through the example of Dogme 95, are clearly differentiable from poor images, as the "poor image is a copy in motion . . . it accelerates, it deteriorates. It is a ghost of an image . . . distributed for free, squeezed through slow digital connections, compressed, reproduced, ripped, remixed, as well as copied and pasted into other channels of distribution" (Steyerl 2009).

Poor images, the "Lumpenproletariat" (Steyerl 2009), within the class system of digital imagery, can be described more by the loss of compression than by their information density. Poor images are based on the high-standard requirements of an HD-spacious network. Their low definition results from moving in a not-even-remotely-comprehensible web, and its bad quality is the result of unpredictability and contingency, caused by incompatibilities and compression. How do the SD images of the DCR-VX1000, recorded by the skateboard community, fit into this scenario?

On YouTube we can find a certain number of carefully designated SD videos delivered by the VX. What we can also find on the video-sharing platform

are many videos concerned with the question of how to transfer the recorded data from a camera having no USB output or memory card. In this specific subcultural context there is no division between SD as format and SD as aesthetics. With Dogme 95's *The Idiots*, bad quality should be saved for the sake of cinematic continuity. For the skateboard community however, the format should be saved for the sake of, in their opinion, so-called good quality. On YouTube numerous influencer videos discuss why the VX1000 still has the best quality for its purpose, emphasizing the fish-eye-lens effect or the clear sound of the uncompressed audio that portrays the collision of skateboard and pavement like no other camera. Whether it is true or not, what we can see is the effort to guarantee the compatibility of the recorded data, *just because* the format's incompatibility is at stake. With every image production, the incompatibility of the format has to be kept in mind.

What we can see here is that technology is expected to disappear. This effect takes the shape of format incompatibilities in terms of the digital, which can be seen only when we cast aside those mixed feelings that arise from worrying about the stability of cinema's continuity (and those concerns about "ontological threats"). The possibility of loss, however, even appends "ontological density" to the format by designating it as "good quality." In the case of formats, relocation does not produce media ideals or self-reflexive modes in order to develop those any further, as a film-philosophical approach suggests. Rather, the format needs to be at stake to find new (qualitative) ways of existence, like the revaluation of the VX1000 MiniDV format. Here, one can find, in Joselit's sense, a form of image-power.

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Moving back to our opening statement about the post-cinematic, questioning cinematic becoming in digital times, we could say that, by holding up the persistence of cinematic continuity, the new resistance of formats, their image-power, is lost. Formats show a media-historical attachment. Sometimes formats overcome these ties and start to move in time and space, and sometimes they do not. If media-technological hurdles are passed, such as MiniDV videos on YouTube, and the format proves its compatibility, we would like to claim a specific form of potential that is different from cinema's idea of continuity and becoming. Hence, we want to ascribe it to the relation of mediality and its specific surrounding, where, in the case of the digital image, it leads to the question of resolution. Therefore, we would like to differentiate imagery not by its perceivable,

phenomenological quality but by its relation to the surrounding network. HD then can be described as an image made to circulate in a decentralized context, whereas SD is bound to a specific technical and even hardware-based surrounding. The potential of the format is distinct from forms of cinematic becoming. The difference lies in the idea of historicity. Cinema, as a medium, is capable of auto-surveying itself and its relation to other media and using this intermedia feedback loop to develop itself even further. The development of formats means a generation loss. Formats in a media-immanent condition are already and permanently at stake. They do not build up facets of complex interrelations over their history to develop further; rather, they exist to be forgotten. And if that is not the case, it is because somebody cares. Subcultural examples, such as the tender concern of the skateboard community of how to save their format, show how counter-narratives can appear when modernization starts by reformatting the existing imagery, extracting meaning by post-productive interventions and media-technical detours. A new form of resistance built up by the format might not be as recognizable from what the images show but from what they do, according to Joselit. Digital cinema and film would then not offer as much to look but instead invite us to look after images.

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